A Group of Scottish Women

by Harry Graham (1908)

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Preface

AT no time in the world's history has the position of woman claimed so large a share of the public thought as it does to-day; never have her influence and power been more fully recognised. Her energies are no longer restricted to the domestic hearth; they extend from the factory workroom to the political platform. She advances unchallenged along walks of life to which until but recently she has been denied all access. At the present moment, indeed, the Army might seem to be the only profession in which she does not aspire to take her place side by side with man.

Whether the hand that rocks the cradle is competent to rule the world is one of the controversial questions of the moment. It does not, however, lie within the scope of the present volume to promote such a discussion. But whatever views one may hold on the subject of woman's capacity to govern or achieve, it cannot be denied that she has always been the most fruitful source of inspiration for genius or eminence of any kind ; that the noblest actions (and the greatest crimes) have been inspired by women. It is therefore interesting to look back into the past and recall individual instances of women who, by reason of their heroism, courage, piety, or wit, have affected their generation and made their mark upon the history of the age in which they lived.

Of the world's women who have ranked as celebrities, Scotland can lay claim to a generous share. Scottish queens, from the sainted Margaret -who was, however, Scots only by adoption-to the ill-starred Mary ; heroines, from Grisell Baillie to Flora Macdonald; great ladies and leaders of society, from the Duchess of Buccleuch and Lady Stair to Lady Eglinton and Gainsborough's Mrs. Graham ; writers and novelists, from Susan Ferrier, Catherine Sinclair, Lady Halkett, Mrs. Brunton, and Mrs. Hamilton to Mrs. Grant of Laggan ; poets and songstresses, from Joanna Baillie to Lady Nairne ; they have inscribed their names indelibly upon the pages of the national history. There are, moreover, a

number, difficult to classify -such widely different women as Lady Arabella Stuart, Lady Jane Douglas, and Mrs. Clephane Maclean - who all inspire interest and deserve more than passing notice. While others, again, of the type of jenny Geddes, Lady Lovat, or Miss Sophia Johnstone, have become notorious by their very eccentricities.

With so many names to choose from, it is somewhat curious that there should not be any single one that stands out with notable pre-eminence. When the Scottish National Portrait Gallery was built, some twenty years ago, a number of patriotic Edinburgh ladies raised a subscription to erect a statue of a famous and typical Scotswoman in one of the niches in the front of the building. It was to be a fitting companion to the effigies of Barbour, Raeburn, Knox, Adam Smith, and the other eminent Scotsmen already installed there. When, however, the final choice of the individual came to be made, it was found impossible to decide upon the name of any woman, of pure Scottish birth and breeding, who was worthy, in the opinion of the subscribers, of such an honour.

It is not my intention to attempt the solution of a problem by which the Scotswomen of the past have succeeded in puzzling their descendants of to-day. My desire is to present the reader with a series of biographical portraits of some of the most prominent of the former, and to throw as much light as possible upon their characters, methods, and achievements.

Of materials for such a volume there is no lack. Interesting women are plentiful throughout the whole history of Scotland; the eighteenth century is particularly rich in them. How many books have already been written round the "Ladies of the Covenant"? and still the material appears inexhaustible. What subjects for literary treatment are to be found in the lives of fair Jacobites; of that devoted group, "the Queen's Maries"; of the "flames" of the susceptible Robert Burns, or the friends of the large-hearted Walter Scott !

In these pages I have endeavoured to collect a number of types of feminine character, differing from one another in many particulars, but all with one single exception-bound together by the common ties of Scottish birth. There are, no doubt, many names well worthy of a place in the front rank of Scottish women, which have not been included in this volume. My excuse must be that there was not room for all, and in the selection of subjects I have exercised the right of allowing personal preference, or prejudice, to be my guide. My choice of individuals is, indeed, a purely arbitrary one. It ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the devout to the degenerate ; from Dervorguilla, the philanthropist, to Elspeth Buchan, the fanatic; from Jane, Countess of Sutherland, to Isobel Pagan. Many phases of character are thereby represented. Thus, Lady Grisell Baillie stands for heroism ; Jane, Duchess of Gordon, for political ambition ; "Black Agnes" is the type of Scottish Amazon ; Miss " Nicky " Murray, the woman of fashion ; Lady Anne Barnard, the woman of the world ; Mrs. Grant, the "blue-stocking "- and so on through out these pages.

In my treatment I have adopted a discursive style. I have even ventured to introduce much extraneous and apparently irrelevant matter. My object has been to include in these sketches of notable Scotswomen some brief glimpses of other less important individuals of whom it was not possible to write at length. Above all, I have sought to provide each of my main figures with a suitable background, which shall suggest something of the general life and manners of her particular time.

For permission to make use of various sources of information, kindly placed at my disposal, I am indebted to the courtesy of the Hon. Mrs. Maxwell Scott, Mrs. Graham-Wigan, the Duke of Sutherland, the Duke of Portland, the Earl of Crawford, the Earl of Home, and Colonel H. R. Clinton. I am particularly grateful to the Earl of Rosebery, Lord Guthrie, Lord Balcarres, Mr. A. Francis Steuart, Mr. William K. Dickson (Keeper of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh), the Rev. James M. Joass of Golspie, and to my friend, Mr. E. V, Lucas, for their interest, encouragement, and assistance. I also wish to express my warmest thanks to Mr. David Douglas for permission to quote extensively from many publications of which he holds the copyright. To various other publishers and authors-notably Mrs. Godfrey Clark, the Hon. J. A. Home, and Mr. T. Craig-Brown -who have kindly provided me with valuable material, I have endeavoured, as far as possible to acknowledge my indebtedness in footnotes.

H. G.

Chapter 1 - Scotswomen of early times - Dervorguilla (1213 - 1290)

It is extremely difficult to form any definite idea of the position held by women in Scotland during that somewhat primitive age that preceded the Reformation. The brief glimpses that we get of them throughout the lurid pages of early Scottish history are shadowy and elusive. The Scotswomen of that period are not easily followed into the privacy of their homes, and the part they played in the wider public life of their day is never very clearly shown.

In the pictures of Scottish life presented to our gaze by the chroniclers of early times – many of whom seem to have relied very largely upon their imaginations for their facts – the women are kept so consistently in the background as to be obscured by the scenes of violence and bloodshed which occupy by far the larger portion of the canvas. But the pursuit of such indefinite figures is an absorbing if an intricate task, and the subject though perplexing is one that amply repays investigation.

For many centuries the condition of Scottish women of the humbler classes was deplorable. The wives were for the most part mere beasts of burden, the girls slaves. Even as late as the year 1750 a traveller in Scotland [*Thomas Pennant*] has drawn a realistic and disagreeable picture of the peasant women turning their patient backs to the dunghills to receive in their baskets “as much manure as their lords and masters thought fit to fling in with their pitchforks,” and then trudging in droves of sixty or seventy to deposit their unsavoury burdens upon the fields.

The young women of that day, as Arnot the historian tells us, [History of Edinburgh*, by Hugo Arnot, p.193. [Edinburgh, 1788.]]* if they were unfortunate enough to get into trouble, were harassed and terrified into crimes which brought them to the scaffold; and the old, “under the absurd imputation of witchcraft, were tormented by the rabble, till, by the confession of an imaginary crime, an end was put to their sufferings.” [*In 1678 no less than ten women were tried for witchcraft before the Court of Justiciary and burnt at the stake. (See Stark’s* Picture of Edinburgh, *p 286.)*]. Indeed the cruel practice of “scoring” or drawing blood from a supposed witch’s forehead, as an antidote against the effect of incantations, was performed in a Scottish parish as late as the year 1776. [My Own Life and Times, *by Thomas Somerville, D.D., p. 366. (Edinburgh, 1861.)*]

From the correspondence of travellers in Scotland one might hope to obtain a good idea of the general characteristics or, at any rate, the appearance of the women with whom they happened to come into personal contact. But the accounts given by tourists are almost invariably vague and indefinite, if they do not actually contradict one another. Even in the earliest days there were always a few foreigners touring through Scotland who were not, as a rule, loth to record their impressions frankly and candidly; but on the subject of women they maintain a strange reticence. Perhaps the women of that day occupied so unimportant and inferior a position as to be considered unworthy of comment. Perhaps the chivalry latent in the breast of every man – even of a tourist – exercised some restraining influence upon his powers of criticism. Whatever the reason may have been, it is certainly true that we find but little mention of the softer sex in the correspondence of those English strangers who made their way across the country. And if we seek for notice of a favourable nature, we are force to turn to the letters of foreigners from the continent of Europe.

Aeneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius II., who visited Scotland in the middle of the fifteenth century, found the women good-looking and comely. He disapproved very strongly, however, of their moral character, and especially of their lavish distribution of kisses, reproachfully declaring that they gave their lips as freely and readily as did Italian women their hands. A Spanish visitor, Don Pedro de Ayala, ambassador of Ferdinand and Isabella, who came to Scotland at about the same time, describes the women as being exceedingly courteous and honest, though he too cannot refrain from criticising their boldness. They are very graceful and handsome, adds the polite Spaniard, dress much better than Englishwomen, are so fond of foreigners that they dispute as to who shall entertain them, and are absolute mistresses of their own homes, and even of their husbands. [Calendar of Letters, Dispatches, and State Papers, relating to Negotiations between England and Spain, preserved in the Archives at Simancas, *Vol. i. p 169. (Edited by G. A. Bergenroth, 1862)*]

If we explore the writings of English tourists, we find a very different and far less agreeable

picture of the sex. Thomas Kirke, who wrote a “Modern Account of Scotland” in the seventeenth century, is hardly a fair example, as he does not appear able to discover anything good to say of the country or its inhabitants. According to him, the Scottish people are arrogant, vainglorious, “bloody, barbarous, inhuman and proud.” [A Modern Account of Scotland by an English Gentleman. *(1679.) (Thomas Kirke took a particular dislike to the skirling of the pipes – an aversion to the national instrument which he shares with many other Englishmen. “Musick they have,” he writes, “but not the harmony of the sphears, but loud terrene noises, like the bellowing of beasts.”*] But perhaps his definition of pride coincided with that of another Englishman who paid a visit to Edinburgh in 1704 and stated that “the people here are very proud, and call the ordinary tradesmen *merchants*.” Kirke’s jaundiced view of things Scottish did not stop short of the women, whom he included in his general denunciation, styling them “strong-posted timber” – a discourteous allusion, probably, to the thickness of their ankles. Further, as he avowed that they “dislike Englishmen because the latter have no legs or (like themselves) posts to walk on,” [*Ibid*.] one cannot help suspecting that it was the peculiar exiguity of his own calves that impelled him to inveigh with such bitterness against the more stalwart extremities of the good ladies of Scotland.

Sir Anthony Weldon, too, is ungallant enough to write somewhere that “the beasts of Scotland be generally small – women only excepted, of which there are none greater in the world.” He was notoriously prejudiced against Scotland and Scotsmen (who, as he averred, “christen without the cross, marry without the ring, receive the sacrament without reverence, die without repentance, and bury without divine service”) and particularly venomous on the subject of their womenfolk, whom he describes as being mere slaves, kept by jealous husbands in a state of complete domestic subjection. “It be [the] mountaines affords no monsteris (he says), but weemen, of which the greatest ones, as countesses and ladies, ar keiped lyke lyones in iron grates. The merchantis wyves ar lykewayes prisoners, but not in such strong holdes. They have wooden cages, lyke as English borefrankis, through which sumtymes peeping to catch the ayre, we ar almost choked with the sight of them.” [A Perfect Description of the People of Scotland, *by Johnne E. (1659.) (N.B. Throughout this volume, wherever quotations have been made from ancient books or documents, neither spelling nor punctuation have been altered, except in a few instances where the sense demanded some minor correction; but in place of the old-fashioned and confusing letter “f” its modern equivalent has been substituted.)*]

But his suggestion that the women of that day were entirely under the sway of their husbands is contradicted by the fact that, during the insurrection of 1678, when Monmouth called upon the gentry of Scotland to join the King’s army against the rebels, a number of those who failed to respond to this summons gave as an excuse the reason that their wives would not allow them to fight.

If we seek for some kindly words of praise from the pens of Englishmen to set against this chorus of depreciation and disapproval, we must turn to writings of more modern date. Thomas Pennant, in spite of his horror of the servile condition of the female peasantry, declares that the townswomen of Scotland “fully emulate the character of the good wife so admirably described by the wisest of men.” [*A Tour in Scotland. (1769)*]. Captain Burt, too, another eighteenth-century tourist, gives it as his opinion that, “among the better sort,” there is a “full proportion of pretty women” all over Scotland, though he hastens to add a rider to the effect that women grow handsomer and handsomer the longer one stays away from home! [Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland. (*1759.)*].

A cursory examination of such authorities as these does not bring much light to bear upon the subject. We are consequently forced to consider the matter from an entirely modern point of view, and by a study of the actual doings of such women as peer shyly forth from the pages of Scottish history, form our own conclusions as to their virtues, their qualities of mind and body, their national peculiarities and characteristics.

That the welfare of women was not altogether neglected even in the most distant days is proved by an Act of Parliament, obviously intended to promote their well-being, which was passed as early as the thirteenth century. Queen Margaret was hardly likely to forget those of her subjects who happened to belong to her own sex, and by the terms of this Statute, the responsibility for which is attributed to her, it was ordained that, “during the reine of hir maist blissit Magestie, ilk maiden ladye of baith highe and lowe estait shall hae libertie to bespeak ye man she likes; albeit, gif he refuses to tak hir till be his wyf, he sall be mulctit in ye sume of ane hundredth pundid or less, as his estait mai

be, except and always gif he can mak it appear that he is betrothit to an either woman, then he shall be free." [*Hislop quotes this in his* Book of Scottish Anecdote, *p. 6 (1874), but it is not given in* The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland from 1124, *nor does it appear in Skene's* Ancient Lawes of Scotland.] If the very modern proposal to tax recalcitrant bachelors had been formulated and put into effect in Scotland nearly six hundred years ago, one may readily assume that the women in whose interests such a statute was drawn up cannot have been the slaves and chattels of the English tourist's too vivid imagination. In Scots law, women have always enjoyed much freer control of their estates, even when married, than their English sisters. Far from sinking their status in that of their husbands, they continued until recent time to sign with their own family name. Not only does the happiness of the softer sex appear to have been considered in those far-off days; the subject of their morality was also a matter of national importance which was not allowed to suffer neglect, in Scotland at any rate, as the world grew older. An ancient statute, passed about the year 1454, prohibited women from going to drink at beerhouses without their husbands. And in 1695, in the records of the bye-laws enacted by the Common Council of Edinburgh, there is a reference to another regulation forbidding the employment of barmaids, and thus anticipating a form of domestic legislation for which some of our most zealous temperance reformers of modern times have long struggled in vain. [*This statute enacted that "no vintner, Inn-keeper, or Ale-seller shall hereafter presume to employ any Female Servant in drawing or selling any Ale or other Liquors in any of their Houses, under the Penalty of Three Pounds* Scotish *Money; nor any Woman to keep any of the said places for the Sale of Liquors, or to hire herself to any Person, to be employed in that Service, under the like Penalty." (Maitland's* History of Edinburgh, *p. 111.)*

Domestic heroines, as they may be termed, are plentiful in Scottish history. From the early days of Robert III., when an unknown Catherine Glover – Scott's "Fair Maid of Perth" – took pity on the wretched Duke of Rothesay, who was being starved to death in a dungeon of Falkirk Castle, and supplied him with milk from her own bosom, the annals of Scotland are rich in heroic women. A few examples will suffice. There are Catherine Gordon, the "White Rose of Scotland," a woman of extraordinary beauty and accomplishments, who by her loving fidelity to Perkin Warbeck, amid ever reverse of fortune, gained the sympathy and respect of even her bitterest enemies. The wife of David Home, of the fighting house of Wedderburn – the first of his family to suffer a natural death, 2 [*A.D. 1574*] all the rest having died in defence of their country – was another. Such a paragon of benevolence was this woman that she was always known as the "Good" Lady Wedderburn. [*The expression "Lady" is used throughout these pages in the Scots sense, as being the courtesy title conferred by general usage upon the wife of the laird.*] So too, Christian Fletcher, Mrs. Grainger, is still remembered as the woman who, when the English in 1652 besieged the Castle of Dunottar, where the regalia of Scotland were preserved, escaped with the crown, sceptre, and sword concealed about her person, and kept them safely hidden until the Restoration eight years afterwards.

In later times we have many more: Lady Grizel Cochrane, who turned highwaywoman for a single day in order to rob the Royal Mail of her father's death warrant; Helen Walker, whom Sir Walter Scott has immortalised as Jeanie Deans; and another Helen, "of Kirkconnell," who saved her lover's life at the cost of her own, and is the heroine of one of Wordsworth's poems. [*"Ellen Irwin," or "The Braes of Kirtle," probably the worst set of verses that Wordsworth ever penned.*] Nor must a niche in the Temple of Fame be denied to the devoted women of Jacobite times, from Flora Macdonald to poor Clementina Walkinshaw whose liaison with Charles Edward gave rise to so much scandal and ended so disastrously. From the lives of such women as these, who, flaming like meteors across the sky of history, by some supreme act of self-sacrifice or by a lifelong devotion to duty, earned an eternal place in the hearts of their countrymen, we can gain some idea of the thought and feelings of Scotswomen of the past. And, as we study these early histories, it is impossible not to be struck by the simplicity of their natures and the singular piety of their lives. Religion had a firm hold over their hearts; and it was a religion which expressed itself in charitable acts, and was not merely confined to devotional exercises. The best proof of this lies in the numerous individual instances of feminine philanthropy which stand out with such notable prominence in the early chronicles of Scotland. Many were the ladies of ancient lineage who "went about doing good"; many the convents, the hospitals, the churches, built and endowed by such women. [*See* A perfyte inventor of all the pious donations govin to kirks and hospitalls since the dayos of King James the first to the reigne of King James the sixt, *preserved among the MSS. In the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.*] Queen Matilda, the Scottish wife of Henry I., founded in 1117 the Hospital for Lepers at St. Giles in London, [*Wilson's* Memorials of Edinburgh, *vol. ii. P.217.*] to the chapel of which institution, the Church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields (where Andrew Marvell lies buried) owes its origin. Another leper-house was built, in Glasgow, by the

Lady or Lochow, daughter of Robert, Duke of Albany, in 1580. [*Chambers's* Domestic Annals of Scotland, *vol. i. p.226*] The convent at St. Bothan's in Berwickshire was endowed by Euphemia, Countess of March, and that at Haddington in East Lothian by the Countess of Northumberland; while Isabel, Countess of Lennox, built the Collegiate Church at Dumbarton. But it is not necessary to scour the country to discover examples of feminine charity. Edinburgh itself is rich in memorials of the beneficence of wealthy women of the past, the most diminutive but not the least important being the tiny Chapel of St. Margaret, founded by the Queen of Malcolm Canmore. Another chapel, St. Mary's, in Niddry's Close (from which the oldest lodge of Scottish Freemasons derives its name) was founded by Elizabeth, Countess of Ross, daughter of the Great Chamberlain of Scotland, [*James, Lord Livingston.*] and widow of John, Lord of the Isles. As early as 1293 there is a record of a certain Lady Donoca making a gift of all her possessions to the Abbey of Holyrood; and in the Cowgate stood Magdalen Chapel, originally a *Maison Dieu,* which, having at some time or other fallen into disrepair, was rebuilt by one Janet Rynd, "widow of Michael Macquhen," in the middle of the sixteenth century. [*Wilson's* Memorials of Edinburgh, *vol. ii. P.251. The scene of the famous meeting held by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Reformed in 1578.*]

Lady Yester's Church is, perhaps, one of the best known relics of bygone philanthropy. Margaret, Lady Yester, was a granddaughter of Mark Ker, Abbot of Newbattle. She built a number of churches in various parts of the country, including this famous one in Edinburgh at the corner of the old High School Wynd. With the lapse of years the original building gradually fell into disrepair. It was rebuilt, however, in 1803, with the old materials on a new site, the founder's memory being kept green by a monumental inscription

[*Its needless to erect a Marble Tomb;*
The Daily Bread that for the hungry Womb,
And Bread of Life thy Bounty hath provided,
For hungry souls all Times to be divided,
World lasting Monuments shall rear,
That shall endure till Christ himself appear.
Pos'd was thy Life, prepar'd thy happy End,
Nothing in either was without Commend.
Let it be the care of all who life hereafter,
To live and die like Margaret, Lady Yester."]

engraved above the place of her supposed burial, and by the four original communion cups and collecting plates which are still preserved.

In more recent times the chapel founded by Lady Glenorchy in 1772 is but another of many similar memorials to the piety of notable Scotswomen.

Of those ladies of noble birth who devoted themselves, their talents, and their wealth to the cause of their country's welfare there is no earlier and certainly no more remarkable example than that supplied by the Lady Dervorguilla. As the mother of a Scottish king she has some right to be remembered; as the co-founder of one of the most famous colleges in the whole world her claims to immortality cannot be lightly disregarded.

Up to the very beginning of the eighteenth century the progress of civilisation in the north was an extremely slow affair. Speaking of Scotland in the fifteenth century, Carlyle says that it is a country without a soul, "nothing developed in it but what is rude, external, semi-animal." Yet on the question of popular education Scotsmen do not appear to have been altogether behindhand. Even in very primitive times the flickering torch of literature was to a certain extent kept alive in those monastic institutions for which the country was famous. St. Columba had founded his first monastery in Iona in the sixth century. Here his successors continued to devote themselves earnestly and successfully to the cause of education. Iona soon became the very centre of learning, the spring of knowledge. Hither came the young from all the neighbouring countries – from Scotland, from Ireland, from England, even from Scandinavia [Scotland in the Middle Ages, *by Cosmo Innes, p.100. (1860)*] – to acquire learning. Hence went forth priests and bishops to the ends of the earth, converting, instructing, and, above all, founding similar institutions elsewhere.

Throughout Scotland the schools were for the most part under the direct control of the monasteries, to which indeed they generally owed their existence. Those in the city of Perth, for instance, were endowed by the monastery of Dunfermline in the time of William the Lion; the monastery of Kelso had schools in the town of Roxburgh as early, and we read of the widowed Lady of Molle, a great landowner in the Merse, resigning part of her dowry lands to Kelso on condition that her son was educated at the monastery schools. The importance of a scholastic education was not disregarded, nor were the efforts of the monks unappreciated or undervalued. During the reign of James IV. A statute was framed which ordained that a school should be provided in every parish in Scotland. And an Act of Parliament passed in 1496 required all barons and freeholders of substance to put their eldest sons to these schools “far Thai be eight or nine years of age, and to remained at the grammar sculls quail Thai be competently found it and have permit Latina.” [Scotland in the middle Ages, *p.271*] Scottish barons who failed to keep their sons at school were liable to a fine of £20 in King James IV's time. Scotsmen still continued to realise the advantages of a classical education in the eighteenth century, when a large proportion of the scholars in the country towns learned Latin, many of the children of mechanics and others in the same humble station spending two or three years at the grammar schools for this purpose. [*Dr. Somerville* (Life and Times, p.348) *tells us that the fee for being taught Latin at the Kelso schools was 2s.6d. per quarter*]

Dr. Johnson once declared that the learning of the Scottish people was “like bread in a besieged town: every man gets a little, but no man gets a full meal,” [*Boswell's* Life of Johnson *p.251*] But at the time that captious critic wrote the standard of education in Scotland was gradually reaching a level higher than that of almost any other country – a level, be it said, from which it has never declined – and inspired Sir Robert Peel to remark sarcastically that “England, like Aberdeen, has two universities.”

In the earliest days it was very uncommon, as Sir Walter Scott tells us, to find men of the higher ranks who did not possess a “general tincture of letters,” or, thanks to their excellent system of parochial education, individuals even in the lowest classes without the knowledge or reading, writing, and arithmetic. [Tales of a Grandfather, *p.376.*] the Scottish student in his thirst for learning submitted to penury and difficulties innumerable in order to educate himself: his parents were only too content to suffer poverty and practise self-denial to assist him in attaining this worthy object. [*the following extract from the accounts kept by Prise Lockhart Gordon during his first year at Aberdeen University gives some idea of the modest way in which students lived in the eighteenth century. His whole expenditure during the year only amounted to £17.4s.3d., and that sum he considered excessive. (See* Personal Memoirs, *vol. i. p.15: 1830.)*

	£	s.	d.
Expenses of journey to Aberdeen (50 miles) performed			
In two days.	*0*	*2*	*4*
College fees to bellringers and sacrist.	*0*	*5*	*0*
My share of coal and candles for the winter.	*0*	*17*	*6*
Pens, ink, and paper.	*6*	*6*	*6*
Breakfast of bread and milk at rate of 9d per week			
(26 weeks).	*0*	*19*	*6*
Board (dinner) at college table at 14s. per month. . .	*4*	*4*	*0*
Bread, cheese, butter, smoked haddocks, small beer,			

and other luxuries for supper. 1 4 0

Tea and sugar once or twice a week. 0 12 0

Fees to the Greek Professor 1 11 6

Ditto to Professor of Humanity (Latin). 0 15 0

Charity in Church. . . . . 0 1 1]

"Any young man," says Lockhart, "who can afford to wear a decent coat and live in a garret upon porridge and herrings, may, if he pleases, come to Edinburgh, and pass through his academical career just as creditably as is required of expected." [Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk, *by J.G. Lockhart, vol. i. p.196*] Even the fifteenth century, though as troubled and turbulent a time as any in Scottish history, saw the foundation of three of the oldest universities in Scotland – those of St. Andrews, of Glasgow, and of King's College, Aberdeen. [*A.D. 1410, 1450, and 1495.*] And two centuries earlier we find the Lady Dervorguilla furthering the advance of education by the foundation of yet another college, though not, it must be admitted, in her own country.

The family of Balliol is as old as any in the three kingdoms, and can be traced back to the Conquest. Bernard de Baliol, one of those English barons who opposed King David at the Battle of the Standard, was its head, and Barnard Castle, in Northumberland, where his descendants subsequently dwelt for so long a period, was built by him. He it was, too, who marched with the English barons from Newcastle to Alnwick in 1174 to oppose William the Lion, who had invaded England. And when his troops lost their way in a fog, and some of the nobles were for retiring, "If you should all turn back," he said, "I would go forward alone!" His great-grandson, John de Baliol, a noble who combined great wealth and political consequence with a love of learning and a benevolent disposition, married a woman who was even wealthier than himself and as much of a philanthropist.

Through his wife Dervorguilla, daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway, and granddaughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon, Baliol acquired vast estates in England as well as half the Scottish county of Galloway. To the children of this union Dervorguilla also brought that title to the crown of Scotland which one of them was subsequently destined to assume with such unhappy results.

In the year 1260 we first hear Sir John de Baliol mentioned as coming into collision with one of those English bishops – true types of the Church militant here in earth – who guarded the border so zealously against the invading Scots. How Sir John offended the prelate is not clear, though an early chronicler suggests that he had "gotten himself drunk with beer, quite contrary to the fair esteem befitting his rank, and had done other evil disrespectful to the church." Baliol's crimes, whatever they may have been, were duly reported to the English king, and he was condemned to do penance at the door of Durham Cathedral. Here he confessed his sin and was publicly scourged by the bishop of the diocese. By way of making still further amends for his wrongdoing, the humiliated nobleman undertook to provide for the perpetual maintenance of sixteen poor scholars in the University of Oxford, where they were finally established six years later.

Oxford was not a new foundation even at this time. The collegiate system had begun as early as the reign of Henry III., when his chancellor, Walter de Merton, obtained a charter to incorporate the "Scholars of Merton" into an independent society. In 1249 William of Durham, founder of University College, bequeathed a legacy of 310 marks for the support of a dozen poor Durham masters at Oxford. Between that date and the foundation of New College in 1386 by William of Wykeham, three other colleges, Exeter, Oriel, and Queen's, as well as Balliol, had sprung into existence.

John de Baliol died in 1269 without having made any provision for his beneficiaries, and the duty of maintaining these scholarships devolved upon his wife, who proved herself fully qualified to undertake the task. Dervorguilla had been educated in England at the home of her grandfather, and seems to have inherited none of the proverbial wildness of her Galloway ancestors. She passed the days of her widowhood in good works, and applied her vast wealth to various worthy objects, among the most deserving of which was the Oxford college which her husband had founded and which,

thirteen years after his death, she placed on a permanent financial footing. This she effected by the purchase of land in Stamfordham and Howgh, in Northumberland, which she assigned to the Balliol scholars, for whose accommodation she had first hired a house in Horsemonger Lane, and afterwards bought Mary's hall, Oxford. [*A.D. 1284.*]

Dervorguilla was not of those philanthropists who confine their beneficence to the mere providing of money, leaving others to work out the scheme of its expenditure. So facile a form of charity was not popular in her time, even had she felt drawn towards it. The practice of presenting a large cheque to a Royal Hospital Fund and then patiently awaiting the publication of the New Year's Honours' List had not as yet come into fashion. She took an intelligent interest in every undertaking which she supported, and for the benefit of the scholars who owed their education to her generosity drew up a statute embodying a number of rules by which the conduct of their daily lives was to be governed. In this she was ably advised and assisted by a Franciscan monk name Richard of Silkeburne, who seems to have acted as her public almoner.

By the terms of Dervorguilla's careful code, the scholars of Balliol were bound to attend divine service of Sundays and feast-days, and to celebrate three masses annually for the souls of their pious founders. They were also bidden to elect a principal, whose duty it was to preside over their gatherings and undertake the responsibility for their good behaviour. Eightpence a week was the allowance paid to each scholar, who was provided with two meals a day at the common table. If the cost of subsistence exceeded the aggregate of allowances, Dervorguilla particularly enjoined that the poorer scholars were on no account to suffer, but, in order to make up the deficit, each was to be assessed according to his means, and the "poor" were never to pay more than a penny a week. Furthermore, one "poor scholar" was always to be maintained upon the crumbs of the common table.

AN IMAGINARY PORTRAIT OF DERVORGUILLA
FROM ACKERMANN'S "HISTORY OF OXFORD," 1817

It was further laid down that all conversation should be carried on in the Latin tongue. Any scholar who did not obey this rule was, for a first offence, to be reproved by the principal. If he sinned three times in this respect, he was sentenced to have his meals alone at a separate table, where he was served last of all. An offender who, at the end of a week, still remained incorrigible or impenitent was expelled. Dervorguilla also commanded that a bi-weekly “disputation” should be regularly held under the presidency of the principal, and delegated to him the business of settling the subject under discussion and keeping order during the debate.

It may be supposed that many of Dervorguilla’s countrymen took advantage of her generosity

to become Balliol scholars, and by the end of the fourteenth century Oxford was much patronised by young Scotsmen anxious to increase their stock of learning. [*Oxford seems to have provided many attractions for youthful students. Aubrey, in his* Life of Dr. Kettle, *President of Trinity College, declares that several charming ladies, among whom was Lady Isabella Thynne, daughter of the Earl of Holland ("she lay at Balliol College"), were wont to come to chapel every morning "half dressed like angels."*] One of the most famous of these was Henry Wardlaw, afterwards Bishop of St. Andrews. But Scotsmen do not appear to have been as popular as they were prevalent at the University. Their presence was not altogether appreciated by their English fellow-scholars. Indeed, in 1382 Richard II. Was obliged to address a writ to the chancellor and proctors forbidding them to molest Scottish students, notwithstanding the latter's "damnable adherence to Popish heresies," [Scotland in the Middle Ages, *p.274.*] – for Scotland, like France, adhered to the Antipopes at Avignon, while England was still obedient to the Popes at Rome.

Of Dervorguilla's personality or appearance little is known. Even the question as to the proper spelling and pronunciation of her name is a doubtful one. Henry Savage, in a quaint and rather confused little treatise on the history of Balliol College, published in 1668, entitled *Balliofergus*, states that "the orthography is Dervorguille, which by a Gallicism usual in the English tongue, is pronounced Dervorgille, and the latter E at the end of the name, by another Gallicism of E feminine, is pronounced almost like A" – an observation which does little to enlighten the obscurity. The name still survives in Scotland in the Gaelic Diorbhail, and is not uncommon today.

The seal upon Dervorguilla's statute contains what is presumably a portrait of the founder. Walter Hearne, the historian, speaks of her as the "leading Oxford beauty of her day," while an equally reliable chronicler declares that the face upon the seal was that of another Oxford beauty, and apothecary's daughter, bearing the unromantic name of "Reeks."

But if little is known of Dervorguilla's life or looks, there is ample evidence to prove her wisdom, her strength of character, and her active benevolence. She constructed a much-needed bridge over the Nith at Dumfries, and Balliol College is not the only institution of which she was the founder. She built the Wigtown Priory for the Dominican monks, and the House of Grey Friars at Dumfries. At the latter place, too, she founded a convent, and another at Dundee, and in 1275 the monasteries of Holy Wood in Galloway and Lincluden Abbey, beneath the shadows of whose ruins Robert Burns is said to have composed several poems. [*Pococke's* Tours in Scotland *p.8. (Scottish Historical Society, 1887.)* She also built, in 1273, Dulce-Cor, (or Sweetheart) Abbey, afterwards known as New Abbey, in Kirkcudbright, eight miles from Dumfries, of which nothing now remains but a few ruins. Here her husband's heart, embalmed and encased in an ivory box bound with silver, was placed in the wall near the high altar. [*The chapel of the abbey, standing opposite the refectory, was used for divine service until 1731, when it fell into decay, was pulled down, and replaced by a new church.*]

It is said that Dervorguilla insisted upon carrying her husband's heart about with her for a long time in a casket, and that this gruesome relic was always placed on the table in front of her at every meal. Such an ornament would not appeal perhaps to the modern mind as a very suitable decoration for the breakfast-table; but tastes, like manners, were essentially primitive in the days of Dervorguilla. The habit of looking upon the heart as the seat of the affections, and consequently the most important part of the human body, came into vogue about the time of the first Crusade. [*Chambers's* Book of Days, *p.415.*] It was long a common custom for a person to bequeath his heart to a friend or to leave it to an abbey or church as a legacy of priceless value. Even when no such bequest was made, the relations of the deceased would often cause it to be embalmed, and preserved for all time as a family heirloom. Thus Robert Bruce's heart, after many wanderings, found a resting-place in Melrose Abbey. That of Isabella, the sister-in-law of Henry III. And daughter of William, Earl of Pembroke, after her burial at Beaulieu in 1239, was sent in a silver cup to be entombed before the high altar of Tewkesbury Abbey. In the same way the heart of Robert, Earl of Leicester, one of the early Crusaders, who died and was buried at Preaux in 1118, was by his own order preserved in salt and conveyed to the hospital which he himself had founded at Brackley. That on Montrose was extracted from the mutilated body, after his execution, by some adventurous spirits, at the request of Lady Napier, who enclosed the relic in a small steel case made from the blade of the dead patriot's sword. (This case was placed in a silver urn and stood on a table by Lady Napier's bedside, but she subsequently had the contents embalmed and sent in a rich gold box to Montrose's eldest son.) [Life

and Times of Montrose, *by Mark Napier, p.497.*] And the heart of Louis XIV. Was, it will be remembered, absent-mindedly swallowed by Dr. Buckland, to whom it was being shown by an ancestor of the Harcourts, and is presumably buried with the omnivorous Dean in Westminster Abbey.

Dervorguilla died at Castle Barnard on the Feast of St. Agnes in the year 1290. In the arts of peace she had long excelled, spending her time, her money, and her energies in the service of education, and exercising a wise discretion in the various philanthropic schemes of which she was the initiator. As Wyntoun says in his *Kronykil:* -

"This lady
Dyd all thir dedys devoutly.
A better lady than sche wes nane
In all the yle of Mare Bretane.
Sche wes rycht plesand off bewté,
Here wes gret taknys off bownté."

She was buried in the monastery of Cistercians which she had founded at Dulce Cor (or Duquer) in Galloway. By her will she bequeathed a legacy of "100 to the principal and scholars of Balliol College. Here prayers are still daily offered up for her soul and that of her husband by scholars of whom the majority know little or nothing of their founder's history, and only associate her name with that of the "Dervorgilla Club," whose members forgather for the purpose of enjoying refreshment which is not exclusively intellectual.

Chapter 2 - Some Scottish Amazons - "Black Agnes of Dunbar" (1313 - 1369)

Up to the commencement of the eighteenth century the domestic annals of Scotland strike one as being singularly squalid. Deeds of violence abound on every page. Human life is held to be of little value, and murder is a crime of such frequent occurrence as scarcely to call for comment or excite attention. The early Scottish chronicles comprise for the most part descriptions of the public torture of criminals, the commission of "agrarian" outrages (as we should call them nowadays), the forcible abduction of desirable heiresses, the "sequestration" of undesirable wives, and the worrying of witches. They are largely devoted to unedifying accounts of family feuds, of forays, of brawls between rival clans and rival factions. "For a long series of centuries," as Sir Walter Scott says, "the hands of rapine were never folded in inactivity, nor the sword of violence returned to its scabbard." [Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, *p. xlviii.*] And though he was referring particularly to the Border, the same words apply with equal truth to the rest of Scotland, and more especially to the Highlands.

The lust of blood was a vice common to both noble and peasant. It was not confined to the uncivilised or uneducated half of the population. In October of the year 1396, for instance, the King of Scotland and all his court assembled of the bank of the river Tay to witness a duel to the death between two bodies of Highlanders, each thirty in number. The combatants were armed with dirk and claymore, and so bloody was the fray that at the end only one man remained alive on the one side, and on the other only ten, all of whom were grievously wounded. Such an affair as this was probably the result of a clan feud, a form of hostility too often marked by a cruel and vindictive spirit expressing itself in deeds of the foulest treachery. Thus at the beginning of the seventeenth century we read of the Macleods driving the Macdonalds to the shelter of a cave in the Island of Eigg, and deliberately smoking them all to death. [*Sir Walter Scott visited the scene of this slaughter two hundred years later, and took away a woman's skull as a memento.*] Again, in the raid of the Clanranald against the Mackenzies of Kintail, as late as 1603, a whole congregation of the latter was burnt alive in the Church of Gilchrist, while the Macdonald pipers marched round the building drowning the cries of the unfortunate victims with inappropriate music. In this same year, too, the Clan Gregor decimated the Colquhouns of Luss in Glenfruin in the Lowlands – Tobias Smollet, the novelist's ancestor, being among the slain – in what was probably the last savage battle fought between the clans.

In early days the passions of Celtic feudalism could not be restrained from acts of bloodshed and devastation. They found a satisfactory outlet in this ceaseless battling of clan with clan. There was a perpetual feud between the Lindsays and the Ogilvies, between the Grants and the Gordons, between the Scotts and the Kers. The hatred of the Maclaurins of Balquhidder for the Lenies of Callander was only one degree less violent than that of the Maxwells for the Johnstones. The

Macleans were for ever quarrelling with the Campbells, the Campbells with the Macdonalds. The Macdonalds and the Macgregors combined against the Drummonds, and the Drummonds themselves were busy harrying the Murrays. [*Most people will agree with the sentiment expressed by Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, who, writing to a friend in 1805,* apropos *of Sir Walter Scott's* Border Minstrelsy, *says: "I like the Border stories, I own, better than the very Highland ones of Macleans and Macdonalds, which never go beyond their own hills; and I like the hills themselves better then the traditions of a Maclean kicking a Macdonald down one of them, or vice versa." (*Antiquarian Notes, *by C. Fraser-Mackintosh, p.266.)*]

In such squabbles as these, women – "generally the witnesses of men's imbecility," as Dr. Chalmers declares – took an active share. They were, indeed, in many instances the very cause and object of the strife. The system of "hand-fasting," which allowed two persons to contract a temporary connubial alliance, terminable at the end of a year, was another prolific source of bloodshed. [*A feud ensued between the clans of Macdonald of Sleat and Macleod of Dunvegan, because the chief of the former availed himself of this licence to send back the sister of the Macleod after the expiration of the probationary period.*]

The dames of bygone days did not spend their whole time at the distaff. They were not all the timid, retiring ladies of whom we are accustomed to read in romantic fiction. Some, indeed, like Lady Bridekirk, seem to have been almost too bold and masculine. This good lady was long famous in the Annandale border both at the bowl and in battle. She could drink a Scots pint of brandy with ease, and "when the men grew obstreperous in their cups, could either put them out of doors, or to bed, as she found most convenient." [Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle, *edited by J. H. Burton, p.24.*] Lady Brux provides a good example of the implacable, vindictive spirit common to the women of the sixteenth century. Her husband, Cameron of Brux, had agreed to meet one Muat of Abergeldie, with whom he was at feud, each being attended by twelve horse only. Muat treacherously took advantage of the literal meaning of the words, and provided each of his twelve horses with two riders. In the fight that ensued at Drumgaudrum, near the Don, Brux and his party were outnumbered and slain. His widow thereupon offered the hand of her daughter, now heiress of the Brux estates, to whomsoever should avenge her husband's death. A young gallant named Robert Forbes challenged Muat to single combat, and killed him. On presenting himself to Lady Brux, that bloodthirsty old lady clasped him to her bosom, declaring that the marriage should take place at once, while Muat's gore was yet reeking upon the bridegroom's knife. [Don: A Poem, *p.16. (London, 1655.)*]

Lady Johnstone is another instance of a similar type of Scottish Amazon. The Johnstones and the Maxwells were fighting outside the gates of Lockerby Castle, where Lady Johnstone anxiously awaited the result of the struggle. Becoming impatient to receive news of her husband's safety, she sallied forth to the scene of the fight, armed only with the keys of the fortress. Among the dead and wounded on the field of battle she found Lord Maxwell, chief of the rival clan, slowly bleeding to death. The old man begged for mercy, but in vain, Lady Johnstone's only reply being to raise her heavy bunch of keys and dash out his brains. Again, during a feud between the clans of Gordon and the MacIntosh, the chief of the latter, finding that he was getting distinctly the worst of the argument, decided to submit himself to the goodwill of Lord Huntly, chief of the Gordons. While the marquis was away from home, the MacIntosh took the opportunity of surrendering himself to the tender mercies of Lady Huntly. As a sign of complete submission, he laid his head on a butcher's block which chanced to be in the kitchen where the interview took place. His hopes that such a token of humiliation would melt her heart were not fulfilled, for the marchioness calmly gave an order to the cook, and the wretched MacIntosh was neatly decapitated on the spot.

When from time to time Scotsmen agreed to sink their private differences in order to unite against their own kings or a common Southron foe, women continued to play a prominent part in the proceedings. It was the murder of his wife by the English at Lanark that increased the fury of William Wallace, and made him vow never to rest until he had slain the man who was guilty of this deed. And an old historical legend long attributed the murder of the Regent Murray to Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, who, sentenced to forfeit his property as a traitor to James VI., saw his wife turned out of the house in an almost naked condition – an outrage which drove her insane – and found a speedy means of avenging the tyrant's brutality.

The Scot, like Robert Browning, was "ever a fighter." He could always agree with that old Earl

of Buchan who declared, in his letter to Pitt, that “if the privileges of Scotland are endeavoured to be violated, I shall know how to make my porridge in my helmet, and stir it with my sword!” And his womankind naturally inherited much of that admirable patriotic spirit. It was not required of every one of them to emulate the achievements of that unknown Amazon who, in the disguise of a knight, accompanied Guy, Count of Namur, when he marched upon Edinburgh to fight the Earls of Moray and March on the Borough-muir, in the early part of the fourteenth century, and engaged with a Scottish squire in single combat which proved fatal to both. But the women of that age were reared in an atmosphere of stress and turmoil; the familiar din of battle and the clash of arms to which their ears were ever accustomed helped to strengthen their characters, and rendered them fit mates for warrior chieftains.

Women were often to be seen upon the battlefields of those days. King Edward I. of England used, it is said, to summon the ladies, as well as the earls and barons of his kingdom, to attend him in war. In the year 1291 he called upon the ladies of Cumberland and Westmoreland to meet him at Noreham, a village near the Scottish border, provided with horses and accoutred with arms, “the consequences of which summons,” says a chronicler, “it is believed Scotland will never forget.” [An Inquiry into the Origin and Limitations of the Feudal Dignities of Scotland, *by William Borthwick. (Edinburgh, 1775.)*] And the list of ladies of Scotland who at that time swore allegiance to the English king, of which the original is preserved at the Tower of London, contains over a score of well-known Scottish names.

The women of that violent period of history were, indeed, imbued with the universal spirit of martial ardour which then pervaded Scotland, and have handed it down as an heirloom to their descendants. [*Near the border, betwixt the parishes of Maxton and Ancrum, there is a ridge of hill called Lilliard Edge. Here, in 1547, a battle was fought between English and Scots, wherein the latter obtained a victory, though inferior in number. The success was ascribed to a young woman named Lilliard, who fought with great courage on the Scottish side. Some remains of a tombstone erected upon her grave on the field of battle can still be seen, with this inscription:-*

“Fair maiden Lilliard lies under this stane,
Little was her stature, but great was her fame;
On the English lads she laid many thumps,
And when her legs were off, she fought upon her stumps.”

(See Life in Scotland 100 Years Ago, *by J. Murray, p.268. Cf.* The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase, *fytte ii. st.30)*]

Even as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, we find an example of a woman taking a personal part in actual warfare. During the rebellion of ’45, the MacIntosh of MacIntosh, laird and chief of the clan, remained loyal to the reigning sovereign, and held a commission in Lord Loudon’s army. But his wife, Anne, a daughter of Farquharson of Invercauld, was one of the Pretender’s most active partisans, even going so far as to raise a small body of troops to uphold his cause. “Colonel Anne,” as she was nicknamed, led this corps in person, and a story is told of the MacIntosh being captured by the insurgents and brought as a prisoner to his wife’s headquarters. “Your servant, captain,” said the fair lady, as the captive was led into her presence. “Your servant, colonel,” was the laird’s laconic reply. [History of the Rebellion of ’45, *by R. Chambers*] Charles Edward remarked at the time that the prisoner “could not be in better security of more honourably treated,” and subsequently favoured the gallant “Colonel Anne” with a visit to Moy.

Many a zealous adherent did the Young Pretender find among the ranks of women. The Duke of Perth would never have espoused Prince Charles’s cause so warmly but for his mother, the duchess, who proclaimed the Chevalier from the battlements of Castle Drummond and recruited a regiment on his behalf. She herself accompanied the Scottish army to England, and at Carlisle, when the expected reinforcements failed to put in an appearance, threatened to lead the troops in person against the enemy. She was finally taken prisoner at Culloden, a fate which she shared with another Scottish woman – the short-tempered but courageous Lady Ogilvy.

Since that day more that one Scotswoman has turned amateur recruiting sergeant. The regiment of Gordon Highlanders was raised by a woman, Jane, Duchess of Gordon. Another

duchess, Elizabeth, Duchess-Countess of Sutherland, when a girl of twelve years old, raised a Sutherland regiment, at the time of the American Declaration of Independence, declaring that she was only sorry she could not herself command it. This brave child subsequently reviewed her troops, one thousand strong, from the windows of her aunt's house in Edinburgh, and later, in 1793, when she had reached womanhood, exerted herself to raise another corps of "Fencibles" which was eventually embodied in the famous "93rd" Regiment. In our own time the successful enlistment of a body of Scottish Horse, which did splendid work in South Africa during the war, was largely due to the exertions and influence of a woman.

Of such women as these it may truly be said that they inherited something of that spirit of courage and patriotism which more than four centuries ago inspired two successive Countesses of March in their celebrated defence of the castle of Dunbar.

The history of the castle is a romantic and interesting one. The antiquity of the fortress is unknown, but must be considerable, for we hear of its being burnt and levelled to the ground by Kenneth, King of Scotland, as long ago as the year 856 A.D. Two hundred years later, when the stronghold had been rebuilt and fortified by all the artificial means then known, it was given by another Scottish king, Malcolm Canmore, to Patrick, Earl of Northumberland, who fled thither from England after the Conquest.

Built on a cluster of high rocks, round which the sea beat fiercely at high water, Dunbar Castle was, by reason of its natural situation, practically impregnable. It came consequently to be regarded as the key to the eastern portion of Scotland, and played an important part in the martial history of that country. In 1296, during the wars of Bruce and Baliol, when Edward I. occupied the throne of England, the governor of the fortress, Patrick, 8th Earl of Dunbar and March, seceded to the English side and fought in the army of King Edward. But his wife, Margery Comyn, who hell the castle in the absence of her lord, regarded the English with feeling of deadly hatred, and entered into secret negotiations with the Scottish leaders to deliver her charge into their hands. Margery was forced to choose between disloyalty to her country and the betrayal of her husband, and readily chose the latter. The Scottish besiegers, assisted as they were by the chatelaine of the castle, found little difficulty in capturing it, and expelling the few defenders who still remained true to England. Hearing of the treacherous surrender of Dunbar, Edward I. at once despatched the Earl of Surrey with a force of 10,000 foot and 1,000 horse to recover the fortress. But the Scottish garrison were not easily to be daunted into submission, and for some time succeeded in repelling the English attack. Margery Comyn and her Scottish men-at-arms meanwhile stood on the battlements and hurled insults at the Earl of Surrey's soldiers. "Come on, ye long-tailed hounds!" they shouted, "and we will cut off your tails for you!" In spite, however, of these suggestive taunts, the English force persevered in the siege, and was eventually rewarded by the capitulation of the fortress and the unconditional surrender of its garrison.

Patrick, 10th Earl of Dunbar and March, has been described by one historian [*John Major*] as "at that time the most outstanding man among the Scots," and by another as a noble who stood "almost alone" in the position of a man "whom no promises could entice, nor any dangers force to submit to the English." [*Buchanan's* History of Scotland, *p.483*] Yet he seems to have had some difficulty in fixing his allegiance permanently to the cause of any particular monarch. His sympathies were at first entirely on the side of the English, and he allowed Edward II. to take refuge at Dunbar after the battle of Bannockburn, and thence to escape to Berwick by sea. Later on, however, he tendered his allegiance to Robert Bruce, fought in command of the Scottish troops, and was appointed governor of Berwick Castle. But in 1333, after the battle of Halidon Hill, he surrendered once more to the English, and became a loyal subject of Edward III., a temporary allegiance which he renounced in the following year, when he was once more to be found fighting on the side of the Regent of Scotland.

In the earl's absence on the field of battle, the castle of Dunbar was left in the charge of his second countess. [*The practice of leaving a woman in sole charge of the fortress was then habitual. On one occasion at least it resulted in an amusing incident which shows how deserving were the women of those days of their husbands' confidence. In July 1474, James II. informed Lord Somerville, who was then at court, that he proposed paying his lordship a visit at his country seat. Lord Somerville at once sent a messenger home with a letter to his wife in which, according to his*

invariable custom whenever he was bringing guests to stay, he wrote a postscript consisting of the two words, "Speates and Raxes" (spits and ranges), thereby suggesting that the kitchen muniments should be prepared. Lady Somerville was unable to read, but her steward, a new man, who was unacquainted with his master's handwriting, deciphered the words as "Spears and Jacks." From this Lady Somerville concluded that trouble was brewing, at once set out to collect and arm all the tenantry, and by 8A.M. next morning a body of 200 of her men were well on the road to Edinburgh. This force was met by King James and his retinue on their way out. For a moment the King suspected treachery, fearing a plot to seize his person, but when the meaning of the cavalcade was explained to him, he was much delighted, and commended Lady Somerville for her diligence and activity in having raised a force so quickly. (See Memories of the Somervilles, *vol i. p.241)*]

"Black Agnes," so called from the darkness of her complexion, was a daughter of the famous Randolph, Earl of Moray, and the alleged grand-niece of Robert Bruce, and in her capable hands the fortress was safe against the attacks of the most persistent foes. A powerful English force, under the command of Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, proceeded to besiege it, and for five long months sought in vain to accomplish its capture. A cordon of troops was drawn up around the fortress, closing in upon it from day to day, while two Genoese galleys were ordered to manoeuvre in concert with the land force, and watch that side of the stronghold which overlooked the sea. But the problem of its capture was not so easy as Montagu had perhaps imagined. The defender of Dunbar – though only a young woman of twenty-five – was a foe worthy of his steel, resolute and fearless, if (as an early bard would have us believe) she was not altogether without pity.

[*"In her fair hands she grasp'd a spear,*
A baldrick o'er her shoulders flung;
While loud the bugle-note of war
And Dunbar's cavern'd echoes rung.

Then to the Castle yard she sped,
Where her worn troops in order stood;
'Spare all you can, my friends,' she said,
'Nor idly dip your dirks in blood.'"

----Black Agnes, or The Defence of Dunbar (1804)]

The castle of Dunbar was boldly situated on two rocks which projected far into the ocean, and were connected by a natural reef of stone consisting of two archways, through one of which, serving as a port to the water-gate, the Bass Rock might be seen in the dim distance. It was the Earl of Salisbury's intention to prevent any friendly force from coming to the rescue of the beleaguered garrison, and thus he hoped in time to reduce the defenders to starvation. He had to reckon, however, with the courage and determination of a particularly determined and courageous guardian of the fortress. "Black Agnes" was a born leader of men, valiant and full of resource. "She performed all the duties of a bold and vigilant commander," says an enthusiastic of chronicler; "animating the garrison by her exhortation, munificence, and example," [The Antiquities of Scotland, *by Francis Grose. (1797.)*] and extorted even the praise of her enemies by her warlike bearing. In the words of one of the English minstrels of the time:-

"She kept a stir in tower and trench,
That brawling, boisterous Scottish wench;
Came I early, came I late,
I found Agnes at the gate."

Day after day she exposed herself fearlessly upon the battlements, deriding (like her predecessor Margery Comyn) the futile onslaughts of the English invaders, and rousing them to the fever pitch of fury by the fierce and ceaseless witticisms in which she indulged at their expense. When the huge stones from the besiegers' catapults struck upon the castle walls, "Black Agnes" would scornfully send one of her women to wipe off the dust with a white napkin – a particularly felicitous manner of displaying her indifference to their attacks.

Salisbury at last brought up a huge military engine called the “Sow,” which had been used with great success at other sieges, and which he now hastened to erect against the walls of this stubborn fortress. This machine resembled the Roman *Testudo,* and consisted of a vast wooden shield, under cover of which the besieging force was intended to advance and undermine the foundations of the castle. The arrival of this contrivance inspired Black Agnes to burst into verse for probably the first and (let us hope) the last time. Stepping forward onto an overhanging parapet, she shouted out the following couplet – in which, claiming the licence of the true poet, she sacrificed the correct pronunciation of her adversary’s name to the exigencies of rhyme –

“Beware, Montagow” (she cried),
“For farrow shall thy sow!”

As she uttered this masterpiece, “Black Agnes” gave a preconcerted signal, and the defenders paused in the admiration of their leader’s poetic gifts sufficiently long to allow them to drop an enormous rock on to the top of the “Sow,” crushing it to pieces, and killing a number of the unfortunate soldiers who were sheltering beneath it. As the bruised and wounded Englishmen fled from the wreck of their machine, “Black Agnes” added insult to injury by jeering loudly at them, declaring that her metrical prophecy had been fulfilled, and that they reminded her of nothing in the world so much as a new-born litter of pigs.

Finding that force was unavailing, the Earl of Salisbury determined to try other means to secure the downfall of the castle. He sent to England for the Earl of Moray, “Black Agnes’s” brother, who was a prisoner there, and, displaying him to the defenders of Dunbar, declared that he would kill him before their eyes unless they surrendered immediately. The countess was not to be moved by such a threat. She retorted that the castle was not her property but that of her husband, and that she could not, therefore, deliver it without his authority, however much she might desire to do so. “If you slay my brother,” she added coldly, “I shall be the heiress of the earldom of Moray!” Salisbury was humane enough to appreciate the truth of her argument, and refrained from putting his prisoner to death. Moray was sent back to England, and survived to fight at the battle of Durham, where he was killed in 1346.

The scheme of terrorising the defenders having failed ignominiously, Salisbury now had recourse to guile. He bribed the warden of one of the castle gates to admit a portion of the English into the fortress at nightfall. This the man readily consented to do, but wisely omitted to inform the earl that he had every intention of betraying this typically southron scheme to his Scottish mistress. When, therefore, the scene was wrapped in darkness, a body of the besiegers crept stealthily up to the gate and gave the signal which was to secure their admittance. The portcullis was silently raised and the English made their way quietly into the fortress. Suddenly the defenders, who had been watching events from a hiding-place on the battlements, gave a loud shout, the portcullis was once more dropped into position, and the invaders found themselves caught in a trap. The Earl of Salisbury happened to step back just as the gate was lowered and so managed to get away, the defenders having mistaken one of his men-at-arms, Copeland by name, for the commander, and let down the portcullis a moment too soon. As he made good his escape, “Black Agnes” called after him, begging him earnestly to come back and sarcastically expressing her regret that his lordship could not stay to give her the pleasure of his company at supper. She had a strong sense of humour, a quality which Salisbury no doubt appreciated, as he was not himself wholly deficient in it. One morning, when he was riding near the wall in company with a knight in full armour, a Scottish archer, named William Spens, shot an arrow from the battlements and stretched the knight dead at his feet. “That is one of my lady’s tiring-pins,” said the earl, with a smile, as he withdrew the arrow from the corpse of his companion. “Black Agnes’s love-shafts pierce to the heart!”

For five weary months the siege continued, until at length the garrison was reduced to extremities. The supply of food began to run short, and things looked bad for the gallant defenders of Dunbar. But the celebrated Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalwolsey [*Sheriff of Teviotdale. He ended an adventurous career in Hermitage Castle, where he was confined by his enemy, William Douglas, Lord of Galloway, and died of starvation in 1342.*] heard of the straits in which the castle was placed and made up his mind to attempt its relief. Ramsay had collected a small band of Scottish swashbucklers, and was lurking in the caves of Hawthornden, whence he issued now and then to harry or cut off detached parties of the English. Being a chivalrous man as well as a brave one, he lost no time in

arranging plans for the relief of “beauty in distress,” as exemplified by the chatelaine of Dunbar. Secure within the caverns of Hawthornden, he concocted an elaborate scheme for turning the tables upon the hated English and rescuing the hard-pressed countess and her little band of men-at-arms.

Hawthornden was a perfect hiding-place for such a man as Alexander Ramsay. It is famous in Scottish history as the refuge of many early patriots. It is still more famous perhaps as being the residence of the poet and historian, Drummond. Hither in the year 1618 Ben Jonson walked all the way from London on purpose to visit his Scottish friend, an occasion on which their greetings took the form of an impromptu couplet:-

D. – “Welcome, welcome, Royal Ben!”

J. - “Thank ye, thank ye, Hawthornden!”

Which has acquired (though it scarcely seems to have deserved) immortality. The house itself was the scene of many a memorable conflict in the past. On the gable of the old mansion was a tablet with the inscription: “To the memory of Sir Lawrence Abernethy of Hawthornden, a brave and gallant soldier, who, at the head of a party, in 1338, conquered Lord Douglas five times in one day, yet was taken prisoner before sunset.” [*Fordun, book xii. Chap. 44.*] The caverns, known as “Bruce’s bedchamber” and “Bruce’s Library,” which were close to the house, have been considered by archaeologists to date their origin to very early times, when they were perhaps the stronghold of the old Pictish kings. It was from these caves that Sir Alexander Ramsay and his forty resolute followers emerged to the rescue of “Black Agnes.” Contriving by some means or other to get into communication with the defenders of the fortress, one dark and stormy night, at the head of his gallant little force, Ramsay eluded the vigilance of the Genoese galleys, approached the castle from the sea, and was gratefully admitted at the Water Gate by “Black Agnes” herself.

[*“O’erjoyed, the Countess scarce could speak,*
But straight her beaver up she flung,
Survey’d and wip’d his sea-beat cheek,
And on his neck her broadsword hung.”

--Black Agnes.]

Next morning, before the besiegers had time to realise the addition that had thus been made to the garrison, the latter sallied forth under Ramsay’s command and inflicted a serious defeat upon the Earl of Salisbury’s troops, on the same ground where, three hundred years later, Cromwell defeated the Scottish Covenanters. The English now acknowledged themselves foiled by a woman’s wit, determined to abandon the siege, and made a truce favourable to the defenders.

There are numerous other instances in Scottish history of women who have defended hearth and home at the point of the sword. In 1336 king Edward III. made a successful expedition to relieve the beleaguered Countess of Athole and her garrison in the castle of Lochindorb. Sixty years later the castle of Fyvie in Aberdeenshire was held by Margaret Keith, wife of Sir James Lindsay and daughter of Sir William Keith, Great Marischal of Scotland, against the attacks of her nephew, Robert de Keith, who was the centre of a family quarrel. [*Anderson’s* Scottish Nation.] And in the Privy Council Records at the General Register House at Edinburgh there is an account of how “Dame Isobel Hepburn, Lady Bass,” and her son, George Lauder, defied their creditors from the safe shelter of an impregnable tower on the Bass Rock, where they long remained, bankrupt but undaunted, “presuming to keep and maintain themselves, so as to elude justice and execution of the law.”

Of “Black Agnes” we hear little more. Her husband changed his mind once again, in 1363, when he rebelled against King David. He was speedily suppressed, however, and five years later resigned his earldom. Some say that he and his countess had no children; others that their daughter Agnes became mistress to David Bruce and was perhaps the cause of that monarch’s divorce of Margaret Logie. Patrick died about 1639 at the age of eighty-four, and his death was shortly followed by that of his wife.

The castle of Dunbar is now nothing but a ruin on the seashore. If the old stones could speak, what strange stories they would have to tell of “far-off things and battles long ago.” A thousand romantic memories cling to the fallen battlements. It was at Dunbar that the luckless Mary sought refuge after Rizzio’s death, and from the gates of this castle she set forth to the disastrous Carberry Hill where she surrendered. But there is nothing more stirring of remarkable in the annals of its history than that lengthy defence maintained by the gallant body of Scotsmen who owed their success and safety to the intrepid leadership of “Black Agnes” of Dunbar.

Chapter 3 - Jane, Countess of Sutherland (1545 - 1629)

In the month of April of the year 1567, the fortress of Dunbar was again the scene of an event memorable in Scottish history. James, 4th Earl of Bothwell, was at that time Keeper of the castle, a post to which he had been appointed by Queen Mary soon after the murder of Rizzio. It is not necessary to do more than recapitulate as briefly as possible the well-known chain of circumstances which led to the marriage of the Queen and her favourite.

On April 19th, the famous bond had been signed in an Edinburgh tavern by a number of Bothwell’s friends, wherein special stress was laid upon the earl’s innocence of Darnley’s death, and the subscribers stoutly pledged themselves to further his matrimonial ambitions with regard to the Queen. Scarcely a week later, as Mary was returning to Edinburgh from Stirling, after a visit to her son, she was met by Bothwell and an armed force, and borne away captive to Dunbar. Whether she submitted willingly to such an outrage is a matter of doubt. Sir James Melville, who, together with Lethington and Huntly, was also taken to Dunbar on this occasion, declares that the abduction met with Mary’s full approval. “Captain Blakester that was my taker,” he says, “allegit that it was with the Quenis owen consent” [Memoirs of His Own Life, *by Sir James Melville of Halhill. (Edinburgh, Bannatyne Club, 1827).*] – which is more than probable. As they entered the town, Bothwell dismounted, and, commanding his followers to throw away their weapons – so as to secure himself against a possible future charge of treason – led the Queen’s horse into the castle by the bridle.

His project to gain the heart and hand of his sovereign, however ambitious it may have seemed, was admirably planned, and executed under the most favourable conditions possible. Mary was notoriously impressionable. She was still young and very large-hearted. Her love had been lavished upon an unworthy object who requited her affection with gross ingratitude, and met her advances with neglect and violence. Bothwell, whatever else he may have been, was essentially a strong man. By securing the custody of the Queen’s person he held the key of the position, and nothing was left to Mary but to submit as gracefully as possible to a course for which she probably felt little disinclination. She afterwards complained feelingly and very justly that while she remained under Bothwell’s thraldom in the castle of Dunbar, not a sword was drawn for her relief; but that after her marriage with him – the direct result of this apathy on the part of her friends – a thousand swords were drawn to drive him from the country and to dethrone her. [Life of Mary Queen of Scots, *by George Chalmers, p.217. (London 1818.)*]

It was during the five days following this dramatic abduction – days spent by Mary at the castle of Dunbar – that she consented to marry her captor. There was, however, a slight obstacle in the way of the proposed union between the Queen and Bothwell. This lay in the fact that the latter was already married to Lady Jane Gordon, daughter of George, 4th Earl of Huntly.

In the year 1565-66, when this previous marriage took place, Lady Jane was only a girl of twenty, endowed with more than average intelligence, and of a grave and peaceful disposition. She was also a devout Roman Catholic. Anyone less suited to be the wife of so turbulent, ill-favoured, evil-minded a man as James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell – who was moreover a bigoted Protestant – it would be difficult to imagine. But it was an age when the wishes of a daughter were not as a rule consulted upon such a minor matter as her own marriage, and the match was in all probability arranged by Lady Jane’s family without much reference to the feelings of the prospective bride.

This was not the first occasion upon which the houses of Gordon and Hepburn had been allied. Patrick, 1st Earl of Bothwell, had married Margaret, daughter of George, 2nd Earl of Huntly, as far back as 1491. One of the consequences of this previous connection was to constitute a blood-relationship between Bothwell and Lady Jane, which rendered it necessary under the canon law to obtain a dispensation before they could be united. This dispensation was duly granted by the

Archbishop of St. Andrews on February 17, 1566, and, a week later, the marriage was celebrated in the Church of the Canongate, Edinburgh, with all the customary ceremonial and rejoicings. [*"Vpoun the 22 day of Februar, the earle of Bothwell was married vpoun the earle of Huntlie's sister. The king and queine maid the banqueitt the first day, quhilk continewed five dayes with justing and tournamentis, and thair was maid six knyghtis of Fyfe at that tyme."*- The Chronicles of Scotland, *by Robert Lindsay of Pitscottis, p.570. (Edinburgh, 1814.)*] The Queen gave a material expression of her approval of this match by presenting the bride with a wedding dress of cloth of silver: "Plus xij aulnes de toylle dargent plainne pour faire vne robbe a la fille de Madamme de Hontelles pour le jour quell fut marriee a Monsieur de Bodouel," is the entry in her inventory. [Inventaires de la Royne Descosse Douairiere de France. *(Bannatyne Club, 1863).*

Of Lady Jane's married life with Bothwell there is no record. That the union was a happy one is unlikely, as can be gathered from the fact that, two years later, when her husband had made up his mind to win a royal bride, she showed no unwillingness to conspire in the dissolution of her own marriage. In order to accomplish this, it was of course necessary for one or both of the parties concerned to obtain a divorce – a comparatively easy matter in days when marriage ties were not regarded as particularly indissoluble. "Ilz on tune coustume estrange en Angleterre, mais plus prattiquée en Écosse," says a French historian, "de pouvoir se repudier l'un l'aultre quant ilz ne se trouvent bien ensamble." [Papiers d'État relatif à l'Histoire de l'Écosse *(Teulet, ii. 157).*] For Roman Catholics, however, the affair was not quite so simple. By the Acts of 1560 the papal supremacy had been abolished; the Romish hierarchy had consequently no power in such matters. But a court of four commissaries was appointed by royal authority in 1563, and before this tribunal Lady Jane was induced to sue for a divorce on the grounds of her husband's misconduct with one of her servants, Bessie Crawford by name. [*Bishop Leslie, in his* Narrative of the Progress of Events in Scotland, *1562-1571, declares that Bothwell presented his wife with a cup of poisoned wine, commanding her either to drink it or else to sign a paper approving the divorce. It is, however, unlikely that Lady Jane would require such intimidation to induce her to regain her liberty.*] But, though a divorce was easy enough to obtain, this was not sufficient for Bothwell's purpose. According to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, persons separated for such an offence as his were not permitted to remarry. It was therefore necessary for Bothwell, not only to be divorced, but also to obtain an annulment of his former marriage before he could hope to make the Queen his wife. Luckily for the two lovers, Mary had restored the Consistorial authority, with the Archbishop of St. Andrews at its head, and in his court Bothwell instituted a suit praying that his marriage with Lady Jane might be annulled on the ground of consanguinity.

The history of Bothwell's divorce shows it to have been effected with the least possible delay. On Sunday, April 27, the archbishop issued a commission; on the following Saturday this was presented to the judges; on the Monday the evidence was heard by the only judge who put in an appearance; and two days afterwards the marriage was annulled. [*In his* History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James VI. *(Appendix, vol. iii. p.326), Dr. Robertson quotes the following account of these proceedings from a manuscript in the possession of "Mr. David Falconer, advocate":-*

"Upoun the 29 of Apryle 1567, before the rich thon. Mr. Robert Maitland dean of Aberdene, Mr. Edward Henryson doctor in the laws, two of the senators of the college of justice, Mr. Clement Little, and Mr. Alexander Syme advocattis, commissars of Ednr.; compeered Mr Henry Kinrosse, procurator for Jean Gourdoune countes of Bothwell, constitute be her, for pursewing of ane proces of divorcement intendit by her contra James erle Bothwel her husband for adultry, committed be him with Bessie Crawfurde the pursuers servant for the time…

"At the same time there was another proces intendit be the erl of Bothwell contr his lady, for to have their marriage declared nul, as being contracted against the canons, without a dispensation, and he and his lady being within degrees defendand, viz. ferdis a kin, and that wife for expeding this process, there was a commissione grantit to the archbishop of St. Androis to cognosee and determine it…

"Conform whereunto, on Wednasday the 7th of May, the said judge [John Manderston] gave out his sentence in favour of the erle, declaring the marriage to be, and to have been null from the beginning, in respect of their contingence of blood, which hindered their lawful marriage without a

dispensation obtained of befoir."]

It is curious that the Archbishop of St. Andrews should have been so ready to dissolve the very alliance for which he had granted a dispensation but two years before. It is still more curious that at the time of the divorce no mention should have been made of this dispensation, though there must have been a number of people aware of its existence. Had Lady Jane, in whose possession this vital piece of evidence remained, produced it before the archbishop's court, the proceedings for annulling her marriage would have fallen to the ground. But either from motives of loyalty to the queen, or because she was as anxious to escape from her husband as he was to get rid of her, she maintained a discreet silence on the subject, and allowed a declaration of nullity of marriage to be pronounced without a word of protest of explanation. [*The vernacular version of Buchanan states that "all this while they kept close the Pope's bull, by whilk the same offence was dispensed with." For many years it was thought that this important document must have been destroyed. That such was not the case was proved by Dr. john Stuart, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, who unearthed the dispensation from among the Sutherland family papers at Dunrobin about the year 1870. (See* A Lost Chapter in the History of Mary Queen of Scots Recovered.)]

Within a week of this affair Bothwell and Mary were married at Holyrood, much to the annoyance of the General Assembly, who showed their displeasure by unanimously depriving for a time the Bishop of Orkney, who officiated at the ceremony. [*Anderson's* Collection on History of Queen Mary, vol. ii. p.283.]

Buchanan [*Book xviii. Chapter 30.*] declares that when Bothwell married the Queen he already had three other wives living. Of these the first was Lady Jane Gordon; the second, Dame Anna Rostung, a wealthy Norwegian, who subsequently claimed him as her husband when he was carried captive to Bergen; and the third, Janet Beton, widow of Sir Walter Scott of Branksome, and heroine of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* [*The name of Dame Janet Beton, Lady Buccleugh, had already been associated at an earlier date with that of Bothwell. In 1559 exception was taken to the earl as Sheriff-Principal of Edinburghshire because he had been "quietly marreit or handfast" to Jane Beton, and the Session upheld this objection and substituted another official in his place. (See the* Inquiry into the Law and Practice of Scottish Peerages before and after the Union, *by John Riddell, 1842,vol. i. p.427.) Again, six days after Darnley's assassination, a placard was affixed to the door of the Tolbooth accusing Bothwell and Lady Buccleugh of causing Mary, "by persuasion and witchcraft," to assent to the crime of her husband's murder. And Bothwell's mistress is elsewhere charged with administering love philtres to the queen with the intention of riveting her affections the more closely to him.*]

How many wives Bothwell actually possessed is a matter which cannot easily be determined. Marriage, like divorce, was a simple enough affair in the Scotland of those days and even later, for the habit of "handfasting" obtained till comparatively recent times. [*Even a century ago the blessed state of matrimony does not seem to have been treated with the seriousness that it deserves. In the* Journal *of Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford (preserved among the family papers at Welbeck Abbey), the diarist describes how he met, in 1725, not far from Haddington, the procession of a Scotch wedding coming along the road. The bridegroom went first, and then came the bride, led by two men and accompanied by a train of women. Before the man went a "curious concert of music," consisting of a bagpipe and a fiddle; but before the woman was a single solemn bagpipe. The only ceremony performed on this occasion was the breaking of a cake over the bride's head as she entered her husband's house. In the* Narrative of the Last Sickness and Death of Dame Forbes *(p.29 n.), we read of an old widow lady who, wishing to marry her gardener, casually announced the fact to her maids by bidding them "mak doon the bed for Saunders and me!" (It is amusing to note that when her plebeian husband, to whom she had conveyed all her property, lay on his deathbed, she suddenly bethought her of her son by a former marriage, and stood over the dying gardener with a deed in her hand, saying: "Sign! Sign ower to the lad! Ye ken it's his ain!" "Ay, ay," replied the canny Saunders, turning over with his face to the wall, "I'll sign when I wauken." "But he waukent in Hell," adds the narrator of this story without further comment.)*]

Being mercifully released from the clutches of so eminently undesirable a husband, Lady Jane went, after a time, to live at Strathbogie on the river Deveron, the Aberdeenshire residence of her brother, Lord Huntly. She still continued in possession of her conjugal rights of property, in

accordance with the terms of her marriage settlement, and her relations with Bothwell seem to have been of an amicable nature. Of the state of her late husband's feelings towards her, it is not easy to judge. It has been suggested, however, that he regarded her with sufficient affection to render the Queen extremely jealous and add considerably to her Majesty's other troubles. [*"He was so beastly that he suffered her (Mary) not to pass a day without shedding tears." – Melville's* Memoirs, *p.153.*] After Carberry Hill, Secretary Maitland fanned the spark of this jealousy into flame by telling Mary that Bothwell and Lady Jane were still corresponding, and that the letters of the former contained disparaging allusions to her Majesty. In one of the much-disputed "Casket Letters" [Love Letters of Mary Queen of Scots to James, Earl of Bothwell, *ed. By Hugh Campbell, p.45 (1827)*] Mary is alleged to have written imploring Bothwell not to see Lady Jane, "whose faint tears should not be so much praised nor esteemed, as the true and faithful travels which I sustain for to merit her place." Du Croc, the French Ambassador, wrote to Catherine de Médicis, in June 1567, on the subject of Bothwell's constancy: "Mais nous ne doubtons point en ce royaulme qu'il n'aime mieux sa première femme que la Royne." [Papiers d'Etat relatifs à l'Histoire de l'Ecosse, *vol. ii. p170*] And in a sonnet which the Queen is supposed to have addressed to Bothwell she refers jealously to his former countess, and even accuses them of carrying on a guilty correspondence.

[*"Brief je ferray de ma foy telle prevue*
Qu'il cognoistra, sans fainte, ma constance.
Non par mes pleurs, ou fainte obeyssance,
Comme autres on fait, mais par divers espreuve.
Elle pour son honneur vous doibt obeyssance,
Moy, vous obeyssant j'en puis recevoir blasme,
N'estant, à mon regret, comme elle votre femme.

. . . . . .

Et toutes fois ses paroles fardez
…Ont tant gaigné qui par vous sont gardez,
Ses letters escriptes ausquels vous donnez foi,
Et si l'aymez, et croyez plus que moi."

A Sonnet supposed to have been written by Mary Queen of Scots to the Earl of Bothwell. (1790)]

One cannot help feeling that Mary's fears on this score were groundless. Lady Jane had been only too ready to accelerate Bothwell's departure from her side, and it seems improbable that she would entertain any idea of a serious love affair with her divorced husband. Her modest and virtuous disposition does not suggest the possibility of such a theory, and she was certainly far too serious-minded to be accused of any inclination to flirt. Indeed, while Mary and Bothwell were quarrelling, Lady Jane was living peacefully and contentedly at Strathbogie, far from the stress and tumult of court life. If Bothwell had ever occupied a place in her heart, the vacant corner was shortly destined to be filled by a worthier man.

Alexander, 13th Earl of Sutherland, a lad of seventeen, and ward of the cruel Earl of Caithness, having been driven from his own country by his unscrupulous guardian, had taken refuge beneath Lord Huntly's hospitable roof. Here he remained for three years, until, upon his coming of age, he was able to regain his hereditary rights and possessions. Sir Robert Gordon, his son, in the family history which he wrote in the year 1630, [*Sir Robert Gordon's* History of Sutherland *dates 1630, but was continued to 1651 by Gilbert Gordon of Sallagh.*] has described the virtues of the earl in glowing terms. Alexander was, we read, "ane honorable and hyemynded man, one that loved much to be weill followed, verie liberall…. A most assured performer of his word, when he had once ingadged himselff, which he hath left as ane hereditary qualitie to his children. He was verie constant and resolute in the prosecution of his purposes. He was by nature framed to wind and insinuat himselff so into everie man's affection, that not onlie from thenceforth they did alwise remayn constentlie faithful unto him, bot also they did easily hazard their lyves and ther fortuns in any extremetie of danger for his sake. He was verie vpright in all his actions, vnfitt for these our dayes, wherein integritie lyeth speechles and vpright dealling is readie to give up the ghost." [A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland, from its Origin to the Year 1630, *by Sir Robert Gordon of*

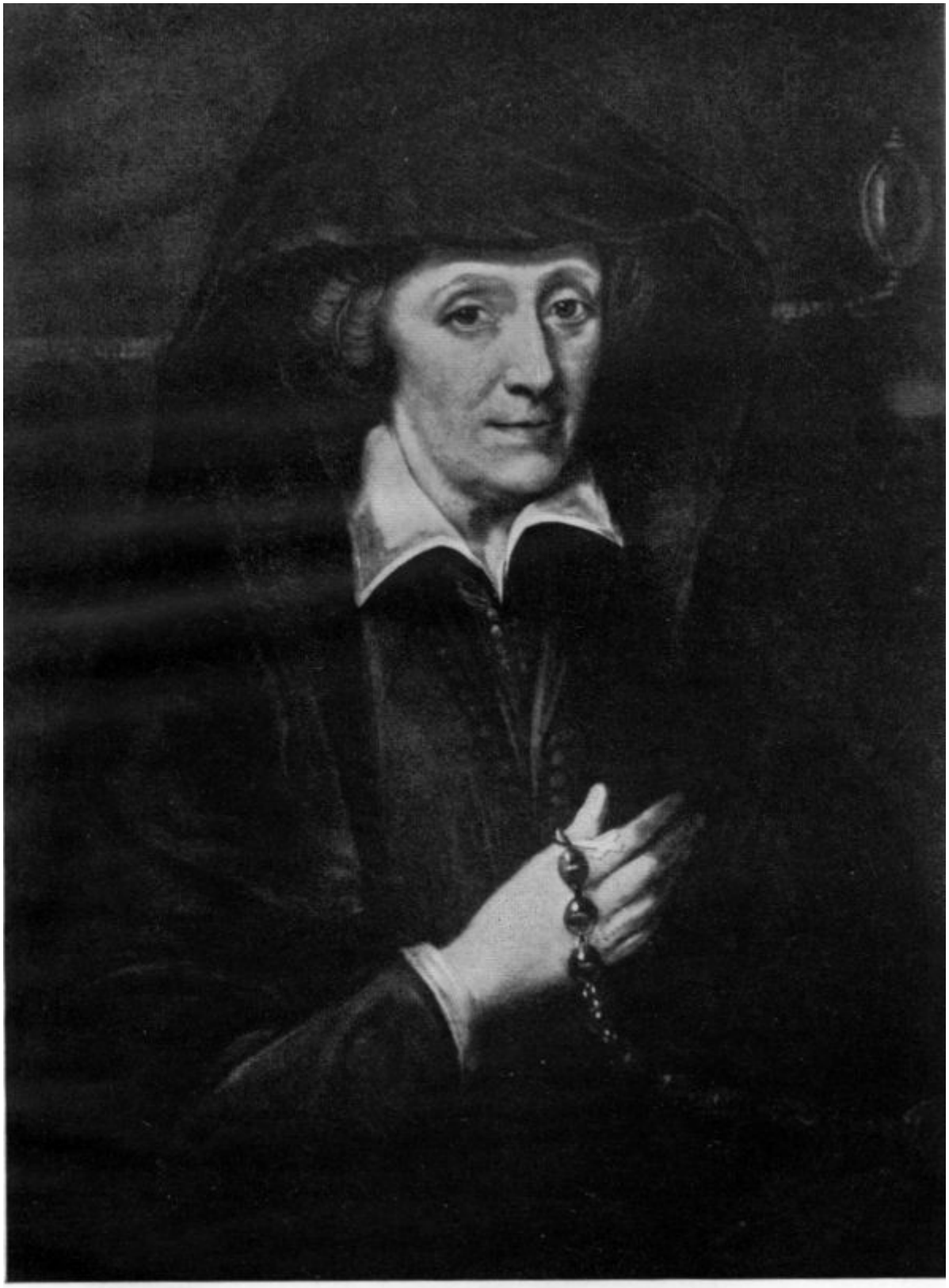
Gordonstoun, Bart., pp.232-233 (Edinburgh, 1813)]

Earl Alexander was evidently an exceptionally charming man, albeit very delicate and suffering much from ill health. During his prolonged visit to Strathbogie he spent much of his time in the society of Lady Jane. The affection which thus developed between the two refugees eventually ripened into something stronger, and as soon as the earl's property was restored to him, he seized the opportunity of asking Lord Huntly for the honour of his sister's hand. To this Huntly readily consented, and as Lady Jane was of the same opinion, the wedding took place on December 13, 1573. For the next twenty years the earl and his countess lived happily together at Dunrobin Castle.

The family of Sutherland can trace its origin to very early days. The charter-evidence [*At Dunrobin.*] for the descent of the Sutherlands in a direct line begins with Freskin de Moravia, who died in 1171. Freskyn's grandson William was surnamed de Sutherland, and this remained the family name until 1515. In that year the heiress of this house married one Adam Gordon, whose surname she adopted, but in 1688 the descendants of thus pair resumed the name of Sutherland. The house of Sutherland gradually managed to possess itself of practically the whole province, either by means of seizure of purchase, and to this day the head of the Sutherland family remains the most important landowner in Scotland.

Dunrobin Castle – founded in 1097 by Robert of Sutherland, after whom it was named – is one of the oldest secular Scottish buildings still inhabited. Standing as it does on a unique site, perched high above the cliffs that overlook the waters of the Dornoch Firth, it has witnessed many stirring scenes in the past. Here during the famous "'45" another Countess of Sutherland distinguished herself by a display of courage worthy of the name she bore. William, 18th Earl of Sutherland, had remained loyal to the House of Hanover. But during his absence in 1746 the Earl of Cromartie, a staunch Jacobite, captured Dunrobin. After Culloden, the castle was relieved by the Sutherlands, but Lord Cromartie successfully appealed to the countess [*Lady Elizabeth Wemyss*] to provide him with a safe hiding-place. The soldiers who were in close pursuit searched the house for a long time in vain, and though one of them went so far as to hold his dirk at the countess's throat, she stoutly declined to divulge any information as to the fugitive's whereabouts. At length, however, Cromartie was captured, and narrowly escaped accompanying Belmerino and Kilmarnock to the scaffold. [T*his is but one of the many instances in Scottish history of women who have hidden fugitive lovers and friends of helped them to escape. Margaret Vinstar, Twinelace, or Twinstoun, one of Queen Anne's gentlewomen and a younger contemporary of Lady Jane Gordon, is a notable example. Wemyss of Logie had devised an abortive plan of bringing Bothwell into the royal presence at Dalkeith Castle. By so doing he fell into disgrace and was thrown into prison. His release, graphically described in the* Historie of James the Sext, *was entirely due to Margaret Twinstoun, "to whom this gentleman bure great affection, tending to the godly band of marriage; the whilk was honestly requited by the said gentlewoman." She was privileged to sleep in the room occupied by the King and Queen. On the night of her lover's arrest she stole out of her room, came to that in which Wemyss was lying in charge of certain of the guard, and bade them bring their prisoner to the King's chamber. When they reached the door, she desired the guards to stay outside while she escorted Wemyss into the royal presence. "And so she closed the door, and convoyed the gentleman to a window, where she minisrat a lang cord unto him to convoy himself down; and sae by her guid charitable help he happily escaped by the subtlety of love." It is satisfactory to know that Logie was afterwards pardoned, and married his faithful Margaret. In the same way the Lady of Grange nearly accomplished the escape of Montrose, a prisoner in her husband's house in Fifeshire, by dressing him up in her own clothes and drugging the guard. And Miss Balmain assisted that fair rebel, Lady Ogilvy, to make her escape from the State prison of Edinburgh Castle by smuggling a washerwoman's dress into her cell. But the case which is practically analogous to that of the Countess of Sutherland is the famous adventure of the beautiful Miss Lumsden, who afterwards became Lady Strange. This young lady was sitting at her needlework in her father's house when Robert Strange, a soldier in the Jacobite rebel army, whom she had never even set eyes on, rushed into her room, hotly pursued by his enemies, and implored her for protection. Without rising of showing signs of being in the least disconcerted, Miss Lumsden bade the fugitive creep underneath the hoop of her voluminous crinoline. Shortly after, when the house was searched, the soldiers on entering her room found a young lady apparently alone, and retired. Strange, of course, as was only right and proper, fell in love with his protectress and married her. (See* Nollekens and His Times, *vol.*

ii. p.245.)]



JANE, COUNTESS OF SUTHERLAND

FROM THE PAINTING BY GEORGE JAMESONE IN THE POSSESSION OF THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND

The condition of the north of Scotland in the Middle Ages was extremely primitive. Sir Walter Scott declares that the Highlanders were to be regarded as “ignorant and irreclaimable barbarians,” so late perhaps as the sixteenth century. [Tales of a Grandfather, *p.376.*] If the poorer inhabitants were not permanently on the verge of starvation, famines were events of almost biennial occurrence. That universal poverty which was so deplorably prevalent throughout the whole country – and indeed throughout all Europe – in early days was particularly noticeable in the Highlands. Even in Edinburgh, it will be remembered, the French knights and ambassadors complained bitterly of the wretched accommodation provided for them, and could hardly be restrained from leaving so miserable a country. And in the far north it may be readily assumed that things were no better. As late as 1772 John Lightfoot, [*Chaplain and librarian to Margaret, Duchess of Portland.*] who accompanied the naturalist Pennant on his tour to Skye and the Highlands, wrote as follows to the Duchess of Portland: “The Wretchedness and Poverty of the People is such as I shall astonish your Grace in the account of it. ….Their Bread is made thus. Their Barley or Oats, (for Wheat they have none) is burnt to get the grain out. It is then put into a Tub or Vessel, and Women tread it with their Feet to separate the clotted Grains…. Their drink is Milk, Water, or a most nauseous Spirit call’d Whisky distilled from Barley….” [*MS at Welbeck Abbey.*] Perhaps the universal addiction to this “most nauseous spirit” may have had something to say to the miserable state of the Scottish peasant in the far north. But though the Highlander was poor – and in the days of Lady Jane he certainly was so – he seems to have been extraordinarily honest. This is shown by the story told of Lord Hugh Fraser, who, in 1573, when a temporary wave of prosperity swept over the country, successfully tested the integrity of his clansmen by hanging a gold chain to an oaken beam at the stock-ford of Ross, to see if any man would be so base as to steal it. [The Highland Notebook, *by R. Carruthers. (Edin., 1843)*] According to the views long prevalent in England, Highlanders were the most arrant barbarians. Swift in his *Journal to Stella* mentions dining with two Highland gentlemen and being excessively surprised to find that they possessed ordinary good manners and civility. Among the peasantry of the north life was still indeed very crude in Swift’s time, and a century earlier it was still more so. The “good old rule” sufficed these hardy Northerners, “that they shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can.” It was not until very late in the Middle Ages that Highlanders realised that there were laws to obey, though even these were but weakly enforced. And we read of one old chieftain writing to a friend in the north, “Take care of yourself in Sutherland; the *law* is come as far as Tain!” [Quarterly Review, *vol. xiv. P.302*]

A traveller in the Highlands, who was a contemporary of Lady Jane and visited Sutherland and Caithness, has left an amusing if a somewhat imaginative account of the conditions prevailing in these countries in the seventeenth century. “Here,” he says, “a rude sort of inhabitants dwell (almost as barbarous as Canibals), who when they kill a beast, boil him in his hide, make a caldron of his skin, brewis of his bowels, drink of his blood, and bread and meat of his carcase. Since few or none amongst them hitherto have as yet understood any better rules or methods of eating.” [Northern Memoirs Calculated for the Meridian of Scotland, *writ in the year 1658, by Richard Franck, Philanthropus. P.209. (Edin., 1821.) (Hector Boece, the historian, also tells this barnacle story.)*] A little further on the writer gives a still freer rein to his imagination. He is describing a most peculiar animal, known to Natural History manuals as the *Lepas anatifera,* which, he declares, formed one of the staple articles of diet among the Highlanders of this district: “Now that barnicles (he says) which are a certain sort of wooden geese, breed hereabouts, it’s past dispute; and that they fall off from the limbs and members of the firtree, is questionless; and those so fortunate to espouse the ocean (or any other river, or humictative soil) by virtue of solar heat are destinated to live; but to all others so unfortunate to fall upon dry land, are denied their nativity.” In case there should be any doubt upon this subject, the traveller goes on to assure his readers that not only has he seen these rare and curious creatures, but has actually held a “barnicle” in his hand, while it was still unfledged and “hanging from it beak to a tree,” before it had made up its mind whether to espouse the ocean (or other humictative soil) or to fall upon dry land and be “denied its nativity.” “Like the leaves in October that leisurely drop off,” continues our authority, with that picturesque touch of metaphor which proves him to have missed his vocation – he should undoubtedly have been a fisherman – “even so the barnicle drops off.” “But though some are destined to live,” he adds, “how difficult is it to preserve life when hourly sought after by the luxurious devourer!!” How difficult indeed!

The natural history of Scotland, and indeed of England as well, [*See the* Itinerary of Fynes Morison [1610], *recently republished.*] stood on a rather unsound basis as late as the seventeenth century. Many superstitions, no less curious than that of the *anatifer,* or goose-bringer, were, and still are, popular in some parts of Scotland. [Cf. *the Modern Geologist’s* Belemnite, *reminiscent of the*

thunderbolts of Jove.] It is, for instance, rare to find a dead eagle, even in the Highlands, a fact which has given rise to the belief that the eagle casts its bill during life, thereby acquiring a renewal of its youth. [*A Scottish authority of 1633 prints the following in the Psalter of that date:-*

"That fill'd with goodness thy desire,
And did prolong thy youth:
Like as the Eagle casts her bill,
Wherby her age renew'th."

Psalm ciii. Verse 5. (In Aberdene. Imprinted by Edward Raban, for David Melvill, 1633, with priviledge.)]

Mr Francks may therefore be pardoned for his credibility, even though we cannot join him in believing that the conditions of the inhabitants of Sutherlandshire – uncivilised though they were, and long remained [*The last instance of execution for witchcraft in Scotland took place in Sutherland as late as 1722. The witch was executed at Dornoch, and, as the day was cold, she warmed herself at the fire which was built for her burning. Statutes against witchcraft were not repealed until 1735.*] – was so deplorable that they were reduced to the luxury of devouring mythological animals. It may certainly be doubted whether the peasants who lived within a wide radius of Dunrobin were ever brought to such straits. The heads of the house of Sutherland have always been proverbially good landlords, and in this respect Countess Jane fully upheld the family traditions. Owing to her husband's continued ill health, the management of the estates devolved to a great extent upon her; nor could it have been in more capable hands. A former Earl of Sutherland had made borings and discovered coal in the neighbourhood of Brora, a little village on the sea coast about five miles from Dunrobin, and this was first worked by Countess Jane. In the days of her youth she had doubtless been familiar with the system of obtaining salt from sea water, as practised in the Lothians, and by building a number of salt-pans at Brora she soon made that little hamlet the centre of a flourishing industry.

Lady Jane, in spite of her questionable conduct with regard to her first marriage, remained loyal to her Roman Catholic principles until the day of her death. It was natural, therefore, that at the time of the Reformation she should be called upon to suffer from the religious intolerance of that bigoted age. Often was she accused of sheltering priests, and suspected of furthering their "popish plots." Indeed, it was only owing to the exertions of her son Robert, who was a staunch Protestant, that the countess was not more severely punished for her so-called heresies. [*None of her sons espoused the Roman Catholic faith; and it is curious to consider that it was a descendant of hers, John, Earl of Sutherland, who was the first person to affix his name to the Solemn League and Covenant in Greyfriars Churchyard of March 1, 1630.*] In 1594 a warrant was issued by King James VI. granting her a remission for "intercommoning with George, sumtyme erll of Huntlie, and vtheris rebellious and vnnaturall subiectis, at diuers tymes, aganis sindry his Hienes actis, lawis, and proclamationis maid in the contrar." And in the following year she had to find surety "under the pain of 2000 merks" [*Pitcairn's* Criminal Trials, *vol. i. p.348 (A* merk *was valued at 13s.4d Scots money, or 13½d. English).*] that she would not conspire with any of his Majesty's "declared traitors," and was finally given a licence permitting her to leave Edinburgh. [*"Decimo quinto Martij, 1614…The Lady Bothwell gaif in a petitioun this day to the Counsall schoweing that scho had some landis plenneist with hir owne goodis lyand within England within xxx myles to the Bordouris, and scho craived licence to go thair for taking ordour with her tennentis. Her petitione is granted conditionallie that scho find cautione under the pane of Vm. Merkis that scho sall not repair any farrer within that cuntrey and sall not [not] pas the boundis of hir owne landis, and hir licence to be null yf scho do in the contrair" – Extracted from "State Business for the yeir 1614" (Denmiln MS., vol. v. fol. 17) in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.*]

Earl Alexander died at Dunrobin in 1594, and his widow shortly afterwards married Alexander Ogilvie of Boyne, the former husband of Mary Beaton, one of the Queen's famous Maries. This she did, as her son tells us, "for the utilitie and profite of her children," of whom she now had seven, four sons (besides the historian) and two daughters, the eldest of whom afterwards became the mother of Donald, 1st Lord Reay.

Alexander Ogilvie did not long survive his marriage, and, after his death, Lady Jane remained

a widow to the end of her days.

Even in her old age she continued to be persecuted for her adherence to the principles of the Roman Church. Sentence of excommunication was on one occasion passed upon her, and she was confined in Inverness as a suspect of popery. Seven years later we find her being granted permission to proceed to England to visit her property, on condition that she finds surety not to go any further. And in 1607 an unfortunate priest named William Murdoche was found guilty of saying Mass at her house, and sentenced to be chained to the Market Cross of Edinburgh for two hours, exposed to public gaze and insult, attired in his "mess-clothes," These garments were then to be stripped from his back and burnt on a fire, together with all his other "Popische baggadge"; after which he himself was to be banished from the country. [*Pitcairn's* Criminal Trials, *ii. 530.*]

No better description of Lady Jane is to be found than that which her son gives in his *Genealogie,* of which the original, a folio of 228 pages, is still carefully preserved at Dunrobin. From him we learn that she was "a vertuous and comlie lady, judicious, of excellent memorie, and of great understanding above the capacitie of her sex." In this she is to be particularly commended, say Sir Robert, that during the continual changes, and amid the rival factions of the court, in the reign of Mary and in the minority of James VI., she managed her affairs so prudently that the enemies of her family were never able to hurt her. It was a time "both dangerous and deceatfull," but the Countess of Sutherland passed through it without fear or harm. She continued to possess the jointure which had been assigned to her from the property of the Earl of Bothwell till her death, though the earldom was twice forfeited during her lifetime.

With foresight and diligence she successfully undertook the whole management of the Sutherland estates, both while her husband was alive and during the minority of her eldest son. She proved herself, indeed, not only a most capable woman of business, but also a devoted wife and mother. And deep was the sorrow of her whole family when she died on May 14, 1629, at the age of eighty-four.

Among the family relics at Dunrobin is an interesting copy of the *Legenda Aurea,* a book of devotional exercises in the Latin tongue, which was bequeathed to Sir Robert by his mother. [*The following was written on the first fly-leaf by the 2nd Duke of Sutherland: "This book originally belonged to Lady Jane Gordon, Countess of Bothwell, and afterwards married to Alexr. Earl of Sutherland. It was left by her to Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun, her second son, and was purchased at the sale of the Gordonstoun Library, 1816." The following seems to have been inscribed by her eldest son before his nineteenth year, in* Legenda Aurea:-

A piece of handwriting inserted here, footnote pg 56.

(This buik perteins To my ladie Sutherland, etc.)]

Here and there throughout the pages of this work, written in a hand which was probably that of the countess, are annotations and remarks, such as "Blessed is he who hath not bent to evil rede his ear;" [*First psalm (Sternhold & Hopkins, 1549).* "In my defence god me defend And bring my sawle to ane good end;" "ane vertuous lyf procureth ane happie death," and other texts which, through the fading of the ink, are scarcely legible.

There is also at Dunrobin a portrait of Lady Jane by Jameson, in which she appears as an elderly woman of a melancholy cast of countenance, wearing an expression at once grave, thoughtful, and dignified, becoming to one who is tersely described in Wood's Peerage as a "lady of great prudence."

Her character is aptly summed up in the loving words of her favourite son. "She wes vertuous, religious, and wyse, evin beyond her sex; and as shoe lived with great credit and reputation, so shoe dyed happelie, and wes (according to the own command) bureid by her sones Sir Robert and Sir Alexr/ (now onlie alive of all her children) in the catherdrall church of Dornogh, in the sepulchre of the earles of Southerland." [A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland, p.409] There she sleeps quietly today.

Chapter 4 - Elizabeth, Duchess of Lauderdale (d. 1698)

From the writings of seventeenth-century historians one might imagine their world to have been a stage devoted exclusively to the performance of melodrama. They have invested their subject with all the conventional characteristics of that sensational form of art. Their heroes and heroines are so heroic as to be scarcely human; their villains and adventuresses are of the most lurid type. To that front row of stalls from which they viewed the play, the villain's raven hair no doubt suggested the blackness of his heart; the character of the adventuress seemed no less scarlet than her lips. The very proximity of the spectator exaggerated the virtues or defects of the various characters, as in a theatre it enhances the redness of the low comedian's nose and makes the "heavy father" still more ponderous.

If contemporary critics were too close to the footlights, we, on the other hand, are certainly too far off to appreciate the charm of subtle effects or delicate characterisation. Distance may lend enchantment; it supplies perhaps the advantage of a truer perspective. But to bring the scene closer there is nothing left save to have recourse to the imagination, at best an unsatisfactory opera-glass. Only in imagination can we note the emotions of the principal actors or follow them beyond the limits of that narrow proscenium within whose bounds history has confined their movements. Some intimate diarist, and Evelyn or a Pepys, may bid us accompany him to the players' dressing-rooms behind the stage; even so, the knowledge that we gain is but scanty, the glimpse too often misleading. For if the modern historian is occasionally prejudiced in his views, how much more so must the contemporary chronicler have been, living as he did in an age when a fair, unbiased eye and an open mind were not considered qualifications essential for the writer of history. While the essayist of today may twist his facts into the shape he requires to prove a paradox – that Henry VIII. was a perfect lover, or Mary Queen of Scots a model wife – he does not, like the bygone historian, cherish any personal grudge which can only be paid off at the expense of truth.

In the seventeenth century, on the other hand, the chronicler did not suffer from the modern weakness of being able to see both sides of a question. Consequently, whatever his descriptions lost in fairness, they gained in strength. He painted his patrons in broad, heroic colours; his foes he portrayed in harsh outline, black as silhouettes, and with as little of suggestion or detail. Small wonder, then, if we find it difficult to form any accurate mental picture of many of the great personages of the past who are shown to us in such exaggerated colours. A great deal has been written about some of them, and yet how little do we really know of any single one. Take, for instance, the case of Elizabeth, Duchess of Lauderdale, a woman who attained to greater power and position than any other woman (not of royal blood) in the whole history of Scotland. What do we learn of her private life, of her real ambitions, of her best side, from the writings of her contemporaries? Practically nothing. Bishop Burnet has, indeed, left a very full sketch of her character as it appeared to him. But his drawing is in many senses a caricature; it is everywhere coloured with the author's prejudice and personal spite. Since that time other writers have for the most part been content to make slavish copies of the bishop's portrait, if anything deepening its shadows, certainly imbuing it with no fresh colour.

It is idle to suppose that a woman of so much character and determination, possessed of such ability and strength of purpose, could have been altogether bad. There must have been good points about her character which her contemporaries had neither the grace nor the desire to see. Yet it is nowhere suggested that the Duchess of Lauderdale was blessed with a single redeeming quality. It is only when we search her private correspondence that we can discover a faint trace of that softer side which nature did not deny to her any more than to less hardened and unscrupulous individuals.

Elizabeth Murray was the elder daughter of William Murray, 1st Earl of Dysart, by his wife Catherine Bruce, a member of the Clackmannan family. Lord Dysart was of comparatively humble birth, being the son of a Fifeshire minister. Educated by his uncle, Thomas Murray, at one time tutor to Prince Charles, he became in turn "whipping boy" to and intimate friend of the young prince, who showed his gratitude to the victim of his vicarious punishments by eventually appointing him to be one of his gentlemen-of-the-bedchamber. Perhaps the memory of those early flagellations which he had suffered in Prince Charles's stead rankled in William's breast when he grew up. At any rate he repaid his master's kindness by selling his secrets to Parliament for a sum of forty thousand merks, and in many other ways betrayed the trust which the King was so unwise as to repose in him. William

Murray was, in fact, an ignoble character, unworthy of either confidence or affection, and his nature was not in any way improved by his being created Earl of Dysart in 1643. One single good quality he possessed. Though in his sober moments he was outspoken and indiscreet, in his cups he became at once reticent and reserved. Luckily, he was generally drunk.

Lord Dysart had planned a marriage between his eldest daughter and her cousin Sir Robert Murray, one of the most high-principled and capable men of his time. [*A famous scientist and first President of the Royal Society.*] Elizabeth, however, held other views on the subject of matrimony. She scorned Sir Robert, and in 1647, married Sir Lionel Tollemache (or Talmash), the head of an old and much-respected Suffolk family. Three years later, when her father died, she succeeded to his title as Countess of Dysart. [*It was not until 1670, however, that the title was confirmed by royal charter and settled on any of her issue whom she might appoint as heir.*]

Historians inform us that Lady Dysart was a very beautiful woman. And though they have a kindly habit of attributing beauty to all women of title, their praise on this occasion would seem to be based upon a solid foundation of truth. She was, moreover, exceedingly witty, a vivacious talker, a keen observer, with an acute mind and a still sharper tongue. Her education had certainly not been neglected, for we are told that she had studied not only divinity and history, but mathematics and philosophy as well. [*Douglas's* Peerage.]

Lady Dysart's moral character was not, unluckily, on a par with her mental qualities. Even in an age when feminine frailty was the rule rather than the exception, she gained an unenviable notoriety for the looseness of her conduct. With the Duchess of Cleveland, [*"A woman of great beauty, but most enormously vicious and ravenous." Bishop Burnet's* History of His Own Times, *p.62.*] the Duchess of Portsmouth, and a score of other ladies of undoubted beauty but doubtful reputation who flourished at the court of Charles II., she helped to lower the general tone of public and private life. And it was with the assistance and encouragement of such women that Charles finally left the nation, as Roger Coke asserts, "more vitiated and debauched in its manners than ever it was by any other king."

Scandal linked Lady Dysart's name with that of many of the most prominent men of her day. It was even said that Oliver Cromwell himself was not proof against her blandishments. [*May 12, 1677. . . went to visit the Duke and Duchess of Lauderdale, at their fine house at Ham. After dinner her Grace entertained me in her Chamber with much Discourse upon Affairs of State. She had been a beautiful Woman, the supposed Mistress of Oliver Cromwell, and at that time a lady of great parts."* – Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, *p.49. (1734.)*] She was certainly on intimate terms with him, and while that rigid old Puritan was in Scotland the safety of many of the countess's friends was due to her personal intercession. Among those who owed their lives to such influences was John Maitland, 2nd Earl of Lauderdale. He had been taken prisoner at Worcester, and, but for her interference, would probably have perished on the scaffold. Lauderdale had long been Lady Dysart's lover, which was sufficient reason to account for her interest on his behalf. But she seems to have been disappointed that his gratitude for her favours was not as overwhelming as she expected, and at the Restoration a coolness sprang up between the two which led to a temporary break of some years' duration in their intimacy.

On the death of Sir Lionel Tollemache in France in 1669 the countess and Lauderdale were reconciled, a fact which caused so much uneasiness to poor Lady Lauderdale that she hastened to Paris, where she promptly died. One of the characters in Oscar Wilde's most brilliant farce declares that to express a desire to be buried in Paris hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last; but; in spite of this, one may assume that the first Lady Lauderdale was a very serious-minded and, indeed, a melancholy woman. Anne, daughter of the 1st Earl of Home, had been systematically ill-treated by Lauderdale ever since her marriage with him. He would certainly appear to have been a most disagreeable husband. At one time he was making love to the pious Lady Margaret Kennedy, [*A keen Presbyterian, "whose religion exceeded as far her wit, as her parts exceeded others of her sex." – Sir George Mackenzie's* Memoirs of the Affairs of Scotland, *p.165.*] a daughter of Lord Cassillis; at another the Countess of Dysart claimed his undivided attention. Lady Lauderdale's position was a difficult one, but for many years she filled it with dignity and self-restraint. Sometimes she lived with her husband at their town residence on the east side of Highgate Hill, where we find them entertaining Mr. Pepys and his friends to supper; [*"Went to my Lord Lauderdale's house to speak with*

him, and find him and his lady, and some Scotch people, at supper: pretty odd company, though my Lord Brouncker tells me, my Lord Lauderdale is a man of mighty good reason and judgement. But at supper there played one of their servants upon the viallin some Scotch tune only; several, and the best of their country, as they seemed to esteem them, by their praising and admiring them: but, Lord! the strangest ayre that ever I heard in all my life, and all of one cast. But strange to hear my Lord Lauderdale say himself that he had rather hear a cat mew, than the best musique in the world; and the better the musique, the more sick it makes him; and that of all the instruments he hates the lute most, and, next to that, the baggpipe." – Pepys Diary, *July 28, 1666.*] at other times she was separated from Lord Lauderdale, and writing to complain bitterly of the dilapidations of her house and of her husband's neglect. [*Owing to the number of books which Lauderdale kept stored on the top floor of his house the countess's bedroom ceiling was always threatening to fall in on her head. (See* Lauderdale Papers, *vol. ii. p.203.)*]

Lady Dysart had such an influence over his affections, that, as Sir George Mackenzie tells us, neither her age – she was then about forty-eight, though she did not look it [*"…nor was her wit less charming than the beauty of other women; nor had the extraordinary beauty she possest whilst she was young ceded to the age at which she was then arrived."* –Memoirs of the Affairs of Scotland, *by Sir George Mackenzie, p.218*] – nor Lauderdale's public position, nor the advice of his friends, not "the clamour of the people," could prevent him from hurrying his second wife to the altar while his first was scarcely cold in her coffin. This unseemly haste confirmed the worst suspicions which the world had entertained regarding the relations that had long existed between the two, and still further, if possible, blackened their reputations. But in the face of general opposition the Earl of Lauderdale and the Countess of Dysart were married in the parish church of Petersham, Surrey, on the 17th of February, 1672. [*The following is the extract from the church register: "The ryght honorable John Earl of Lauderdale was married to the ryght honorable Elizabeth Countesse of Desert, by the Reverend Father in God (Walter) Lord Bishop of Worcester, in the church of Petersham, on the 17th day of Februarie 1671-2, publiquely in the time of reading the common prayer; and gave the carpet, pulpit cloth and cushion."*] The wedding was celebrated by their friends in Edinburgh with banquets and junketings, while the castle guns fired as many salutes as upon the King's birthday. [Affairs of Scotland, *p.218.*]

Lauderdale was in many respects a most remarkable man. At an early age he had arrayed himself on the side of the Covenanters, and was by them sent to Westminster in 1643 as one of the Scottish commissioners whose business it was to induce the king to renounce Episcopacy. In this he failed, and five years later discreetly joined the king's party and became one of the most violent promoters of the "Engagement," thus earning the hatred and suspicion of the Presbyterians, whose cause he had once upheld so vigorously. "Sick of the low farce of fanaticism," said Mark Napier, "he threw his frayed and greasy mask of covenanting religion into the grave of Argyle wit irrepressible demonstrations of glee." [Life and Times of John Graham of Claverhouse, *vol. ii. p.44*] Like his second wife, Lauderdale was a student of Latin and divinity, had a profound knowledge of history, and was besides a master of Greek and Hebrew. Gifted, in addition, with a marvellous memory, he could express himself in a vocabulary which was as copious as it was rough. [*Bishop Burnet's* History of His Own Times, *p.70.*] Fountainhall goes so far as to call him the "learnedest and most powerful minister of state in his age."

Brave, unscrupulous, superstitious, [*Napier declares that he believed implicitly in goblins and witches. (See* Life and Times of John Graham of Claverhouse, *vol. i. p.77.) In Baxter's* World of Spirits *there is a letter from Lauderdale in which he gives an account of a visit he paid to a convent at Loudun in France, where the nuns were supposed to be possessed by spirits. And in 1649 he went to Antwerp to see some witched exorcised, but was much disappointed with the sport. (See C.K. Sharpe's preface to* Law's Memorials, *p. cxi.)*] an accomplished liar, of uncouth appearance and boisterous manner, Lauderdale seemed little fitted for a court. Yet he contrived to gain a complete ascendancy over Charles, and, after the disgrace of Middleton [*John, 1st Earl of Middleton.*] in 1662, was appointed Secretary for Scottish affairs, and for twenty years, until the arrival of the Duke of York, was virtual King of Scotland. His looks were decidedly not in his favour. With long red hair that hung wildly about his shoulders, and a tongue too large for his mouth, causing him, as Burnet says, to "bedew all that he talked to," [History of His Own Times, *p.70.*] he fell far short of the generally accepted idea of a wit or a courtier. Yet he was both the one and the other. And this ungainly personage rapidly became one of the King's especial favourites, and assisted his royal master in the prosecution of those private amours which were his Majesty's principal occupation. [*Kirkton, in his*

History of the Church of Scotland (*p.158), says that he was the King's "privado in his secret pleasures, in which office to keep himself in favour he acted a most dishonourable part."*] On one occasion, when owing to the burning of his fleet at Chatham and the successful retirement of the Dutch, the King was especially depressed, Lauderdale adopted the role of a seventeenth-century Herodias. Dressing himself in a woman's petticoat, he danced before his monarch with such vigour – if not grace – as successfully to chase away the royal melancholy.

As a statesman Lauderdale may have been vicious and untrustworthy, but, though Macauley refers to him as a "ruffian," he was not cruel. Law calls him a man of great spirit, wit, and daring, who did more without the sword than ever Oliver Cromwell accomplished with it; "a man very national, and truely the honour of our Scots nation for witt and parts." [*Law's* Memorials, *p.65.*] His firm suppression of the Covenanters, once his friends, and the anti-conventicle Acts which he enforced for this purpose made him unpopular; but he cannot be accused of an undue exhibition of tyranny during his rule in Scotland. He had a violent temper, which occasionally threw him into fits of passion resembling madness. At such times his charm as a husband was even less noticeable than usual, and his second wife found him no more tolerable than had her predecessor. [*Writing to Queensberry in 1678 Lord Rothes says: "The Duchess…says, it is not* huffing *and* ranting *that does business; and* cries *when she speaks of my Lord's infirmity of falling into passion, when, God knows, she is as guilty herself." (*Queensberry Papers.*)*] To his inferiors he was insupportably haughty; to his superiors, like all bullies, he cringed. Clarendon calls him "insolent, imperious, flattering and dissembling," fit for intrigues and experienced in the darkest political designs, with "courage enough not to fail where it was absolutely necessary, and no impediment of honour to restrain him from doing any thing that might gratify any of his passions." [History of the Rebellion, *vol. vi. p.9*] In his violence and lack of scruple he was a good match for his wife, and between the two they managed to incur an amount of popular odium unique in Scottish history.

Soon after their marriage the Earl and Countess of Lauderdale made a triumphal tour of Scotland. They were everywhere received with that royal pomp and ceremony which was then customary [*"The nobility…in public processions, funerals etc., displayed a degree of pomp unknown in the present times. The Duke of Queensberry, the King's Commissioner, when coming to Edinburgh A.D. 1700, was met by the magistrates about eight miles from the city, which he entered with a train of near forty coaches and about 1200 horse." – Arnot's* History of Edinburgh, *p.195.*] and which they particularly enjoyed. But though the Scottish people waved their flags and bowed their heads before the new Commissioner and his wife, the national heart remained singularly cold and unmoved by their arrival.

The Earl of Lauderdale had always pretended to despise wealth, but the rapacity of his countess, to whose passion or caprice he was entirely subservient, seems to have been sadly infectious. At her instigation he set himself to raise money be every possible method, while she herself offered all the places in the Scottish government for sale, and levied large contributions wherever she went. She even threatened the magistrates of Edinburgh with divers penalties unless they made her a suitable gift of money, and by similar means managed to amass vast sums. So corrupt did the administration become in Lauderdale's hands that no political aspirant could obtain advancement or hold public office unless the Commissioner's wife had first of all been handsomely bribed.

Though extortionate, covetous, and greedy, Lady Lauderdale did not, like Lady Margaret Douglas, [*Sister of the first Duke of Queensberry. She was so penurious that she dressed in rags, and so anxious to amass money that she would sit all day long on the bank of the river Annan, carrying people across on her back for the modest sum of a halfpenny a head. (See* Law's Memorials, *p. lxxxi.)*] hoard her gold, but spent it on pleasures or luxuries with a reckless and extravagant hand. Then, when her store was exhausted, like Oliver Twist or the daughters of the horse-leech she clamoured loudly for more. Much of her money and her husband's was spent in beautifying her property at Ham, in Surrey. The house on this estate, which had been built in 1610, belonged for a long time to the Tollemache family. It was afterwards altered and entirely refurnished by the Lauderdales, who spared no expense to ensure its comfort and magnificence. [*In 1672 King Charles granted the manor of Ham in fee to the Lauderdales and to the Countess (or Duchess as she then was) of Lauderdale's heirs by her first husband. (*The Environs of London, *by Rev. D. Lysons, vol. i. p.173.)*] Evelyn, who visited the place in 1678, has left a description of it which in its eloquent

enthusiasm is strangely suggestive of the prospectus of a modern house-agent, comparing it favourably with the finest villas in Italy; “the house furnish’d like a greate Prince’s” (he says); “the parterres, flower gardens, orangeries, groves, avenues, courts, statues, perspectives, fountaines, aviaries, and all this at the banks of the sweetest river in the world, must needes be admirable.” [*Evelyn’s* Diary, *August 27, 1678.*]

It was with sums wrung from the unwilling citizens of Edinburgh that the Commissioner and his lady were enabled to decorate and improve Ham House; and the Scottish people were not slow to realise this fact and to resent it. The general hatred which the countess’s rapacity evoked in Scotland was still further increased when she started to meddle in private as well as public affairs. She spoke of her acquaintances with a licence which was unpardonable, embroiled her husband with all his best friends, from the Earl of Argyll to Sir Robert Murray, and even brought about a quarrel between Lauderdale and his brother, Lord Hatton. So busy was she, indeed, in her interferences, that people began to ask sarcastically whether there were not one Commissioner at Edinburgh, but two.

In 1672 Lauderdale was created a duke, an honour which pandered still more to the vanity of his duchess, but which he only lived ten years to enjoy. His wife’s determination to be treated with the respect due to a queen added indeed another touch of bitterness to the universal dislike which she inspired. At the opening of Parliament she ordered chairs to be placed on the floor of the house, so that she and her ladies might sit and listen to the speeches in comfort. [Affairs of Scotland, *p.219*] Such a privilege had never been claimed by any woman before her time, and this not very unreasonable request was soon magnified into an exhibition of pride, which only served to increase her unpopularity.

The duchess’s unsavoury reputation provided lampoonists with abundant material. She was the subject of any number of coarse rhymes and ballads. A bowdlerised version of one of the least offensive of these – a parody of a popular song called “Black Bess” – is given in Maidment’s *Second Book of Scottish Pasquils.* [*Page 23.*]

“She is Besse of my heart, she was Besse of old Noll;
She was once Fleetwood’s Besse, now she’s Bess of Atholle;
She’s Besse of the Church, and Besse of the State,
She plots with her tail, and her lord with his pate.
With a head on one side, and a hand lifted hie,
She kills us with frowning and makes us to die.

The Nobles and Barons, the Burrows and Clowns,
She threaten’d at home, e’en the principall townes;
But now she usurps both the sceptre and crown,
And thinks to destroy with a flap of her gown.
All hearts feel excited wherever she comes,
And beat night and day, lyke Gilmour his drums.

Since the King did permit her to come to Whytehall,
She outvies Cleveland, Portsmouth, young Frazer [*Daughter of the King’s physician, afterwards Countess of Peterborough.*] and all;
Let the French King but drop down his gold in a cloud,
She’ll sell him a bargain, and laugh it aloud.
If the Queen understood, what of her Besse did say,
She would call for Squire Dun [*The hangman*] to bear her away.”

The Duchess of Lauderdale’s biographers have had some difficulty in finding epithets sufficiently abusive to apply to “poor Besse.” Mark Napier calls her a “daughter of Satan,” [Life and Times of John Graham of Claverhouse, *vol. i. p.364.*] and Bishop Burnet – the “old-clothes man of History” – is as scathing and more explicit in his denunciation. Yet there was a time when the worthy bishop could be numbered among the duchess’s most devoted parasites. In her honour he even composed some execrable verses in which she was referred to as an “angelic power in human mould,” and likened to a whole choir of heavenly cherubs. [Catalogue of Scottish Writers, *p.56.*] The reverend prelate’s infatuation was short-lived. He was perhaps annoyed that the Duchess of

Lauderdale had not obtained for him that accelerated preferment for which his soul yearned. This, however, would not be enough to embitter him as completely as his writings suggest. His quarrel appears to have been principally with her husband. In 1674 we find the latter advising the King to dismiss Burnet, who had been tactless enough to interfere in the quarrel which was then raging between the Dukes of Lauderdale and Hamilton. Lauderdale's treatment of Lady Margaret Kennedy was another cause of offence to the bishop. He had flirted with that devout lady for some considerable time. She had even resided with him at the Abbey of Holyroodhouse – being the only woman living beneath his roof – and he had actually courted scandal by going openly to her room in his nightgown. But Lady Dysart's entrance upon the scene caused his attitude to change, and when the death of his first wife made such a step possible, he showed no inclination to lead Lady Margaret to the altar. She thereupon married Bishop Burnet instead, [*Lady Margaret was the first of Burnet's three wives.*] and with all the fury of a woman scorned, at once proceeded to incite her husband to devise a plot against the Commissioner. In this Burnet was unsuccessful. The failure of this conspiracy added still further to his dislike of the Lauderdale family, and he availed himself of his "History" as the only adequate means of revenge.

Shortly after his elevation to a dukedom, Lauderdale seems to have grown tired of a life of extravagance, and, at his own request, his pension was reduced from L.60 to L.10 a day. "I swear it will be much easier for me to live at L.10 then L.50," he writes in 1674; "by the great one I am no gainer, and I am deadly weary of being mine host to all Scotland." [*Law's* Memorials, *p.59*] He had always been overfond of the pleasures of the table, and towards the end of his life his greed increased to such an extent that he is said to have consumed a whole sheep daily, eating and drinking being now his only exercise and delight. [*See* "God's Justice exemplified in His Judgements upon Persecutors."] In his old age Lauderdale became, in consequence of these continual orgies, extremely corpulent and unwieldy. This was a source of great annoyance to him. As if to add to his discomfort, the King withdrew all his pensions, and cast off his now helpless and half-paralysed adviser, while his wife began to treat him most unkindly. She is even accused of having purposely hastened his death [*"Discontent and age were the chief ingredients of his death," says Fountainhall, "if his Duchess and physicians were free of it." (*Queensberry Papers.)] which took place on the 24th of August 1682, when he was in his sixty-seventh year. "The Duchess of Lauderdale hath crowned her kindness to her late lord," writes Sir George Mackenzie to the Duke of Queensberry, two days later, "by urging him to drink the waters [at Tunbridge Wells,], which all foretold would kill him; and so it hath fallen out accordingly." [Queensberry Papers.]

After her husband's death the duchess developed that passion for litigation which sometimes assails wealthy old ladies who have nothing better to do with their time and money than spend them in courts of law. The Records of the Lords of Session are filled with accounts of the various suits brought by the duchess against her family and friends. Most of her energies would appear to have been directed to accomplishing the ruin of her brother-in-law Hatton, who had now succeeded to the earldom of Lauderdale. Hatton was already in trouble, for in this same year he was charged with embezzling money from the Mint of which he was then keeper. By this accusation he was publicly disgraced, and his sister-in-law's persistent litigation added to his misfortunes. In 1670 she had tried to arrange a marriage between her eldest daughter Elizabeth and Hatton's eldest son. The latter, however, did not fancy the duchess as a mother-in-law, and politely declined the proposal. On this account she hated him, and paid off her grudge against the son by impoverishing the father. She was, as Burnet says, violent in everything she did, "a violent friend, but a still more violent enemy," as Hatton found to his cost.

She had long ago persuaded her late husband to settle the whole of his estates upon her. Among them was the property of Duddingston, near Edinburgh, which had been presented to her by the duke. In order to effect the purchase of this place, Lauderdale, with his wife's consent, had raised the sum of £7000 upon her estate of Ham. After the duke's death, she sued his heir for the recovery of this money, though she still clung like a leech to the property. The whole question as to the legal possession of the Lauderdale estates was finally brought before the Lords of Session. Lord Pitmedden, [*Sir Alexander Seton*] on the earl's behalf, argued very justly that to force a man to ratify the deeds giving away the whole of his property to his sister-in-law, when he could not succeed, was to give him "stones instead of bread, and a scorpion instead of a fish"; and declared that such legacies as the late duke's should not be encouraged, as they exposed old men to the danger of becoming the victims of unprincipled and greedy wives. "Lauderdale is loth to be reproached," he added," that his family is extinguished and killed by the hand of a woman." [The Decisions of the

Lords of Council and Session. *(Sir John Lauder of Fountainhall.) (1759) Vol. i. p.323.*] Finally, as a means of settling the affair, the duchess was called upon to take a solemn oath that she had never personally undertaken the debt upon her house at Ham. This she agreed to readily enough, light-heartedly committing perjury, as was afterwards proved by the King, who declared that she acknowledged to him personally her undertaking of this particular debt. A lie or two one way or the other did not matter very much to the duchess, more especially if a sum of money depended upon it. [*"Shall an estate acquired without conscience by lost by it? but she is as mean spirited in adversity as she was insolent in prosperity." (From the MSS of Sir Frederick Graham, Bart., at Netherby Hall.)*]

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF LAUDERDALE
FROM AN ENGRAVING AFTER THE PAINTING BY SIR PETER LELY

A more amusing case, which she also won, was that in which she sued Sir James Dick of Priestfield for the value of three swans. Five of these animals, belonging to Sir James, had settled upon the loch at Duddingston. The duchess immediately claimed them as her property, and proceeded to remove them. She killed two f the birds and sent them to her friend General Drummond, [*William Drummond, afterwards 1st Viscount Strathallan, who was among the prisoners captured at Worcester in 1651. A pasquil of the day accuses him of being one of the duchess's lovers.*] who was ill, in order that "in his sickness their skins might warm his heart." The remaining three she locked up at Duddingston. The indignant Sir James Dick retorted by breaking into her house and retrieving the swans, much to the duchess's irritation. When the case came into court the judges decided in her favour, and Sir James was reluctantly forced to return his swans to Duddingston.

The duchess's love of going to law soon grew to be a subject of popular jest. When Wycherley was adapting Molière's *Le Misanthrope,* [The Plain Dealer *was the title of the English play.*] he introduced two new characters, that of Jerry Blackacre and his mother. Old Mrs. Blackacre, described in the stage directions as "a petulant, litigious widow, always in law," is generally supposed

to have been intended as a caricature of the Duchess of Lauderdale.

She had no children by her second husband, but had already presented Sir Lionel Tollemache with eleven, only five of whom, however, survived their infancy. To these she was warmly attached, and they no doubt had many opportunities, denied to others, of seeing the brightest side of her character. Two of them, at least, resembled their mother. Lionel, her eldest son, who sat for many years in the English House of Commons, and finally became Earl of Dysart, was as grasping and covetous as the duchess. Mrs. Manley, in that very old-fashioned work, *The New Atlantis,* calls him "an old curmudgeon" who kept a house "like the Temple of Famine." [Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes, from the New Atalantis, *vol. iii. p.230.*] So miserly was he, she declares, that he used to leave home early in the morning, for fear lest any friend should drop in to breakfast. His whole idea was to save money, and to this end he would "weigh out Provisions to his Family, and seal up his Oven, that the hungry Domesticks might not pinch wherewith to appease the Cravings of Nature, from his number'd loaves." [Ibid., *vol. ii. p.210.*]

The duchess's two remaining sons were in every way superior to Lionel. Thomas Tollemache, the elder of the two, was a soldier who distinguished himself on many fields of battle. He eventually died of wounds received at Brest in 1693, in an engagement with the French when 800 men fell out of the 900 employed in the attack. His younger brother William entered the navy, and was a source of continual anxiety to the duchess. At the age of seventeen he had the misfortune to kill the second son of the Earl of Southesk in a street brawl in Paris. Only the influence of his mother saved him from a punishment much more severe than the heavy fine which was eventually imposed upon him. Of all her children William was the favourite. He is perpetually and most lovingly mentioned in her correspondence with Archbishop Sharp, who looked after the boy at one time when he was ill. [*See the* Lauderdale MSS. *in the British Museum.*] His mother's solicitude on the subject of William's health is shown by the tender care with which she prescribes the most drastic remedies for his cure, and explains in minute detail the exact medical treatment he is to undergo. After her son's recovery the duchess's gratitude to the archbishop gives abundant proof of the sincerity of her maternal devotion. Here, at any rate, we can find something for which to commend her.

Of her two daughters, Elizabeth, the elder, married Archibald, Earl (and afterwards 1st Duke) of Argyll. The marriage did not turn out happily. Elizabeth inherited her mother's shrewish temper, and after a short time she and her husband agreed to separate. The younger daughter, Catherine, was more fortunate, being twice happily married, first to Lord Doune, and subsequently to John, 15th Earl of Sutherland.

As the duchess grew older, she gradually lost most of her friends. Death and her scathing tongue swept them away out of her reach. With them, too, vanished that wit and vivacity which had rendered her bitterest satire pardonable. And from being a fiery, pugnacious woman all her life, she suddenly became a tolerant, melancholy, and even devout old lady. "I am well assured, whenever my time shall end in this life," she writes to one of her sons, "it will be an end to an Age of as many troubles as ever any one in my circumstances has suffered. And I trust in the Lord, as I am weaned from the world, so I shall be fully happie when I am out of it." [*Letter written on December 9, 1685, among the MSS. in the British Museum.*]

Financial matters still continued, however, to hold her interest and engage her thoughts. Eighteen months before her death she sends her "most Deare Lyonell" a letter entirely filled with instructions as to the disposition of her money. She is particularly anxious that all arrears owed by her at Michaelmas shall be paid, "that I may not lessen my credit In the Least or [be] exposed to the censure of not keeping my word, which would trouble me in the Highest Degree." [Ibid.] It was then a little late perhaps for the duchess to be worrying about keeping her word. Her past record proved that the act of breaking faith had never troubled her overmuch, and only the imminence of death can have awakened within her bosom this tardy sense of honour.

She died on the 4th of June, 1698, and was buried in Petersham churchyard, though no monument marks her resting-place there. Whatever her failings may have been – and they were no doubt numerous – it is an indisputable fact that no stateswoman – to use a term which Disraeli borrowed from Swift – has ever taken part in the domestic and political administration of Scotland with half the ability or the power displayed by Elizabeth, Duchess of Lauderdale.

Chapter 5 - Women of the Covenant - Lady Grisell Baillie

"Tyrants! Could not misfortune teach
That man has rights beyond your reach?
Thought ye the torture and the stake
Could that intrepid spirit break,
Which even in women's breast withstood
The terrors of the fire and flood!"

The Scottish Reformation which proved the outcome of John Knox's preaching was, as Carlyle observed, "the one epoch in the history of Scotland." The internal life of the country was then kindled: after a prolonged period of slumber Scotland at length rose from the dead. The Covenants were the natural product of this resurrection, and were destined to be, in the words of the martyr James Guthrie, "Scotland's reviving." But a country that was in the throes of such a revival had necessarily to pass through a period of persecution and bloodshed. The lives and liberties of her sons were freely sacrificed upon the altar of patriotism and principle. Nor were her daughters exempt from the persecution of these tyrannical times.

The martyrology of Scotland supplies many examples of feminine heroism: Catherine Douglas, immortalised as the "Kate Barlass" whose self-sacrifice delayed but could not avert the murder of James I.; Isabella, Countess of Buchan, the intrepid old lady who claimed the ancestral privilege of crowning Robert Bruce at Scone in 1305, and thereby suffered four years' imprisonment in a wooden cage in one of the outer turrets of Berwick Castle; Jane Douglas, Lady Glamis, who was burnt alive on Castle Hill, Edinburgh, in the sight of her husband, on a trumped-up charge of designing to poison James V.; and many others. And, in the Covenanting days, women of all classes were haled to the prison-house or to the stake, languished in the gloomy dungeons of Dunottar Castle, were branded on the cheek and transported to America, or perished in the waters of the Solway, victims of the bigotry and prejudice of a narrow-minded age.

The Scottish Presbyterians of the seventeenth century were engaged in a hard fight for a continuance of that religious liberty which their forefathers had long enjoyed. And when a royal hand attempted to enforce the adoption of the obnoxious English liturgy, they preferred persecution and death itself to admitting the divine right of kings to impose their will upon the conscience of their subjects. They had been strongly attached to Presbytery for many years. It was the form of church government which King Charles I. had promised to preserve. When, therefore, he proceeded to restore Episcopacy, declaring the Solemn League and Covenant unlawful, investing himself with the sole right of deciding all ecclesiastical and civil affairs – an act, as Bishop Burnet says, which was "only fit to be concluded after a drunken bout" [*"It shook all possible security for the future, and laid down a most pernicious precedent. It was a roaring time, full of extravagance. And no wonder it was so, when the men of affairs were almost perpetually drunk." –Burnet's* History of His Own Times.] – he succeeded in arousing in the bosoms of the Covenanters the strongest sense of injustice and a spirit of the most inflexible opposition. Further, when the renegade Sharp, who had gone to London to represent the Presbyterian view of the case, was induced by the offer of the archbishopric of St. Andrews to betray his trust, less venal Scotsmen were fully justified in adopting the most drastic measures to prove their own unswerving loyalty to the sacred Covenant.

A period of religious persecution of an extremely rigorous kind ensued. Parliament, by the king's command, ordered all ministers who had been admitted to parishes since 1649 to receive collation from the bishops or else leave their churches. The places of the three or four hundred who preferred the latter course were filled by youthful curates, many of them incompetent, some quite unworthy to officiate. As a result, Presbyterians very naturally discontinued their attendance at the parish kirk, flocking instead to the meetings which the dismissed ministers began to hold in the fields. To counteract this desertion, the authorities, moved by the protest of the Episcopalian clergy, decreed in 1663 that all who absented themselves from their parish kirks on the Lord's Day should incur stringent penalties. [*"Each nobleman, gentleman, and heritor, the loss of a fourth of each year's rent; and each yeoman or tenant the loss of such part of their movables as the Lords of Council shall modify, not exceeding a fourth; and every burgess his liberty, and the fourth of his movables."*] Women were not included in this Act, but, as they were the chief offenders, [*The Earl of Rothes, writing to the Earl of Lauderdale in 1665, on the subject of field meetings, declares that the women*

were mostly to blame, being stirred up by the ministers until they became "worse than devils." "I dear say, (he adds) if it uear not for the uimin uie should have litile trubell with conventickils or such caynd of stuff, bot ther ar such a ffulith (foolish) jenerasione of pipill in this cuntrie who ar so influensied with ther fanatick uayffs (wives) as I thinck will bring reuin upon them." (Lauderdale Papers, *vol. i. p.234.)*] it was soon found necessary to hold their husbands responsible for their misdoings. "Not many gentlemen of estate," says Kirkton, "durst come to the field meetings, but many ladies, gentlemen, and commons came in great multitude." Thus it came about that women, whose only crime lay in non-attendance at church, were not only a cause of persecution to their husbands, but were themselves insulted, fined, imprisoned. [*The following list of the fines imposed by inferior courts in the single shire of Roxburgh is given in Woodrow's* History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, *vol. iv. p.52. (The penalties imposed by the Council, from which there was no appeal, are not included.)*

Lady Chesters	*£14,780*
Lady Mangerton	*8,974*
" "	*500*
Lady Castles	*13,500*
Lady Tempendean	*1,405*
Lady Hassendean Scot	*2,146*
Lady Fotherly	*540*
Lady Cranston	*19,657*
" "	*1,412*
Lady Garinberry	*5,700*
Lady Craigend	*247*

	£68,861]

Ill-treatment, however, only served to fan the flame of their enthusiasm to a white heat.

Among those who were most zealous in the Covenanting cause we find the names of the Duchesses of Rothes and Hamilton, the Countess of Wigtown, Lady Kenmure, Lady Colvill, and many another well-known in Scotland. Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, was a particularly active partisan of the Covenanters. After the battle of Bothwell Bridge, when a number of them took refuge in the woods round Hamilton Palace, she successfully interposed to prevent the soldiers from continuing their pursuit of the fugitives. Her grandmother had achieved even greater distinction by the personal resistance she offered to Episcopacy. In 1639 Charles I. sent a fleet to Leith to enforce his views upon the religious enthusiasts of that locality. Lady Hamilton, [*Lady Anne Cunningham, daughter of the 7th Earl of Glencairn, and wife of the 2nd Marquis of Hamilton.*] whose son was in command of the king's naval force, appeared on the seashore with a brace of pistols at her saddle-bow, loaded with balls of gold – it was supposed that lead bullets could not pierce the magic armour of the devil's agents – and personally opposed his landing.

ANNE, MARCHIONESS OF HAMILTON

FROM AN ENGRAVING AFTER AN UNFINISHED PAINTING BY GEORGE JAMESONE

[*"The Covenanters conveened in great Numbers of Horse and Foot on both sides of the River* Forth, *to impede his landing (which he made no great Haste to do) and among the many comical Inventions of theirs for that Purpose one was, That his zealous Mother came riding to* Leith, *at the Head of some arm'd Troops, with two Cases of Pistols at her sadle, protesting that she would kill her Son with her own two Hands, if he did venture to land in an hostile Manner."* – The History of the

Ancient Noble and Illustrious Family of Gordon from the year 1576 to 1699, *vol. ii. p.280. (Edin., 1729.)*]

But the ladies of the Covenant did not enjoy a monopoly of this militant form of religious partisanship. Another Amazon, Ann Keith, Lady Methven, as keen in her hatred of Presbytery as the King himself, expressed her feelings with equal violence against the Covenanters. While her husband was away in London, it came to her knowledge that a field meeting was being held on his estate. Lady Methven thereupon assembled a force of sixty armed men, and proceeded to charge the conventicler-holders, who were about a thousand strong. With less valour than discretion the Covenanters retired before the attack of this infuriated lady, who celebrated her victory by attending a service at the parish church with her triumphant force. [*"My blessed love" (she wrote to her husband of this occasion), "if the fanaticks chance to kill me, it shall not be for noucht … in the strength of the Lord God of Heaven, I'll hazard my person with the men of my command, before these rebells rest where ye have power; sore I miss yow, but now mor as ever." Scott's* Works, *vol. xix. Pp.270-1.*] Another anti-Covenanting woman, whose husband had been ordered to appear before the court at Glasgow on a charge of attending conventicles, presented herself before the astonished judges and begged them to pass sentence of death upon him. "He is a rebel!" she declared with fervour; "hang him, my lords!" The judges, however, on discovering that it was the culprit's wife who was making this frantic appeal for his punishment, ordered his name to be scored out of the roll of misdemeanants. "That poor man suffers enough already at home!" they said. [*Woodrow's* Analecta, *vol. ii. p.114.*]

As the resistance of the Covenanters grew more strenuous and determined, the authorised persecution became more bitter. Neither the age nor sex of the victims was any security against ill-treatment. [*See* A Hind Let Loose, *by Alexander Shields, p.15. (1687)*] In 1681 a pair of youthful martyrs, Isabel Alison and Marion Harvie – the latter a domestic servant – were sentenced to death by the Justiciary for attending field preachings and commenting adversely upon the barbarity of the soldiers. Both, and Napier says, were "amply gifted with godliness, and the grace of unshaken obstinacy." [Life and Times of John Graham of Claverhouse, *vol, i. p.303.*] On the scaffold they joined in singing the Thirteenth Psalm, thereby drowning the voice of the curate who had been ordered to preach to them. Marion assured the assembled multitude that she was dying with a light heart. "I am come here today," she said, "for avowing Christ to be head of His Church. O seek Him and ye shall find him! I sought Him and found Him; I held Him, and would not let Him go!"

In 1685 we read of six women being branded and transported to New Jersey for a similar offence. [*Woodrow's* History of the Sufferings of the Church, *vol, iv. P.218.*] This same year saw the tragic death of the two wretched women, Margaret McLauchlin and Margaret Wilson, now known to fame as the Wigtown martyrs.

Margaret Wilson was the elder of the two daughters of Gilbert Wilson, a Lowland farmer of moderate means. He himself had agreed to conform to the Established Church, but both his daughters resolutely declined to do so. As was customary in such cases, the authorities visited the sins of the children upon the father by quartering a large body of troops upon his farm, in whose hands the unfortunate man saw his stock rapidly disappearing, and was finally reduced to beggary. Meanwhile, Margaret, a girl of eighteen, and her small sister Agnes, who was five years younger, ran away from home and lay for some time concealed in the woods near Wigtown. Here they were eventually found by an informer, and presently dragged before the local military tribunal. Gilbert Wilson succeeded in persuading the authorities to reprieve his youngest daughter on payment of a fine of £100. but Margaret was condemned to death, in spite of all her father's efforts on her behalf. Margaret McLauchlin was an elderly widow of humble rank, whose crime of non-conformity had gained for her a sentence similar to that of her younger co-religionist.

Mark Napier, the self-constituted apologist for the official brutalities inflicted at this time, ingenuously remarks that "a humane order had been issued by the Privy Council that women, if condemned to death, were to suffer *simply by drowning,* and neither to be hanged nor mangled." [The Case for the Crown in re the Wigtown Martyrs, *by Mark Napier, p.83. (1863.)*] But it may be wondered whether the victims themselves were ever sufficiently appreciative of such humanity.

On the day appointed for their execution the two women were led down together to the banks of the Solway and bound to stakes set in the sand on the seashore where the incoming tide would

gradually rise and suffocate them. In order to frighten the younger woman – perhaps with a merciful idea of terrifying her into renouncing her obstinate religious opinions and thus gaining a reprieve – she was fastened to a stake nearer the shore than her companion, whose slow struggle with death she was consequently compelled to watch. The sight did not, however, have the desired effect of cooling her ardour; if anything, it seems to have strengthened her convictions. When the waters finally overwhelmed the first victim, Margaret Wilson was asked what she thought of such a fate. “What do I see but Christ wrestling there?” she replied. “Ye think that we are sufferers? No. It is Christ in us, for He will send none a warfare of his own charge.” By this time the waves had risen rapidly about her, and when they reached her lips she fainted away. Whereupon the brutes who had charge of the execution unloosed her from the stake and revived her, bidding her, as a last hope of pardon, pray for the King. Margaret answered that she prayed for all men, since she desired the salvation of all. Some of her friends now approached and earnestly begged her to say “God save the King!” “God save him if He will,” she replied, “for it is his salvation that I desire.” The officer in command, Major Windram by name, then asked her to take the oath, but she stoutly refused. “I am one of Christ’s children,” she declared, “Let me go!” Seeing that it was useless to argue with her any further, the soldiers thrust her back into the water and held her down with their spears until she was drowned. The martyrdom of these two women – of whom it may truly be said that

“Persecution dragged them into fame
And chased them up to heaven”

- is commemorated by two monuments erected in their memory. [*The one at Wigtown, in the form of a cone-shaped pillar supporting an urn, is inscribed as follows:-*

“Here lyes Margaret Lachlane, who was by unjust law sentenced to dye by Lagg, surnamed Grier, Strachane, Winram, and Grame, and tyed to a stake within the flood for her adherence to Scotland’s Reformation Covenants, National and Solemn League, aged 63, 1685.”

The other monument, to the memory of Margaret Wilson, is at Stirling, and bears the inscription:-

HERE LYES MARGRAT WILLSON, DOUGHTER TO GILLBERT WILSON, IN GLENVERNOCH, WHO WAS DROUNED ANNO 1685, AGED 18.

LET EARTH AND STONE STILL WITNES BEARE

THEIR LYES A VIRGINE MARTYRE HERE

MURTHER’D FOR OUNING CHRIST SUPREAME,

HEAD OF HIS CHURCH AND NO MORE CRIME

BUT NOT ABJURING PRESBYTRY.

AND HER NOT OUNING PRELACY

THEY HER CONDEMN’D BY UNJUST LAW;

OF HEAVEN NOR HELL THEY STOOD NO AW

WITHIN THE SEA TY’D TO A STAKE

SHE SUFFERED FOR CHRIST JESUS’ SAKE.

THE ACTORS OF THIS CRUEL CRIME

WAS LAGG, STRACHAN, WINRAM, AND GRHAME.

NEITHER YOUNG YEARES NOR YET OLD AGE

COULD STOP THE FURY OF THEIR RAGE."]

Almost synchronously with the date on which the Wigtown martyrs were executed, another woman in an equally humble sphere of life displayed a spirit as courageous as theirs, though under somewhat different circumstances. Isobel Weir was the second wife of John Brown, and Ayrshire peasant, a carrier by profession and the mildest and most harmless of men. She and her husband had been married in 1682 by Alexander Peden. This famous minister had taken the opportunity of including in his address to the bride a prophecy which was scarcely calculated to promote the cheerfulness of the wedding ceremony. "Isobel," he said, "you have got a good man to be your husband, but you will not enjoy him long. Prize his company, and keep linen by you to be his winding-sheet, for you will need it when you are not looking for it, and it will be a bloody one." (While admiring the prophetic instinct of Mr. Peden, one may be truly thankful that the clergy of the present day are not addicted to interspersing such remarks into the marriage service.)

Three years later, as John Brown was returning home one evening, he was arrested by Claverhouse's troopers, and led back to his own house, where his wife and children were awaiting him. The bloodthirsty "Clavers," who was present, expressed his intention of having the carrier shot at once, but gave the doomed man a few moments to prepare himself for death. Three times did the soldier interrupt Brown in his loud and somewhat protracted devotions, saying that he had given him time to pray, not to preach. "Sir," answered the condemned man, "you know neither the nature of preaching nor praying if you call this preaching." Then, turning to his wife, he reminded her of Peden's gloomy warning, and asked her if she were willing to part with him. "I am heartily willing," said she. "This is all I desire," replied her husband, "I have nothing more to do but to die." He then gave her his blessing, commended his children to her care, and placed himself at the disposal of the dragoons. These men, touched no doubt by so affecting a scene, showed signs of nervousness and seemed unwilling to murder their prisoner. But Claverhouse, whether because he feared that his troopers might bungle the execution, or in the interests of military discipline, drew his pistol and himself shot Brown through the head.

"What do you think of your husband now?" he brutally inquired of Isobel as she knelt over the dead body.

"I aye thocht muckle o' him, sir," she replied. "But never sae muckle as I do this day."

"I would think little to lay thee beside him!"

"If you were permitted, sir, I doubt not you would; but how are ye to answer for this morning's work?"

"To men I can be answerable," said Clavers, "and as for God, I will take him in my own hands!"

Mark Napier has drawn a flattering portrait of Graham of Claverhouse, in which that general appears as a polished scholar, a gallant soldier, and a gentleman engaged in an unpleasant duty which he performed with firmness but tolerance. [*The bravest commander, and one of the most distinguished and proudest gentlemen who graced the highest society in those days."*- Life and Times of John Graham of Claverhouse, *vol. i. p.11*.] Doubtless Graham's methods were not those of that notorious persecutor, Sir Robert Grierson, laird of Lagg, who held burning matches between the fingers of mere girls in order to make them divulge the whereabouts of their fathers and brothers. Nor was he a murderous ruffian like General Dalziel, who thrust women into pits filled with toads and snakes because they were loyal to their persecuted kinsmen or supplied hunted refugees with food. But if the story of Isobel Weir be true – and doubts have been cast upon it – one must admit that Macauley's picture [*"A soldier of distinguished courage and professional skill, but rapacious and profane, of violent temper and of obdurate heart [who] has left a name which, wherever the Scottish*

race is settled on the face of the globe, is mentioned with a peculiar energy of hatred."] of the famous Dundee is more likely to be a correct one that that of his biographer. Sir Walter Scott does not seem able to make up his mind as to the character of the "bloody Clavers." At one moment he calls him "fierce, unbending, and rigorous," and declares that "no emotion of compassion prevented his commanding and witnessing every detail of military execution against the nonconformists." [Border Minstrelsy, *vol. ii. p.62.*] At another we find him telling a friend that Graham was "every inch a soldier and a gentleman." [*Lockhart's* Life of Scott.] And in *Old Mortality* [*Vol. ii. p54.*] he says that he "united the seemingly inconsistent qualities of courage and cruelty, a disinterested and devoted loyalty to his prince, with a disregard of the rights of his fellow-subjects."

Sir Walter was not at all disinclined to ridicule the Covenanters and laugh at the rigour of the extreme Calvinists, though his sympathetic drawing of the blind widow, Bessie MacClure, sitting in her blue gown by the wayside to warn the hillfolk, makes amends for a few unjust caricatures. No doubt there was many a Gabriel Kettledrummle, many a Habakuk Mucklewraith, in the camp of the Covenanters. [*Lord Cockburn in his* Journal *(vol. ii. p.80) gives an example of the survival of the old covenanting spirit. A poor woman, named Jenny Fraser, occupied a few yards of ground in one of the Duke of Buccleuch's parishes in Edinburgh, which, it was discovered, were not his, but hers, "being the only spot in that inconvenient condition." Jenny was offered a huge price for it, but declined, saying, "Na, na. It cam' frae the Lord, an' the Lord wants't again he shall hae't," A Free Church was eventually erected on this site.*] But the religious enthusiasts of Scotland were not all grim fanatics, devoid of humour and with the narrowest sense of right and wrong. Even in those serious time people could be good without being gloomy. John Knox himself sometimes spoke scornfully of the fair sex, and might well be considered an ascetic. But he, too, as we know from Stevenson, relied very largely upon the sympathy of women, and was in the habit of giving small but by no means unconvivial supper-partied to his friends. Even when he was dying, and some guests turned up unexpectedly, he insisted on trying to join them at table, and ordered a hogshead of wine in the cellar to be broached. The first two martyrs of the Covenant, Dr. James Guthrie and the Marquis of Argyll, were broad-minded men, humorous and without prejudice. "I could die like a Roman," were the latter's last words, "but I choose rather to die like a Christian." And Guthrie, on the eve of his execution, ordered a supper of cheese, a dish which his doctors had long forbidden him, remarking with a smile that he was now well beyond the hazard of all earthly diseases. [*See* Our Scots Reformers and Covenanters, *by the Right Hon. Lord Guthrie, p.13.*]

It is not to be wondered at if the dangers to which the Covenanters were hourly exposed, the atmosphere of suspicion and persecution in which they dwelt, the very scenery which surrounded their secret field meetings, engendered a spirit of enthusiasm bordering upon fanaticism. In some cases this took the form of hysterical frenzy, which impressed the devout, but only moved the unbeliever to mirth. In 1638, for instance, we read of one Margaret Mitchelson becoming subject to "fits of distraction" [*Napier's* Montrose and His Times, *vol. i. p.530.*] which had the effect of throwing her face downwards on her bed, where she spoke in favour of the Covenanters with such eloquence that her hearers wept. Bishop Burnet frankly calls her an "impostress," but we find that "many of the nobility and ministry and well-affected Christians thronged to hear her, being wonderfully moved with her speeches." [*MS. In the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh:* A True Relation of the Bishops in Introducing of the Service Book, etc.] They listened attentively to the ravings of one whom they regarded as the mouthpiece of God, declaring that it was the height of bad manners to interrupt their Maker. A selection of her prophecies, taken down by "such as were skilful in brachygraphy," and headed with a notice to the effect that on such and such a day "Mrs. Mitchelson gloriously spoke as follows," fell into the hands of the sceptical Earl of Airth. He facetiously altered the word "gloriously" to "gowkedly" (or foolishly), and became, in consequence, so unpopular that he narrowly escaped stoning in the public street.

As a rule the Covenanters were simple, quiet, unassuming folk, whose one desire was to be let alone to worship their God in their own way in accordance with the faith of their fathers. It is a great mistake to suppose that they were chiefly recruited from among the poorer classes of the community. This popular error is due, perhaps, to the fact that it was a poor market-woman, Jenny Geddes, who inaugurated the revolt against the prelacy by hurling her stool at the head of the Dean of Edinburgh. [*It may be noted that she subsequently contributed the materials of her stall to the bonfire lighted in honour of the King's coronation.*] As a matter of fact, the labouring classes and peasantry were as often as not as hostile to the Covenanters. The latter were generally well-educated and well-to-do, county gentlefolk, farmers, and their wives. They had much to lose in the way of

property and comfort, but they gladly risked all in this great national cause. On the womenfolk the ceaseless persecution fell with especial weight. Some, like Lady Earlston, who wrote the famous *Soliloquies,* shared their husbands' imprisonment, being subjected to the same rigorous confinement, though they did not suffer the ignominy of being kept in irons. Some, again, were stripped of their property and turned out of their homes by the villainous Dalziel, as was the case with the wife of William Mure of Caldwell, afterwards imprisoned for three years in a damp cell at Blackness. [*It is satisfactory to note that Lady Caldwell was subsequently restored, and after the Revolution, Dalziel's grandson was forced to return the Caldwell estates to their lawful owners.*] Others, Lady Campbell of Auchinleck, Lady Douglas of Cavers, Lady Greenhill, and many more, lived in a perpetual state of panic, while their husbands played an endless game of hide-and-seek with the indefatigable Clavers.

The fate of the Covenanters very often lay in the hands of their womenfolk. It was owing to the cleverness of his stepdaughter, Lady Sophia Lindsay, who smuggled a page's costume into his cell, that Archibald, 9th Earl of Argyll, escaped from his prison in the Castle of Edinburgh in 1681. His father, the old marquis, could have gained his liberty by a similar ruse, and even went so far as to change clothes with his devoted wife, had not his spirit rebelled at the last moment against the adoption of so ignominious a method of flight.

But perhaps the story of Sir Patrick Hume supplies as good an example of feminine fearlessness as any other, his escape being largely due to the devotion of his favourite daughter, Grisell. The tale of heroism with which her name is indissolubly connected, gives her the right to rank high among the Scottish heroines of the past.

Few women have been called upon to display such courage as was demanded of Grisell Hume from childhood; still fewer have spent themselves so unceasingly or so successfully in the cause of patriotism and filial duty. She lived in an age when, as we have seen, the rights of minorities were unrecognised, when the law was invariably on the side of the party in power, when independence of thought and freedom of speech were looked upon a treasonable, and the name of reformer was synonymous with that of rebel. Her childhood was spent in an atmosphere of political stress and social turmoil, with the shadow of the prison and the still darker silhouette of the scaffold in the background of her landscape, ever threatening the peace and happiness of her home. The peculiar circumstances in which her early life was passed, the hardships she underwent and the adventures she experienced, combined to strengthen a naturally strong character. She was, indeed, provided with many opportunities of proving that intrepid spirit of optimism which was her most priceless possession, and to which her family owed so much of their subsequent welfare.

Chapter 6 - Lady Grisell Baillie (1665 - 1746) (Continued)

Grisell Hume was the eldest of the eighteen children of Sir Patrick Hume, laird of Polwarth, and was born at Redbraes Castle, Berwickshire, on Christmas Day 1665. At the early age of twelve she was employed by her father in a particularly difficult and dangerous mission, which she carried out with a combination of daring and intelligence rare in one of her tender years. At that time Robert Baillie of Jerviswood, the famous Scottish patriot, was languishing in prison in Edinburgh. Sir Patrick Hume was anxious to establish communication with the prisoner, and to little Grisell was given the task of carry messages to and fro between her father and "the Scottish Algernon Sydney," as Baillie has been called. It was while engaged upon this perilous errand that the girl made the acquaintance of George Baillie, Robert's son, and acquaintance which gradually ripened into friendship, and from which eventually sprang that deep and lifelong affection which was destined to be crowned sixteen years later by the union of the happy pair.

The influence of the Baillies was a very important factor in the lives of the Humes. The fortunes of the two families were for a long time closely interwoven. In 1673, Sir Patrick Hume, who represented the county of Berwick in the Scottish Parliament, made a series of violent speeches attacking the Duke of Lauderdale and the Government of the day for their severe treatment of the Covenanters. In the following year he accompanied Lord Tweeddale and the Duke of Hamilton to London, in order to lay their grievances before the king. Here Sir Patrick aroused the enmity and suspicion of the authorities by presenting a vehemently-worded petition protesting against the official project of garrisoning the houses of the gentry as a means of checking the powers of the Covenanters. This led to his being sent in custody to Stirling, and there confined in the castle. He seems to have spent the greater part of the next four years in various Scottish prisons, from the

Edinburgh Tolbooth to Dumbarton, but was eventually liberated in 1679.

Meanwhile his friend, Robert Baillie of Jerviswood, who had gone to London to negotiate the settlement of a colony of Scottish Presbyterians in Carolina, was accused of conspiring with the enemies of the crown, and finally imprisoned at Edinburgh. Here he languished for a long time in a rigorous confinement which seriously affected his health. Baillie was supposed to have had a hand in the infamous Rye House Plot, which in 1684 threatened the lives of Charles II. and the Duke of York. A formal accusation of having taken part in it was eventually brought against him, and he had to stand his trial on the capital charge of treason. On being told that he might hope for a pardon, if he were willing to turn informer, he replied with characteristic scorn. “They that can make such a proposal to me,” he said, “neither know me nor my country.” After being brought in a dying condition to the Bar of the High Court of Justiciary, Baillie was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. During his confinement he had been denied the companionship of his wife, a sister of Archibald Johnstone of Warriston, who nobly offered to go into irons as a safeguard against any attempt to escape, if only she might be allowed to share her husband’s imprisonment. But his last hours were cheered by the presence of his devoted sister, Mrs. Kerr of Graden. She, indeed, insisted on accompanying him to the scaffold, and was present when, in accordance with the hideous custom of the day, his lifeless body was quartered and mutilated by the public executioner. We may assume that the visits of the pretty daughter of his old friend Patrick Hume helped to brighten the gloom of the Scottish patriot’s long imprisonment, and were not the least pleasant of the memories which he bore in his heart to the tomb.

In the following year Sir Patrick Hume was himself prosecuted for complicity in the Rye House Plot, though it is more than probable that he was innocent. On his failing to put in an appearance to stand his trial, he was denounced as a rebel, and his estates forfeited. The execution of Robert Baillie had caused much consternation and alarm in the Hume family, who feared that a fresh victim might be sought and found among their own members, and it was consequently deemed advisable that Sir Patrick should forthwith go into hiding. He concealed himself accordingly in a vault in the parish kirk of Polwarth, a mile or so distant from Redbraes Castle, on the banks of the Merse, and the heroism of his daughter was once more severely put to the test.

Every night would Grisell steal away from home to the churchyard, whose atmosphere suggested natural terrors to her youthful mind – for she was still but a girl – bearing the daily supply of food to her father in his gloomy refuge. Midnight found her at the door of the vault, and from that hour until daybreak she would stay talking to Sir Patrick, whose cheerfulness, fortitude and patience she seems in a large measure to have inherited. Her father found much comfort in these nightly visits. The girl would cheer him by recounting such trivial incidents of domestic life as were calculated to interest or amuse, and the chilly vault often re-echoed with the fugitive’s laughter. [*The lantern Grisell carried on these nocturnal pilgrimages, and the bed on which Sir Patrick lay in the vault, reading Buchanan’s Psalms to while away the tedious hours, are still preserved at Mellerstain.*]

The difficulties Grisell had to overcome in order to secrete from her own supper a sufficient quantity of food to carry to her father without arousing the suspicions of the servants, or even of her own brothers and sisters, were at times almost insurmountable. Once, when she had managed to conceal the greater part of her own dinner in her lap, her secret was nearly disclosed to some troopers who had come to Redbraes to search for the laird by the indignant remarks of a small brother. Master Hume insisted upon drawing his mother’s attention to his sister’s apparent greed. “Will you look at Grisell?” he cried. “While we have been supping our broth, she has eaten up the whole sheep’s head!”

Sir Patrick could not spend the rest of his life in a vault, and Grisell was already busy contriving a secret hiding-place for her father in a room on the ground floor at Redbraes Castle. With her own hands she scooped out the earth from a corner of the floor, whence it was carried out into the garden in a sheet by a faithful servant. A wooden box, fitted with air-holes and lined with blankets, was manufactured secretly and deposited in the newly-dug hole, and to this fresh hiding-place Sir Patrick was as length smuggled home. Alas! He had scarcely occupied his new shelter for a week before the cavity which formed his nightly refuge was suddenly found to be full of water, and the box floated up above the level of the flooring. The laird of Polwarth, always a deeply religious man, regarded this incident as a divine message of warning, and straightway made every preparation to

flee the country. He did not escape a moment too soon, for the party of troopers which was sent to visit his house and arrest him only missed the object of their search by a few hours.

Sir Patrick fortunately managed to elude immediate pursuit, and made his way to London by means of circuitous by-paths in the disguise of a surgeon-doctor. Thence he crossed over to France, and journeyed on foot to Holland. “So soon as I got upon the continent,” says he, in his *Narrative of Argyll’s Expedition,* [A Selection from the Papers of the Earls of Marchmont in the possession of the Rt. Hon. Sir. G.H. Rose, *vol. iii. p.2. (1831)*] “I stay’d but a short [time] in France, but spent some weeks in Dunkirk, Ostend, Bruges, and other towns in Flanders and Brabant, where I traversed before I came to Brussels; whither, [as] soon as I heard that he resided there, I went to converse with the Duke of Monmouth, but he was gone thence to the Hague; which led me, after waiting some time for him, in expectation of his return, on to Antwerp, and so to Holland.” On his arrival at Utrecht, Sir Patrick was at once granted an audience by the Prince of Orange, who, “looking on him as a Confessor for the Protestant religion, and the liberties of his country, treated him with a very particular respect.” [Lives and Character of the Officers of the Crown and of the State in Scotland, *by George Crawfurd.*]

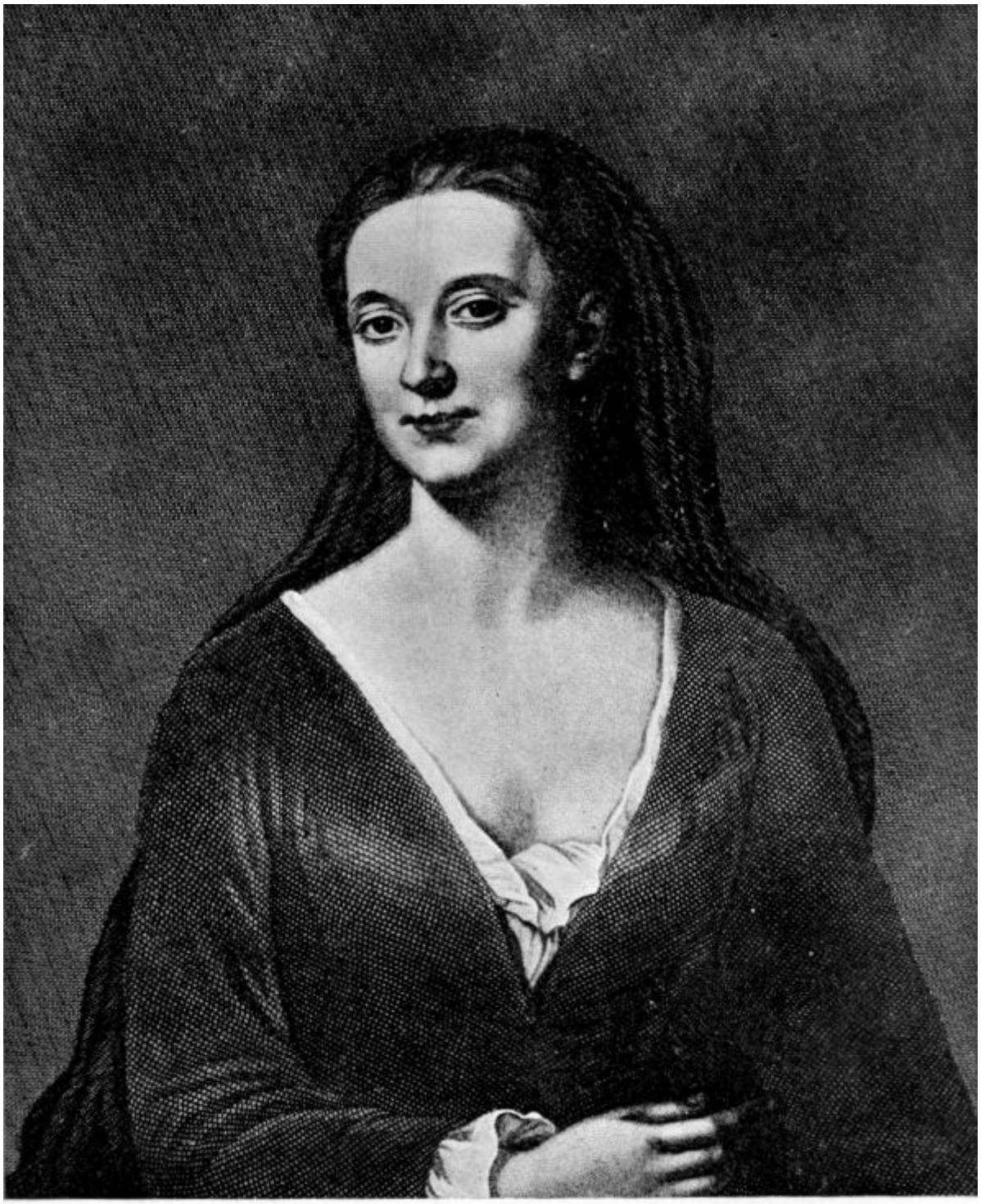
On the death of Charles II., and the subsequent accession of the Catholic Duke of York, those British refugees who had taken shelter in Holland planned two military expeditions, which were to land in England and Scotland under the respective commands of the Dukes of Monmouth and Argyll. Round these two leaders it was hoped that all the malcontents in Great Britain would speedily gather. Sir Patrick Hume was appointed second-in-command of the Scottish expeditionary force, and has left a relic of this adventure in the shape of his sword, upon which is engraved the motto, “*Gott bewarr die aufrechte Schotten.*” Both expeditions failed ignominiously in their purpose. Argyll was taken prisoner, and his force dispersed. Sir Patrick had to seek a precarious asylum in the house of friends, first with the laird of Langshaw in Ayrshire, and subsequently in an empty house belonging to one Eleanore Dunbar. He finally returned in 1686 to Holland, whither his family shortly afterwards followed him.

Owing to the fact that Lady Hume was a confirmed invalid, every arrangement for this journey had to be made by Grisell, who, not content with accompanying most of her family across the sea to Utrecht, returned to Scotland to fetch her little sister Julian, who was ill and had been left behind. When the two girls landed at Brielle, in the island of Voorne at the mouth of the Meuse, nobody was there to meet them. They were consequently forced to walk to Rotterdam, the invalid sister (who had lost her shoes in the harbour mud) being carried most of the way on Grisell’s back, while a kindly fellow-traveller looked after their modest baggage.

When at length the Hume family found itself safely settled at Utrecht, Grisell’s hands were even fuller than before. It was she who managed all the household affairs, went to market to purchase supplies, took the corn to the mill to be ground, in accordance with the Dutch custom, washed the linen, cleaned the house, prepared the dinner, mended the children’s clothes, and, in short, performed all the duties of a housewife and of a mother. The Humes were too poor to keep a servant, though they employed a little Dutch maid to wash the dishes. Every morning, therefore, at six o’clock, Grisell rose and lit her father’s fire, afterwards calling the old gentleman and giving him the dose of “warm small beer with a spoonful of bitters,” [Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of George Baillie and of Lady Grizel Baillie, *by Lady Murray of Stanhope, p.49. (1822).*] which he continued to take to the day of his death. In Holland Sir Patrick was known by the name of “Dr. Wallace,” and practised the art of medicine, which he had some elementary knowledge of, but did not find very lucrative. But in spite of their poverty the family was always able and ready to provide modest entertainment for other still more impoverished exiles from Scotland; their house was ever open to the local professors and other men of learning, who delighted in the society of so cultivated a man of the world as the mysterious “Dr. Wallace.”

Relying as they did upon monetary remittances from Scotland, the Humes occasionally found themselves in sore straits on the non-arrival of some long-expected ship from home, or when they experienced what has been called the “unremitting” kindness of absent friends. At times they were even obliged to pawn all their plate in order to provide for immediate needs. On one occasion, when, as was the custom in Utrecht, a house-to-house collection of alms for the poor was being made, they were horrified at finding that they could only muster up among them one coin of so small a value that

no one was brave enough to go out and present it to the public almoner. “We can do no mare than give all that we have,” said Sir Patrick at last, as with a smile he went forth to add his widow’s mite to the general collection. But in spite of such difficulties as these, the Humes appear to have been a happy and contented household – or at any rate as happy and contented as Scots can ever be away from the land of their birth.



LADY GRISELL BAILLIE

FROM AN ENGRAVING AFTER THE PAINTING AT MELLERSTAIN

George Baillie, the son of Baillie of Jerviswood, was one of the many fugitives from Scotland who fixed upon Utrecht as a suitable haven of refuge. The reason for his choice was not difficult to understand, and may be stated in one word – Grisell. When, at his father's death, he fled to Holland, the tenants of his estates at Mellerstain, not far from Redbraes, insisted on paying him all the rents that were due, and even advanced another half-year's rent as well. His property had been forfeited, and there was no reason why they should do this except as a means of showing their regard for their former landlord and their respect for the memory of his martyred father. On his way to Holland by sea, George Baillie joined his fellow-passengers, penniless refugees like himself, in a game of dice, in order to pass the time. He happened to be in a lucky vein, and before the ship reached harbour had won every penny his friends possessed. Thereupon he insisted upon returning their money, and made a resolution never to gamble again. (A cynic might observe that it would be more appropriate for the losers to make such a resolution, and it is to be hoped that they followed Baillie's good example.) At Utrecht George Baillie took up his quarters with the Humes, and, in company with Grisell's favourite brother, Patrick, enlisted as a trooper in the Prince of Orange's Guards, at that time quartered there. These two young soldiers, who rapidly became fast friends, contrived to arrange that they should always stand sentry together at the gate of the Prince's palace. They managed to share their other military duties as well in a way that no doubt made the work of a private soldier less irksome and laborious to each of them. Whenever his Royal Highness dined in public, as he made a habit of doing, the two were often posted together outside his door. If any pretty girls should happen to demand admission, these light-hearted sentries would set their halberts across the entrance and refuse to let them pass until they had each received a kiss. This practice, as Lady Murray declares in the Memoir of her mother, made the pretty girls of Utrecht think and call Patrick and George "very pert soldiers" – which they were thoroughly justified in doing. [*Lady Murray's* Memoirs, *p.51.*] But whatever piece of mischief young Baillie might be guilty of in his frivolous moments of military duty, it is certain that there was but one pretty girl whose kisses were of real value to him. Grisell had speedily won the susceptible soldier's heart, to which all the crossed halberts in the world could not deny her entrance. It was to her hand, which long ago had borne important despatches to the captive father, and was now so ready to starch and mend the military stocks and ruffles of the refugee son, that the latter aspired; nor did he aspire in vain. And in the course of the three-and-a-half years during which the Humes lived at Utrecht, the love of these two young people was the experience above all others which led Grisell in later years to refer to the period of her stay in Holland as the "happiest time of her life."

It was at about this time, too, that she began to write those simple songs, of which she has left a number of unfinished fragments – scraps which the burden of domestic cares and the stormy surroundings of her home never allowed her to complete – and one at least which is a perfect example of that rugged peasant poetry for which Scotland is so justly famous. Far from home, in a distant land, with the comfort of a large household to look after, she could yet find time and spirit to compose that homely pathetic ballad, "And were na my heart light I wad dee," upon which rests her reputation as a songstress.

[*"When bonnie young Johnnie came over the sea,*

He vow'd he saw naething sae lovely as me;

He gae me gowd rings, and mony braw things-

An' were na my heart light I wad dee.

His kindred sought ane of a higher degree-

Said, Wad he wed ane that was landless, like me?

Albeit I was bonnie, I was nae worth Johnnie-

An' were na my heart light I wad dee.

O were we young now as we ance had been,

We should hae been galloping down on yon green,

And linking it o'er the lily-white lea-

An' were na my heart light I wad dee."

-The Songs of Scotland, *by Allan Cunningham, vol. iii. p91. (1825)*]

In these verses Grisell tells the simple story of a disappointed lover and his lass, or rather, his two lasses. The oft-recurring last line of every stanza suggests something of the author's attitude of patience and courage; it speaks eloquently of the dogged and defiant spirit with which she bore the bludgeonings of fate. Her heart was often sad, but never despairing: her head was "bloody but unbowed."

Many years after her death a further set of verses was found in a parcel of old letters addressed to her brother Patrick, and published in Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine.* [*May 1818*] They are written in the same regretful strain as the rest, and would seem to show that, in spite of Grisell's habitual cheerfulness, there was a vein of natural melancholy underlying the optimism with which she forced herself to face the world:-

"O the ewebughting's bonnie, baith e'ening and morn,

When our blithe shepherds play on their bog-reed and horn;

While we're milking they're lilting baith pleasant and clear,

But my heart's like to break when I think on my dear!

O the shepherds take pleasure to blow on the horn;

To raise up their flocks o' sheep soon i' the morn;

On the bonnie green banks they feed pleasant and free;

But alas! my Dear Heart! all my sighing's for thee."

In the year 1688, William of Orange, in response to an invitation signed by the Earl of Devonshire and the rest of the famous "seven patriots," crossed over to England from Helvoetsluys and landed at Torbay. Sir Patrick Hume and George Baillie bade farewell to their womenfolk and accompanied the Protestant Prince to the land from which they had long been exiled. Their voyage across the sea was fraught with much peril. The vessel in which they sailed was driven back several times by adverse gales and nearly wrecked. But they managed to reach land in safety at last, and to the end of his life George Baillie kept a rigorous fast, one day a week, in commemoration of his escape from this threatened calamity.

The troubles of the Hume family were now practically at an end, though on the very day that

Grisell had news of the safe arrival in England of her father and lover, her joy was turned to grief by the sudden death of her sister Christina. She did not have much time for sorrowing, however, since upon her, as usual, fell the burden of escorting the family back to the old home, where Sir Patrick was now impatiently awaiting their arrival. [*One of the first acts of Sir Patrick on his return was to repair the parish church of Polwarth, which had fallen into decay. Lady Hume presented a bell, and Grisell embroidered green velvet hangings for the pulpit, which are still preserved.*]

On the return of the Humes to Scotland King William showed them every mark of his favour and consideration. In recognition of his services in promoting the establishment of the new king on the throne, Sir Patrick was created Lord Polwarth, appointed Chancellor of Scotland, and King's High Commissioner to Parliament, and finally, in 1697, made Earl of Marchmont. [*The following unpublished letter, which he wrote to William Bentinck, Earl of Portland, Groom of the Stole, First Gentleman-of-the-Bedchamber, and confidential adviser to King William, accepting the Chancellorship, throws some light upon the character of this modest and conscientious old gentleman:-*

"EDINBOURGH, 16 May, 1696.

"MY LORD, - Ther' can nothingbemore gatifying to me than to knou that your Lordship continues your favour towards me, which I well discern by your kind letter of 30th aprill last & for which I return your Lordship my heartiest thanks.

"His Majestie has been pleased to putt me in a high post, and your Lordship to recomend me to him for it, sure the King & your Lordship do think that I am fitt for the station, & do expect that I will approve my selfe suteably to the great trust I have; I am sensible that this thought is the greatest favour I can be capable of but the effect of it is such as makes my fear of not being able to answer expectation drown any satisfaction I can have in being promoted, and I am sure I shall have none, nor any thing but watching, pains and travell till by my services the K. doth find & your lordship that I do not disapoint the good oppinion of me.

"I resolve, god assisting, to heall any difference among the King's servants here, & to anticipat neu ones & all heats & animosities by a prudent early precaution & by my plain & clear way of dealing if it be as possible as I hope it is.

"I earnestly beg & hope that your Lordship will kindly & freely give me your advice & oppinion in matters for I shall need now frequently to trouble your Lordship with my letters not judgeing it proper to trouble much the King who is under so great a weight of affairs, now I have written to his Maj. what here I have sent your Lordship the copie of; which you will honour me to give to his hand; or let Mr. Pringle do it as you please. I hope before Long Your Lordship may have satisfying account of my deportment from honorable persons who will tell you the truth, and if I erre, I will not shun but beg my rebuke; for I am well resolved to comett as few errours as I can, or if I doe, so amend them with all diligence.

"My son Major Hume would have been over with the recruits but is & has been so very ill of a great cold & violent dry cough that he could not travell by land or sea without evident hasard of his life; when his Majesty knows this I believe he will allow of his absence till he be recovered for which he is useing all means, & I hope your Lordship will both excuse him & make his excuse to the King, which will be a great addition to the many kindnesses you have heaped upon – My Lord, your Lordship's most obliged & ever faithfull servant,

POLWARTH."

(This letter is preserved among the family papers at Welbeck Abbey.)]

George Baillie had in the meanwhile been restored to his estates, and was at last able to lay his fortune at the feet of the woman he worshipped. Grisell had meanwhile received many offers of marriage from wealthier and more eligible suitors, and was now offered the post of Maid of Honour to Queen Mary. She declined this high position, however, as she had declined the proposals of her

admirers, preferring to return to Scotland, where her lover awaited her. Here she and Baillie were married of the 17th September 1692, their union being the prelude to a life of wedded bliss which extended over a period of fifty-four years.

George Baillie proved a most tender and devoted husband. In later life he suffered from deafness, and, as is the way with deaf people, would at times give way to momentary outbursts of irritability, but these were of brief duration, and no one regretted them more than he. He was a wonderfully generous man, delighted in giving presents to his family and friends, and never returned home from any visit to London without bringing back a trunkful of gifts for his children. But he particularly disliked being made the recipient of presents himself, and once, when a man who sought some favour at his hands gave him a parrot, he returned it with much indignation. (This one can readily understand. To be given a parrot at any time is annoying, but when such a gift partakes of the nature of a bribe it becomes doubly offensive.) Speaking of her husband and of the great happiness he had brought her, Lady Grisell declared that she would have been quite content to live with such a man as he "on bread and water on the top of a mountain." "Their long-tried faith in honour plighted," sings Joanna Baillie –

"They were a pair by Heaven united…

Her heart first guess'd his doubtful choice,

Her ear first caught his distant voice,

And from afar, her wistful eye

Would first his graceful form descry.

Ev'n when he hied him forth to meet

The open air in lawn or street,

She to her casement went,

And after him with smiles so sweet,

Her look of blessing sent."

It was, in fact, a perfect *ménage,* as indeed might be expected. But Lady Grisell did not spend her whole time smiling from her casement upon her husband's graceful form as it met the open air. She would often set forth in the evening in her sedan chair to grace the assemblies which were then held in Bell's Close, and soon became a well-known figure at these entertainments.

Lady Grisell Baillie had three children, a son, who died in childhood, and two daughters. Rachel, the eldest, married Lord Binning (from whom are descended the Earls of Haddington), while her sister Grisell, who marries Sir Alexander Murray of Stanhope, and wrote a most charming Memoir of her mother – "the best and tenderest of mothers," as she called her – is the "sweet-tongued Murray" whose name occurs in the poem dedicated to Pope by John Gay, entitled, "Mr. Pope's Welcome to Greece."

["What lady's that to whom he gently bends?

Who knows not her? Ay those are Wortley's eyes.

How art thou honoured, number'd with her friends;

For she distinguishes the good and wise.

The sweet-tongued Murray near her side attends…"]

Lady Grisell always treated her children as friends rather than children, spoke openly and without reserve to them on all matters of interest, confided in them freely, and thus won their confidence in return. George Baillie, too, was the kindest and most considerate of fathers, and wrote long letters full of good advice to his family whenever he and they were parted. In middle life the Baillies took their children to Utrecht to show them the scenes of their early struggles and dawning love. Here, however, they experienced intense disappointment through being curtly refused admittance to their old home. It was now in the hands of a cantankerous of Dutchwoman, who resolutely declined to accede to the Baillies' harmless request for permission to revisit the rooms which youthful memories had made so dear to them.

In 1703 Grisell's mother, Lady Marchmont, who had long been an invalid, died at Edinburgh. Her last words were addressed to the daughter who, ever since she was a girl, had taken so much of the burden of domestic cares off her shoulders. "My dear Grisell," said the dying woman, "blessed be you above all, for a helpful child have you been to me." This was surely a sufficient reward for all those years of self-sacrifice and devotion which Grisell had lavished so bounteously upon her family.

Lady Marchmont's death was followed six years later by that of her eldest son Patrick. Under these successive shocks old Lord Marchmont aged rapidly, [*He married again, however, his second wife being Lady Jane Home, generally known as "Bonnie Jean o' the Hirsel," a woman many years younger than himself.*] but even during his last illness he showed signs of that buoyancy of disposition which had brought him successfully through so many trial. On one occasion, when a dance was being given at Berwick, whither he had moved from Redbraes in 1717, he insisted on being carried down to the ballroom, declaring that though he could no longer dance, he could still beat time to the music with his foot. He bore his sufferings bravely to the end, and met death with a smile. When he lay dying in 1724, weak and emaciated after a long illness, he suddenly burst out laughing, and on being questioned by Lord Binning, his grandson-in-law, as to the cause of this merriment, "I am diverted," he replied, "to think what a disappointment the worms will meet with when they come to me, expecting a good meal, and find nothing but bones!" He was always most anxious that his nephews and nieces and grandchildren should be educated as cheerfully as possible. "Special care should be taken," he wrote in a letter to his wife, "to keep them hearty and mirry, laughing, dancing and singing. If I were among them I would help their mirth by a tune on the flute, which I am learning of, and pretty good at: and I dare say that I laugh more beyond measure and to excesse every day, than might doe their mother and them much good, was it parted among them." [*Lady Murray's* Memoirs, *pp.128-129.*] There is something very delightful in the idea of this genial old grandfather playing the flute, like Pinero's "Cabinet Minister," to keep up the spirits of his grandchildren. One failing only Lord Marchmont possessed, and that was a love of hearing himself talk. Indeed he has been described as a garrulous old man who could hardly give advice to a friend without delivering an oration on the subject. [Memoirs of the Secret Service of John Mackay, *p.217. (1733)*] Be that as it may, the fact remains that his children were devoted to him, and Grisell in particular was a continual solace to him in his old age. She made a point of going to Scotland every second year to visit him and look after his affairs. This she did very thoroughly, and once laboured over his accounts for two months on end, from five in the morning till midnight, exhausting all the other members of the household, whose energy was not as untiring as hers, even if their interest in domestic matters had been as keen.

In her views of filial duty she did not resemble the majority of married women, who, as Joanna Baillie says, on assuming the cares of a wife and mother, allow these to absorb every other, and seldom visit the house of their parents, or, when they do, consider themselves the honoured guests who have nothing to do there but to be served and waited upon. The care of elderly parents is usually relegated to the unmarried daughters, but Lady Grisell was evidently not of opinion that filial

duty ends with matrimony.

She did not, however, confine her attention solely to her own family. Her generosity was boundless, and during the troublous times which preceded the rebellion of ’45, she was wont to give freely to distressed persons of both parties. This excellent practice she continued as long as she had any money, and, when the supply was exhausted, is said to have borrowed from others in order to relieve the needy – a form of vicarious charity which is not perhaps invariably to be recommended. She found herself in financial difficulties at this time, owing to her generosity and the impossibility of getting funds from Scotland, and sent for the tradesmen with whom she was in the habit of dealing to inform them frankly of her insolvent condition. The shopkeepers of that day seem to have been of a more confiding, trustful disposition than their descendants. They unanimously declared that they would continue to serve their old customer, knowing well that she would pay them if she possibly could, but that, if not, she was more than welcome to their goods. It is to be feared that a modern tradesman who placed such confidence in the integrity of his patrons, though he might for a time be overwhelmed with custom, would soon realise (as he mournfully proceeded to put up his shutters) the futility of carrying on business upon purely philanthropic principles.

George Baillie died in 1738 at Oxford whither he and his wife had gone to look after the education of their grandsons. His life had been a stirring and eventful one, and towards the end of it he had taken a prominent place in the world of politics. “Union” Lockhart describes him as being “morose, proud, and severs, but of a profound solid judgment,” and declares that he was by far the most significant man of his party, “to whom he was a kind of dictator.” [The Lockhart Papers, containing Memoirs and Commentaries upon the Affairs of Scotland from 1702 to 1715, *by George Lockhart, Esq. of Carnwath, vol. i. p.95. (1817)*] As a member of Parliament Baillie attended to his duties with the utmost regularity. He always expressed the greatest contempt for those persons, who, as he said, after moving heaven and earth to get into the House of Commons, never troubled to be present at debates. In 1715 he spoke eloquently in favour of showing mercy to the rebels, saying with some emotion that he himself had been bred in the school of affliction and had learnt the virtue of clemency. He even entertained the families of the unfortunate prisoners, and assisted them to the best of his ability. He had always been a very religious man and constant in his devotions. Towards the end of his life his doctor considered that he was spending too much of his time in prayers and too little in the open air, and begged him not to shut himself up in his room so much, but to say his prayers in the garden or as he drove about the streets. “You are a better physician than divine,” replied Baillie, “since you would only serve God with your own conveniency.”

Grisell Baillie only survived her husband’s death for eight years. Lady Murray has left a description of her mother’s character and an account of her life from which it is not difficult to gain a fair idea of Lady Grisell’s many sterling qualities. She was, says her biographer, of a modest and retiring disposition, speaking little save in the company of intimates, yet gifted with a quick and ready wit, which flashed out through her conversation and caused her society to be much cultivated by her friends. The hospitality which she dispensed was lavish but at the same time unostentatious, for she was economical without being mean and generous without being extravagant. It was, she declared, her chief delight to give happiness to those around her, and in this she was eminently successful. In later life she spent much of her time and money upon her numerous grandchildren, of whom she was passionately fond. Her long experience as virtual head of her father’s household had given her a knowledge of business and the management of affairs of which she was justly proud, which no doubt conduced to the comfort and welfare of her own home. Scottish women have always made the best housekeepers in the world, and Lady Grisell was no exception to the rule.

Lady Murray, describing her mother’s personal appearance, declares that she was very handsome, with a good figure and “a life and sweetness in her eyes very uncommon, and great delicacy in all her features.” Her hair was of a rich chestnut colour, and her clear complexion, rosy cheeks, and red lips, “as fresh as those of a girl of fifteen,” remained unaltered to the end of her days.

When she lay dying in 1746, in her eighty-first year, she asked that her husband’s letters should be buried in her grave. At her daughter’s urgent request, however, she consented to renounce the idea. On her death-bed she desired that the last chapter of Proverbs should be read to her. It would surely be too much to say that she herself belonged to that type of virtuous womanhood, “whose price is far above rubies,” described so beautifully in that memorable passage. “The heart of

her husband doth safely trust in her… She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands… She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens… She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy … Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in the time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

With Grisell Baillie there passed from the human stage one who may justly be called a perfect wife and daughter, tender, devoted, true. Joanna Baillie declares that she would have made "a meet and magnanimous Queen." As a queen she certainly reigned in the hearts of her family and of all who knew her, and to the present generation she must appear as one of the most charming characters in the domestic history of Scotland.

Lady Grisell Baillie was buried by the side of her husband at Mellerstain, on Christmas day 1746, and the following epitaph, composed by Sir Thomas Burnet [*Son of Bishop Burnet.*] and engraved upon her tomb, gives as concise an account and appreciation of her life and character as the pompous language of the period permits:-

HERE LIETH

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY GRIZEL BAILLIE

WIFE OF GEORGE BAILLIE OF JERVISWOOD, ESQ.,

ELDEST DAUGHTER

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PATRICK, EARL OF MARCHMONT,

A PATTERN OF HER SEX, AND AN HONOUR TO HER COUNTRY,

SHE EXCELLED IN THE CHARACTERS OF A DAUGHTER, A WIFE, A MOTHER.

WHILE AN INFANT

AT THE HAZARD OF HER OWN, SHE PRESERVED HER FATHER'S LIFE;

WHO, UNDER THE RIGOROUS PERSECUTION OF ARBITRARY POWER,

SOUGHT REFUGE IN THE CLOSE CONFINEMENT OF A TOMB,

WHERE HE WAS NIGHTLY SUPPLIED WITH NECESSARIES, CONVEYED

BY HER

WITH A CAUTION FAR BEYOND HER YEARS,

A COURAGE ALMOST ABOVE HER SEX;

A REAL INSTANCE OF THE SO-MUCH CELEBRATED ROMAN CHARITY.

SHE WAS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF CONJUGAL AFFECTION,

THAT KNEW NO DISSENSION, FELT NO DECLINE,

DURING ALMOST A FIFTY YEARS UNION;

THE DISSOLUTION OF WHICH SHE SURVIVED FROM DUTY, NOT CHOICE,

HER CONDUCT, AS A PARENT,

WAS AMIABLE, EXEMPLARY, SUCCESSFUL,

IN A DEGREE NOT WELL TO BE EXPRESSED,

WITHOUT MIXING THE PRAISES OF THE DEAD WITH THOSE OF THE LIVING;

WHO DESIRE THAT ALL PRAISE, NOT OF HER, SHOULD BE SILENT.

AT DIFFERENT TIMES SHE MANAGED THE AFFAIRS

OF HER FATHER, HER HUSBAND, HER FAMILY, HER RELATIONS,

WITH UNWEARIED APPLICATION, WITH HAPPY ECONOMY,

AS DISTANT FROM AVARICE AS FROM PRODIGALITY.

CHRISTIAN PIETY, LOVE OF HER COUNTRY,

ZEAL FOR HER FRIENDS, COMPASSION FOR HER ENEMIES,

CHEERFULNESS OF SPIRIT, PLEASANTNESS OF CONVERSATION,

DIGNITY OF MIND,

GOOD BREEDING, GOOD HUMOUR, GOOD SENSE,

WERE THE DAILY ORNAMENTS OF A USEFUL LIFE,

PROTECTED BY PROVIDENCE TO AN UNCOMMON LENGTH,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL WHO FELL WITHIN THE SPHERE OF HER

BENEVOLENCE.

FULL OF YEARS, AND OF GOOD WORKS,

SHE DIED ON THE SIXTH DAY OF DECEMBER 1746,

NEAR THE END OF HER 81ST YEAR,

AND WAS BURIED ON HER BIRTHDAY, THE 25TH OF THAT MONTH.

Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth (1651 - 1732)

It cannot be denied that in the world of Art or of Literature, Scottish women have never occupied a very prominent place. Scotland has yet to produce a Rosa Bonheur, a Georges Sand, and Charlotte Bronté. It is impossible to compare Joanna Baillie with Elizabeth Barratt Browning, or Miss Ferrier with Jane Austin or George Eliot. The Scotswoman's genius is not of a creative or speculative kind. But for sheer individuality she cannot be rivalled. Looking back at the history of the past six centuries, it is not difficult to find many examples of Scottish women whose personalities have had a

profound influence upon their times. Scotswomen of strong – if occasionally eccentric – character, of shrewd intelligence, of active wit, have again and again inspired the men of their day to heights which the latter would never have reached without feminine assistance. The great ladies of the court, in particular, were fully sensible of the responsibilities attaching to their high social position, and for the most part worthily upheld the traditions of their rank.

An excellent example of a woman of title whose life and conduct earned universal respect, and who exercised a beneficial influence upon her contemporaries, in Anna, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, whom Sir Walter Scott was proud to number among his distinguished ancestry.

Of the many Scottish families which rose to greatness upon the ruins of the mighty house of Douglas, the Scotts were by no means the least important. When the last Earl of Douglas died in retirement about 1491, some years after he had been handed over as a prisoner to King James III., his vast estates were divided among those who had remained loyal to the crown. Sir Walter Scott of Kirkurd and Buccleuch had assisted in the downfall of the Douglasses at the battle of Arkinholme in 1455, and his services were rewarded by grants of lands in the forests of Ettrick and Selkirk and in the shire of Roxburgh. He acquired also the lands of Branxholm, and in his time Branxholm Castle was first established as the residence of the Buccleuch family. His descendant Walter, Lord Scott, was created Earl of Buccleuch in the year 1619.

Francis, 2nd Earl of Buccleuch, died in 1651 without male issue, and his title and estates passed to his daughter Mary, who at once became the greatest heiress of her day in Scotland. At the early age of eleven this unfortunate child was married to a kinsman, one Walter Scott of Highchester, a boy of fourteen. Vainly did some of the girl's relations and her tutor, Sir John Scott of Scotstarvet, seek to have this scandalous marriage annulled. They were not strong enough to counteract the influence of the little countess's mother, Lady Margaret Leslie, only daughter of John, Earl of Rothes, and widow of Lord Balgonie, a clever and determined woman who, after her second husband's death, married David, 2nd Earl of Wemyss. The dowager-countess had her way, and as soon as the heiress reached the age of twelve, at which she could legally effect a marriage of her own free will, the girl was persuaded to approve of the proposed match, and went to Dalkeith to commence married life with her boy husband.

Mary was a delicate child. Her premature marriage cannot have had a beneficial effect upon her health; and having been taken up to London by her mother to be touched by the King for the "cruels," she died there, after a short two years' experience of matrimony, and was succeeded by her sister Anna.

Anna, (or Anne, as she is generally called), Countess of Buccleuch, was born in the year 1651 at Dundee, where her mother is supposed to have gone to act as an intermediary between General Monck and the Scottish nobility. Her early life was spent at Dalkeith, and later on, when her mother married again, at Wemyss Castle. She was, of course, as great an heiress as her sister had been, and the question of providing her with a suitable husband was one that immediately occupied her mother's mind. General Monck is supposed to have wished his son to marry her. But Lady Wemyss was, as has been seen, an ambitious and designing woman, and, after taking note of all the possible suitors for her daughter's hand, fixed her final choice upon James, Duke of Monmouth, the natural son of Charles II. and Lucy Walters. To this arrangement, supported as it was by the powerful Earl of Lauderdale, the King offered no objection, and on 20th April 1663, when little Anne was in her twelfth year and Monmouth but a trifle older, the marriage between the two children was duly solemnised at Wemyss Castle in the presence of the King and Queen. Monmouth at once assumed his wife's name of Scott. On the day of their wedding he was created Duke of Buccleuch, and, two days later, his newly-acquired honours were celebrated by a banquet given by the King to the Knights Companion of St. George on the name-day of their patron saint.

A marriage under such conditions, and between parties of so immature and age, was scarcely calculated to prove a success. From the very first moment of their wedded life, Monmouth and his duchess were at complete variance. They differed in character as well as in tastes. The duke's charms were chiefly of a physical order. "His figure, and the exterior graces of his person were such," says De Grammont, [Memoirs of the Count of Gramont, *p.294. (1846)*] "that nature, perhaps, never formed anything more complete: his face was extremely handsome; and yet it was a manly

face, neither inanimate nor effeminate; each feature having its beauty and peculiar delicacy: he had a wonderful genius for every sort of exercise, an engaging aspect, and an air of grandeur: in a word, he possessed every personal advantage; but then he was greatly deficient in mental accomplishments." [*On the other hand, in a contemporary MS at the Advocates' Library, entitled* Historical Researches on the Antiquity and Anecdotes of the Noble Family of Buccleuch, *Monmouth is described as one whose "learning was greater than any of his Rank at that time, without the least alloy of Pedantry."*]

His duchess, on the other hand, was probably not very handsome, or if she was, her contemporaries were so dazzled by the brilliance of her mental qualities that they failed to observe of record her physical attractions. John Evelyn, the diarist, calls her "one of the wisest and craftiest of her sex." [Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn, *vol. ii. p87. (1857.)*] Grammont, again, tells us that her mind possessed all those perfections in which the handsome Monmouth was deficient. [*Grammont's* Memoirs, *pp.295-6.*] It might be imagined that two persons who were each the complement of the other could have managed to live together as husband and wife without friction or unhappiness. Unfortunately, Monmouth's views of the duties of a husband did not coincide with those of his duchess – nor indeed with those of any self-respecting wife. He was "ever engaged in some Amour," as the Duke of Buckingham relates in his Memoirs, [The Works of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, *vol. ii. p.15 (1723)*] and was consequently not only a severe trial to his duchess, but the universal terror of husbands and lovers. Wife, widow, or maid, no woman was safe from his intrigues. "The Duke of Monmouth has so little employment in state affairs," wrote the Dowager-Countess of Sunderland to Sidney in 1679, "that he has been at leisure to send two fine ladies out of town. My Lord Grey has carried his wife into Northumberland, and my Lady Wentworth's ill eyes did find cause, as she thought to carry her daughter into the country in so much haste that it makes a great noise, and was done sure in some great passion. My Lord Grey was long in believing the Duke of Monmouth and unfaithful friend to him. He gave her but one night's time to take leave, pack up, and be gone." [Diary of the Time of Charles II., *by the Hon. H. Sidney, pp.263-4 (1843)*]

The duke did not confine his amorous attentions to married women alone. He dallied for a time with Eleanor, daughter of Sir Robert Needham, and one of their children, Henrietta Crofts, afterwards became Duchess of Bolton. But the chief intrigue of his life was the very genuine attachment which he formed for Henrietta, Lady Wentworth. [*She was the granddaughter of Thomas, Earl of Cleveland, by whose death, in 1667, she became Baroness Wentworth in her own right.*] His affection for the lady was sincere and most warmly returned. Lady Wentworth lived with Monmouth for many years, and even shared his banishment, and he was so far faithful to her that on the day of his death he stoutly declared her to be his only wife in the eyes of God.

If the duke's and the duchess's views of conjugal morality differed widely, their ideas of loyalty were equally dissimilar. Monmouth's perpetual plotting against the crown is a matter of history. The duchess, on the other hand, by steering clear of the sea of conspiracies in which her husband was always plunging with such utter recklessness, managed to preserve the favour of James II. (and later of William III.) to the end of her life. The Duke of York, speaking to Bishop Burnet on the subject of the duchess's integrity and loyalty, in 1673 – when it was proposed that the King should declare that he had been legally married to Lucy Walters, and thus legitimise the Duke of Monmouth – affirmed that not even the hopes of a crown would tempt her to do an unjust thing. [*Bishop Burnet's* History of His Own Times, *p.177.*] Indeed, if she ever interfered at all in politics, it was either to save her husband from the consequences of his numerous indiscretions or to contribute towards his advancement. For this purpose she was well served by the friendship which the Duke of York openly professed for her, though the intimacy of so useful and uncle, whose only object, it is thought, was to convert the duchess to the Roman Catholic faith, gave mutual enemies an excuse for unfavourable comment. "Whether this familiarity of theirs was contrived, or only connived at, by the Duke of *Monmouth* himself, is hard to determine," says the Duke of Buckingham. [The Works of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham *(Memoirs in the Reign of Charles II.) vol. ii. pp.12-13.*] "But I well remember that after these two Princes had become declared enemies, the Duke of York one day told me with some emotion, as conceiving it a new mark of his nephew's insolence, that he had forbidden his wife to receive any more visits from him: At which I could not forbear frankly replying, that I who was not used to excuse him, yet could not hold from doing it in that case; wishing his Highness might have no juster cause to complain of him. Upon which," adds this candid friend, "the Duke, surprized to find me excuse his and my own enemy, changed the discourse immediately."

The Duke of York was not the only good friend made by the duchess during the course of a long life. Sir Gideon Scott, her guardian, and George, 1st Earl of Cromartie, were ever ready to give her advice as to the management of her private affairs; and for the conduct of her estates she depended upon the business-like qualities of her brother-in-law, George, Earl of Melville, with whom, however, owing to an unfortunate lawsuit, she quarrelled in her old age. Lord Wemyss, her stepfather, was a man of active and able mind. Before Anne's mother became his wife he had already been twice married, first of all to Jean, daughter of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, and secondly to Lady Eleanor Fleming, daughter or the Earl of Wigton. His second wife was in some ways a remarkable character. During her brief two years of married life she managed to spend a hundred thousand merks of her husband's money. Also, being addicted to a love of strong potations, [*Chamber's* Domestic Annals of Scotland, *vol. ii. p.215.*] she had a door pierced through the wall of her bedroom into the adjoining wine-cellar, in order that, in distant anticipation of Mrs. Gamp, she might "put her lips to the bottle when so dispoged." To Lord Wemyss the duchess was devoted, and always displayed the warmest affection for her half-brother David, Lord Elcho.

The Princess of Wales was another of Anne's friends. Lady Cowper, one of her Royal Highness's ladies-in-waiting, describes how at a supper-party given by the princess in 1716 she met the Duchess of Buccleuch, who entertained and delighted the company with amusing stories of the court of Charles II. [The Diary of Mary, Countess Cowper, *p.93. (1865)*] The princess "loved her mightily," says Lady Cowper, "and certainly no Woman of her Years ever deserved it so well." [*Ibid., p.125.*] Owing to her influence at court the duchess was often able to perform many kindly actions, to which the natural benevolence of her disposition prompted her. Sir Walter Scott, in a note to the autobiography of his great-grandfather, declared that this fire-eating old gentleman – "Beardie," as he was always called – who served with Dundee in 1685, ran a grave risk of being hanged but for the timely intervention of Duchess Anne.

As was becoming in a woman of her station, the duchess extensively patronised the drama and literature of her day. The poet Gay – afterwards destined to become famous in the service of another duchess – was for a time her secretary. She showed especial appreciation of Dryden, who, in return for her favour, dedicated *The Indian Emperor* – the first of his plays to attract public notice – to one whom he termed his "first and best patroness." [*Dryden's* Works, *vol. viii. p.120 (1808)*] In his preface to this work the poet heaps compliments upon both duke and duchess, whom he declares to be "a pair of Angels sent below to make Virtue amiable in their persons" – for, though Monmouth's far from angelic conduct somewhat belied this description, poets could not then afford to be too particular. *The Indian Emperor* was played at the King's Playhouse in 1667, with Nell Gwyn in the part of the Emperor's daughter, "a great and serious part," says Mr. Pepys with his customary candour, "which she does most basely." [Diary of Samuel Pepys, *August 22, 1667.*] And in the following year the play was performed at court by an amateur company which included the Duke and Duchess of Monmouth. The histrionic talent displayed by these titled amateurs was not apparently of a very high order, if we are to believe Mr. Pepys, who bluntly remarks that "not any woman but the Duchesse of Monmouth and Mrs. Cornwallis did any thing but like fools and stocks" [*Ibid., January 14, 1668.*] – though it is only fair to add that the diarist was not himself among the audience on this occasion.

In *The Duke of Guise,* which was produced in 1682, Dryden frankly brought his patrons upon the stage. This play was of an avowedly political character; its meaning and moral were but lightly veiled. The Covenant was represented in the play by the League in France; the return of the Duke of Guise to Paris was analogous to that of the Duke of Monmouth to London. It naturally followed that the character of Marmoutière, tenderly treated by the dramatist, was that of the duchess, whose intimacy with the Duke of York corresponded to that of the king and Marmoutière in the play.

Monmouth's position was at this time a perilous one. In 1679, owing to suspected complicity in the Rye House Plot, he had been banished, a punishment which would doubtless have taken a more severe form but for the duchess's influence in high places. And on the death of Charles II., he planned a futile invasion with the Duke of Argyll, landed at Lyme in 1685, was defeated and taken prisoner at Sedgemoor. His trial and death sentence followed in due course.

Monmouth had many good points besides his personal attractions. "Brave, generous, affable," is a description given of him by a contemporary, [Memoirs of the Most Material Transactions in England, *by S.J. Welwood, p.152. (1820)*] "constant in his friendship, just to his word, and an utter

enemy to all sort of cruelty." Of his humanity the Covenanters had experience after the fight at Bothwellhaugh, when he forbade his troops to put the prisoners to death. His personal bravery has never been questioned. He served with distinction in France in 1673, and in Flanders a few years later. And on the day of his execution he evinced a spirit of unflinching fortitude which evoked general admiration. The duchess, too, bore this tragic ordeal with wonderful courage. She and the duke had long been estranged, owing to the latter's invariable inconstancy and the curious fancy he entertained for any wife but his own. But however little real affection she may have felt for him, it was impossible for a woman of her sensitive temperament to contemplate with equanimity the execution of one who was still her husband and had once been her lover.

The scene at their meeting, on that night that Monmouth was committed to the Tower, must have been peculiarly affecting. At this interview the duchess behaved with becoming calm, adopting a generous attitude towards the man who had wronged her so deeply and for so long. If, she declared, she had ever said or done anything displeasing to her husband – save in regard to his predilection for other women or his disobedience to the late king – if she had failed in duty or obedience as became a wife and a mother, she was ready to fall upon her knees and humbly ask his pardon. Monmouth's reply was equally creditable to his good sense and feeling. He assured his wife that he had no cause for complaint in her conduct either towards himself, his children, or his king. And at the final farewell meeting, which took place on July 15, in the presence of his two sons and a company of officials and friends, Monmouth publicly declared his duchess to be innocent of any cognisance of his designs against the crown. He further begged her to forgive him for his many offences against her and for the irregular life which he had led, and earnestly committed his children to her charge. His composure throughout this affecting scene was remarkable, and he bade adieu to his weeping children with perfect self-control. [*He continued to assert, however, that Lady Wentworth was his wife in the eyes of God, and that it was to her he owed all affection and fidelity (*Memoirs of Sir John Reresby, *p,213.)*]

As the fatal hour approached, the duchess, who had hitherto restrained her emotion, broke down, and, bursting into tears, once more asked her husband to forgive her if she had ever in any way offended him.

Even on the scaffold Monmouth's courage did not forsake him, and his conduct made a deep impression upon all who were present on this tragic occasion. "Rash in his undertakings," as Grammont describes him, [Memoirs, *p.294*] "irresolute in execution, and dejected in his misfortunes, in which, at least, an undaunted resolution ought to equal the greatness of the attempt," James, Duke of Monmouth, me his death – made needlessly painful by the bungling of an incompetent or nervous executioner – with exemplary fortitude.

They sympathy felt for the duchess under this trial was universal, nor was it lessened by the sudden death of her daughter Anne, a few days after Monmouth's execution. The King showed his goodwill in a practical manner by giving her a re-grant of her titles and estates, so that she continued, as she had been since 1666, Duchess of Buccleuch in her own right. Badly as her husband had treated her, she could not refrain from mourning his loss. To the friends who, in order to cheer her, explained to her how highly the world had extolled her conduct during the duke's unkindness and disloyalty, she replied simply that she had bought that commendation dear.

After three years of widowhood the duchess was secretly married to Charles, third Lord Cornwallis, [*"Visited the Duchess of Monmouth, she being newly come to town. She owned that she had been married three weeks to Lord Cornwallis, and that she went into the country to avoid the clutter usual upon those occasions."* – Correspondence of the Earls of Rochester and Clarendon, *vol. ii. p.173*] by whom she had one son and two daughters. Lord Cornwallis has been described by a contemporary as "a Gentleman of sweet disposition, and great lover of the Constitution, and well esteemed in his native County of Suffolk; inclining to Fat, fair Complexion." [Memoirs of the Secret Service of John Mackay, Esq., *p.105.*] She continued to reside a great deal in England, paying occasional visits to Scotland. She bought a house in Edinburgh in 1712, and, at her palace at Dalkeith, which in her old age she restored and refurnished, continued to keep up a state befitting the widow of a prince. Johnson, in his *Life of Gay,* says that she was "remarkable for inflexible perseverance in her demand to be treated as a princess." She ordered a canopy to be erected in her

room, and would sit beneath it to receive her friends with much ceremonial, while her attendants stood round in attitudes of respectful deference. It is said that even at meals she was the only person present who was allowed a chair. And Robert Chambers tells us that she was the last person of quality in Scotland to keep pages of good birth.

At her house at Moor Park she gave sumptuous entertainments to numerous guests (among them being Queen Mary), and some idea of the state maintained at Dalkeith may be gathered from an extract taken from the Duchess's household book, quoted by Arnot in his *History of Edinburgh:-*

Table of Her Grace the Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, kept at Dalkeith, A.D. 1701 and 1702.

Present, the family, Earl of Rothes, Earl of Hadington, Lord Elcho, and three gentlemen.

DINNER

First Course. Haunch of venison boiled; roast mutton; veal collops; boiled fish; pidgeon pye; brown fricassee of rabbits; whiting pottage. *Second Course.* Roasted wild fowl; roasted chickens; eggs in gravy; fried flounders; collard pig; buttered crabs; tarts.

DINNER. (Her Grace's Table)

First Course. 200 Oysters; bacon and pease pottage; haggiss, with a calf's pluck; beef collops; mutton roasted, three pints; fricassee of five chickens; remove, a roasted goose. *Second Course.* Six wild fowl, and six chickens; buttered crabs; collard beef; tarts; four roasted hens.

It may be presumed that the duchess, her family, and six guests, after devouring 200 oysters and the remainder of this gargantuan feast, did not carry out the modern precept which insists of the advisability of rising from the table hungry. To provide so vast a daily meal as this was not in reality as expensive a matter as it sounds today. A price-list of provisions is also given in the Dalkeith household book, from which we learn that a hen cost 1s2d, a pair of chickens 10d, that oysters were only 2s per 100 – fourpence more than the same number of onions – but, on the other hand, such luxuries as anchovies were priced as high as 4s per lb., and an equal quantity of nutmeg could not be obtained for less than 16s. [*"The Countess of Argile debit to John fferguissone, June 15, 1690.*

To 6 ounce and a half tea. 10. 16. 00

To 2 botles hungarie water. 02. 02. 00

To 2 Indian florored gravatts. 10. 16. 00

23. 14. 00."

(from the Duchess of Argyle's Letters. MSS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.)]

In 1668 the duchess had the misfortune to meet with a painful accident whereby she sprained her thigh, - "dancing at her lodgings," says Mr. Pepys [Diary, *May 9, 1668.*] – and the muscles of one leg became contracted, making it shorter than the other and laming her for life. This physical infirmity does not seem to have affected either her spirits or her temper. When she was sixty-five years old, says Lady Cowper, "she had all the Life and Fire of Youth, and it was marvellous to see that the many afflictions she had suffered had not touched her Wit and good Nature, but at upwards of Threescore she had both in full Perfection." [Diary of Mary, Countess Cowper.]

Luttrel [Brief Relation of State Affairs, *vol. v.*] declares that she married a third time, the Earl of Selkirk, but there seems to be no foundation in fact for this assertion.

In her old age the duchess was sometimes in temporary financial difficulties owing to the

unbusiness-like and casual fashion in which her pension was paid. On September 11, 1712, we find her writing to complain of this to Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford:-

"MY LORD. - You will oblige me verie much if you put her Majesty in mind that I did the other day represent to her the uneasiness I suffer in my affairs, by reason of the great Arrears due upon my jointure, Your Lordship can not but think it verie hard for me to pay Interest for borrowed money, whilest I have a Grant settled in the manner your Lordship knows mine is…"

The Earl's reply, though it was not written until an interval of four months had elapsed, has at any rate the merit of extreme candour:-

"MADAM (he writes), I received the honour of Your Grace's Lre, and I do assure Your Grace, that it is very greivous to me to see any thing unpaid of the Demands upon the Civill List, but particularly that Your Grace's payments are in Arrear; Let me acquaint Your Grace with the true reason: when the Queen comanded my Service in the Treasury I found the Establish'd Expence of the Civil List exceeding the Income One hundred Thousand pounds Yearly, add to this a Debt of severall hundred Thousand pounds, and for the most part due to the meanest and most necessitous people. This has been struggled with and I hope we are near a Method of Discharging the whole Debt. I have thus plainly laid the truth before Your Grace, and I beseech Your Grace to accept the assurances that I will take particular care of Your Grace's payments…" [*These letters are preserved among the family papers at Welbeck Abbey, and have never before been published. On the back of the duchess's letter is the following note, probably in Lord Oxford's hand: " Ds Bucclieuch, paid by Wt. [Warrant] dated 28th Febry. 1710/1711 6000l. for a year & halfe to Xmas 1709: 4000l. p. annum."*]

It is to be hoped that Lord Oxford kept his promise, and that his correspondent was not put to any further inconvenience owing to the curious inadequacy of the Civil List.

The duchess lived to the age of eighty, and died on February 6, 1732. on the day that the notorious Colonel Charteris was buried – when so great a storm arose that the superstitious believed it to be caused by the Devil's arrival in person to carry away the wicked Colonel – Anne, Duchess of Monmouth and Buccleuch, who,

"In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb,"

was laid to rest in her own peaceful sepulchre in the family vault of the old church of Dalkeith.

Catherine, Duchess of Queensberry (d. 1777)

The houses of Scott and Douglas, of Buccleuch and Queensberry, have long been connected by ties of blood and friendship. Janet, daughter of David Scott of Branxholm, and Sir James Douglas of Drumlanrig, by their marriage in the year 1470, became the common ancestors of the two families. In later days these houses were still more closely allied. Francis, son of James, Earl of Dalkeith, who married Henrietta Hyde, daughter of the Earl of Rochester, inherited the Dukedom of Buccleuch through his grandmother Anna. He in turn married Lady Jane Douglas, eldest daughter of the second Duke of Queensberry, and thus the third Duke of Buccleuch succeeded in 1810 to the Queensberry title as well.

The name of Douglas has inspired poets, dramatists, and historians, from Scott and Home downwards,

[*"Douglas, a name through all the world renoun'd –*
A name that rouses like the trumpet's sound! –
Oft have your fathers, prodigal of life,
A Douglas followed through the bloody strife."
- The Tragedy of Douglas (*Prologue.)*]

to the most enthusiastic eulogies in prose and verse, and an old rhymed saying, long common in the

mouths of Scotsmen, declared that –

"So many, so good as the Douglasses have been
Of one sirname were never in Scotland seen."

An early biographer of the Douglas family, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, traces their pedigree as far back as the days of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, the father of that monarch who pursued Moses with such malignant fidelity. According to this historian, a certain Gathaleus was the general of Pharaoh's troops, who, with the assistance of his lieutenant Sayas, succeeded in defeating the ever-hostile forces of the Ethiopians. As a reward for this victory he was given the hand of Pharaoh's daughter Scota. Gathaleus and his bride journeyed to Portugal, where they were joined by the faithful Sayas, and the descendants of these two families eventually came to Scotland and founded the house of Douglas. [The History and Martial Achievements of the Houses of Douglas, Angus, and Queensberry, *p. v. (Edinburgh, 1769.)*] "I shall add no more," says this old chronicler, with an exhibition of self-restraint all the more commendable in one who obviously possessed so exceptionally vivid an imagination, "but give me Leave to ask all Christian Kings, Princes, and Noblemen, and the Flatterers who have wrote their Genealogies, conquests, Exploits and Battles, if they can produce a family equal in Nobility, antiquity, and Valour to the House of *Douglas?*" "What family," he asks, "ever did, in Favour of their Country, what the *Douglasses* have done for the Honour and Advantage of Scotland?" [*Ibid., p.xix*]

On the 10th of March, 1720, Charles Douglas, 3rd Duke of Queensberry, a Privy Councillor, and Lord of the Bedchamber to George I., married Lady Catherine Hyde, second daughter of Henry, Lord Hyde, who afterwards succeeded to the earldoms of Rochester and Clarendon.

Lady Kitty was already one of the reigning toasts of her day. Her mother, a lovely woman whom Prior has immortalised as Myra in his *Judgment of Venus,* bequeathed her good looks to at least two of her eight children, - to Kitty, whose beauty was no less famous than her eccentricities, and to Jane, the "Blooming Hyde, with eyes so rare," mentioned by Gay in the prologue to his *Shepherd's Week.*

It may be urged that Kitty, Duchess of Queensberry, has no right to a place in these pages, since she was not by birth a Scotswoman. Indeed, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was malicious enough to suggest that she was not even a Hyde, but the daughter of Lord Carleton, - a calumny for which there does not seem to be the slightest justification. But if the duchess was not of Scottish birth, her husband was a Scotsman, and she herself was such a well-known figure in the society of the Scottish capital that the inclusion of her name in a list of the notable Scottish women of the past may perhaps be pardoned.

Of the duchess's early life there is little record. It is said, on I know not what authority, that she was at one period confined in a strait-waistcoat, and by her crazy conduct in later years she certainly seems to have deserved, if she did not actually obtain, an occasional dose of physical restraint. A whole chapter could easily be filled with an account of her various eccentricities. Horace Walpole, who, though he lived to alter his opinion, was not at one time particularly fond of her, [*"Thank God! The Thames is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry!"* – The Letters of Horace Walpole, *Edited by Peter Cunningham, vol. ii. p86. (1857.)*] relates a typical story of her Grace driving off post-haste to Parson's Green to Lady Sophia Thomas, bearing news, as she declared, of paramount importance. "What is it?" asked the astonished Lady Sophia. "Why," replied the duchess, "take a couple of beefsteaks, clap them together as if they were for a dumpling, and eat them with pepper and salt; it's the best thing you ever tasted: I couldn't help coming to tell you!" [*Ibid., p.161*] And away she drove back to town! (In this story the duchess reminds one of the night-watchman in one of Max Adeler's tales who used to wake people up in the middle of the night to remark that bananas were the best bait for cat-fish.) Walpole's only comment on such conduct is that "a course of folly makes one very sick!"

At a ball which the duchess gave at Drumlanrig the guests were all assembled and the band had started playing when the hostess suddenly declared that she was suffering from a headache and could not bear the noise. The dancing was stopped then and there, to the great disgust of the assembled company. Lord Drumlanrig had, fortunately, some experience of his mother's peculiarities,

and knew how to deal with them. He at once proceeded to seize the big armchair in which the duchess was sitting, and ran it violently round the room two or three times, saying that this was by far the best treatment for a headache. Whereupon his mother realised the humour of the situation, admitted that her temporary indisposition was cured, and graciously allowed the dance to proceed.

The duchess always appears to have found peculiar scope in the ballroom for a display of her eccentricities. At a masquerade which she once gave at her house in London, she had large notices containing regulations as to the conduct of the dance posted all over the walls, turned half her guests out of the house at midnight, kept the remainder to supper, and, in short, as Walpole tells us, "continued to do an agreeable thing in the rudest manner imaginable." [The Letters of Horace Walpole, *vol. ii. p.86*.] On this occasion, too, she insisted on dressing her husband up in Scottish costume, which was then – it was only a few years after the Rebellion of '45 – considered particularly offensive, if not openly disloyal.

She herself made a point of wearing at all times the garb of a Scottish peasant woman, and was curiously surprised at the uncomplimentary comment it evoked. [*"Everybody's eye would strike them that my dress was exactly according to form," she writes, "if their ears had not been (by some ill accident or other) used to hear it unjustly condemned."* – Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk, *vol. ii. p.99*] On account of this habit of hers and edict was issued forbidding ladies to appear at Court in aprons. The duchess decided, however, to ignore it, and gaily presented herself at the next Drawing-room attired in her usual simple dress, which, becoming as it was, must have looked singularly out of place at St. James's. The lord-in-waiting on duty attempted to stop her at the door, explaining as politely as possible that she could not be admitted in an apron. Whereupon the duchess lost her temper, tore off the offending garment, flung it in his lordship's astonished face, and strode into the circle dressed in her rustic gown and petticoat. Such conduct naturally gave rise to unflattering criticism.

Again, when in her official capacity as lady-in-waiting the duchess was present one day in the Queen's room while her majesty was dressing, she was suddenly so completely overcome with the humour of the situation that she was obliged to creep out of the window on hands and knees, in order to avoid giving way in the royal presence to an outburst of indecorous laughter. Her breaches of court etiquette were the result of light-heartedness and a frivolous disposition; they were not due to lack of education or *savoir faire* as in the case of her predecessor, Jane Warburton, Duchess of Argyll. [*Jane was maid of honour to Queen Anne and afterwards to Queen Caroline, and, though well-born, was very indifferently educated. The removals of the court from palace to palace were superintended by a state official known as the "Harbinger." On one occasion, when the ladies-in-waiting, on a rumour of a sudden move to Windsor, were consulting together about their baggage, "Well, for my part," said Jane, "I shan't trouble myself. Must not the 'Scavenger' take care of us maids of honour?"* Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke, *edited by the Hon J.A. Home, vol. iii. p.423*] Lady Mary Coke, in her Journal, gives an account of an afternoon call paid on her in 1768 by the Duchess of Queensberry, who was then an elderly woman. Lady Mary happened to remark that she had heard of her Grace dancing at a ball at Gunnersbury, but had not had the pleasure of seeing her. "You may see me now," said the old lady, and immediately proceeded to skip round the room with amazing agility. [*Ibid., vol. ii. p.345*]

The duchess's practice of wearing clothes which were unsuited to her rank and position often got her into trouble at other places besides the Court. She once arrived at a military review dressed in her customary garb, and on trying to approach the duke was rudely pushed back into the crowd by one of the sentries who had naturally failed to recognise the great lady so disguised. Her fury at this insult was only appeased when her husband promised that a sound flogging should be administered to every man of the guard as a lesson in the folly of judging by appearances.

To the end of her life the duchess remained loyal to the fashion in dress which was in vogue when she was a girl, and flatly declined to make any change in her costume. Being a singularly handsome woman, she could afford to be eccentric on this point. Whitehead the poet, to whom she declared that the frequent alteration in feminine fashions was merely a lure to catch male attention, admitted this when he wrote the following verse in reply:-

"Your Grace will contradict in part

Your own assertion, and my song,
Whose beauty, undisguised by art,
Has charmed so much, and charmed so long."

The lively Kitty was always in the very best of spirits –"the cheerful Duchess," Gay called her [*"Yonder I see the cheerful duchess stand,*

For friendship, zeal, and blithesome humours known."] – and combined a strong sense of humour with great tenderness of heart. Many of her friends had experience of her kindly nature. When old Lady Lichfield was stricken with blindness, the duchess would go and sit by her bedside night after night, cheering the invalid with her amusing society and that ceaseless flow of gossip and anecdote with which her conversation sparkled. Though a sweet-tempered woman as a rule, there was one thing that never failed to rouse her righteous indignation. "I declare to you, she writes in one of her letters to Dean Swift, "nothing ever enlivened me half so much, as unjust ill-usage, either directed to myself or to my friends." This hatred of injustice and oppression caused her to become involved in the case of the poet Gay when his play *Polly* was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain. She warmly espoused the cause of the dramatist, and consequently both she and the duke fell into dire disgrace in high quarters.

Gay had scored a huge success by his *Beggar's Opera*, which was acted in London for sixty-three nights – a long run in those days – and afterwards scored a similar triumph in the provinces. The Italian Opera, then at the height of its popularity, unable to compete with Gay's rival production, was forced to close its doors. Such was the enthusiasm evoked by the *Beggar's Opera* that (according to Pope's notes to the *Dunciad*) "ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens." The actress who took the part of Polly rose from obscurity to fame, rapidly became the favourite of the town, and her pictures were engraved – this was long before the days of pictorial post-cards! – and sold in great numbers. But when the play was published, certain puritanical persons, notably Dr. Herring, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned it as vicious and likely to prove subversive of public morality. The fact that the hero was a highwayman and that he went unpunished, was, in the eyes of these critics, a distinct encouragement of vice. When, therefore, Gay wished to produce a sequel entitled *Polly,* the authorities declined to license it. The forbidden play was consequently published by private subscription in 1728, and the Duchess of Queensberry exerted herself violently on the author's behalf, even going so far as to solicit subscriptions within the sacred precincts of St. James's. Writing to Swift on the subject of the unsuccessful efforts made by the duchess to have the embargo removed from his play, Gay says that she was allowed to have shown "more spirit, more honour and more goodness, more understanding and good sense" than was thought possible in those times. [The Works of Jonathan Swift, *edited by W. Scott, vol. xvii. P.269 (Edin., 1814)*]

So anxious was the duchess to secure a licence for her poet that she even offered to read the play to King George in his closet, so as to satisfy his Majesty that there was no harm in it. But the King laughingly declined this offer, saying that he would be delighted to receive her Grace in his closet, but hoped to amuse her there better than by the literary employment she proposed. [*Ibid., vol. xvii. P.199*]

At last, owing to her continued importunity, the duchess was forbidden to appear at court. This punishment she accepted with her usual cheerfulness. When Lord Hervey said to her that, now she was banished, the palace had lost its chief ornament, "I am entirely of your mind," she replied. [The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delaney, *edited by Lady Llanover (1862), vol. i. p.199*] And to the Vice-Chamberlain, whose duty it was to inform her that his Majesty had reluctantly determined to dispense with her society, she wrote a most spirited and characteristic letter. "The Duchess of Queensberry is surprised and well pleased," she wrote, "that the King hath given her so agreeable a command as to stay from Court, where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a civility on the King and Queen; she hopes by such an unprecedented order as this is that the King will see as few as he wishes at his Court, particularly such as dare to think or speak truth. I dare not do otherwise, and ought not nor could have imagined that it would not have been the very highest compliment that I could possibly pay the King to endeavour to support truth and innocence in his house, particularly when the King and Queen both told me that they had not read Mr. Gay's play. I have certainly done right, then, to stand by my own words, rather than his Grace of Grafton's, who

hath neither made use of *truth, judgment,* nor *honour,* through this whole affair, either for himself or his friends." [Autobiography of Mrs. Delaney, *vol. i. p.194.*]

The Duke of Queensberry also sided with Gay in this affair, and showed his disapproval of the position taken up by the King by resigning all his appointments. Including that of Vice-Admiral of Scotland. He shortly afterwards attached himself to Frederick, Prince of Wales, then in opposition to the King, and was appointed one of his Royal Highness's Lords of the Bedchamber.

The persecuted Gay was invited to take up his quarters with the Queensberry family, and spent the remainder of his life under their protection. At "Jenny's Ha'," a famous Edinburgh tavern opposite Queensberry House, the poet might often be seen in the company of Allan Ramsay and other congenial cronies. The duke undertook the management of his financial affairs; the duchess nursed him when he was ill, and both of them treated him, as he says in one of his letters, as though he had been their nearest relation or their dearest friend. [*Swift's* Works, *vol. xvii. P.268.*] He became secretary to the duchess, and no doubt helped her to manage the little theatre which she had fitted up in Queensberry House, where dramatic performances were frequently given for the entertainment of her guests.

In 1739, ten years after the *Polly* affair, the duchess once again came into collision with the authorities, when she headed a party of intrepid ladies who successfully stormed the gallery of the House of Lords. The Peers had unanimously resolved to exclude ladies from a gallery which had long been assigned to their use, but was now kept for members of the House of Commons. But a number of fearless dames, led by the Duchess of Queensberry in person, presented themselves at nine o'clock one morning at the door of the House and peremptorily demanded the right of entrance. Sir William Saunderson, the official on duty, politely informed the deputation that the Lord Chancellor had issued an order forbidding their admittance, and that it was consequently impossible for his to let them in. Vainly did the duchess cajole and wheedle; the obdurate Black Rod declined to change his mind. When at last she tried the effect of threats, Sir William lost his temper and said that "By G-! they should never enter the House!" The duchess replied with equal indignation that "By G-! they *would*, in spite of the Lord Chancellor and the whole House of Peers!" Sir William reported this altercation to the Chancellor, and it was determined to keep the doors shut, and thus starve the ladies into submission or induce them to give up and go home. These inexorable females were not, however, to be got rid of so easily. They sent out to an adjacent cookshop, procured a supply of provisions, and manfully stood their ground from nine in the morning till five o'clock at night. By this time, of course, a huge crowd had gathered to watch the fun, and, while some of its members jeered at the ladies, others urged them to continue the siege, and even encouraged them by thumping loudly upon the doors of the House. Seeing that violent methods were not likely to prove effective, and having perhaps more regard for decorum than those modern "suffragettes" whose methods they to a certain extent anticipated, the duchess and her friends determined to accomplish their purpose by means of a ruse. They accordingly made up their minds to keep perfectly silent for the space of half-an-hour – a task which would tax the powers of endurance of the least garrulous of their descendants. At the end of this period the Chancellor, unaccustomed to such self-control on the part of the fair sex, came to the conclusion that the besieging party had gone home. He thereupon ordered the door to be opened, and the ladies, who had been awaiting this opportunity with exemplary patience, rushed in immediately, took possession of the gallery, and celebrated their victory in a thoroughly feminine and illogical fashion by interrupting the debate with laughter and conversation. [Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *edited by Lord Wharncliffe, vol. ii. p.37. (1861.)*]

When Gay died, [*A.D. 1732. ("Unpensioned with a hundred friends."* –The Dunciad.)] the duchess, who had long been his best friend was very deeply affected. "It is not possible to imagine the loss his death is to me," she wrote, "but as long as I have any memory, the happiness of ever having such a friend can never be lost to me." [*Swift's* Works, *vol. xviii. P.151.*] And again, two years later, "I often want poor Mr. Gay," she says; "his loss was really great, but it is a satisfaction to have once known so good a man." [Life of Alexander Pope, *by P. Carruthers, p.300. (1862)*] The poet died in the Duke of Queensberry's house, and was honoured by a magnificent funeral at his patron's expense. On his tomb in Westminster Abbey was engraved, by his own express desire, the famous if frivolous couplet from one of his letters to Pope:-

"Life is a jest, and all things show it;

I thought so once, and now I know it."

And the duchess induced the author of the *Dunciad* to write a suitable epitaph for the monument which she erected in the Abbey to her favourite's memory.

The Queensberrys were eventually pardoned for their share in the affair of Gay and his forbidden drama, and in 1747 we hear of the duchess once more attending the Court. [Autobiography of Mrs. Delaney, *ii. p.469*.] She was also present at a royal party given in 1749 by the Duke of Cumberland at Richmond, where Walpole met her, "in the middle of all the principalities and powers," in her usual "forlorn trim, white apron and white hood." [*Walpole's* Letters, *ii. p.161*.] When George III. ascended the throne the reinstatement of the Queensberrys to royal favour was complete. The duke regained his seat on the Privy Council, and was appointed Keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, and, later on, Lord Justice-General. The Queen paid a visit to the duchess, who in turn appeared at a Drawing-room – for the first time for forty years – in such high spirits that she could not resist committing many minor breaches of court etiquette.

The excitement occasioned at this time by the famous "Douglas Cause" was shaking society to its very foundations. Public feeling ran high, especially between the kinsmen and supporters of the houses of Hamilton and Douglas, who were now called upon to range themselves behind the chiefs of their respective families. When the Duke of Douglas died in 1761, his estates, devolved upon his nephew Archibald, the only surviving son of Lady Jane Douglas. But the Duke of Hamilton, suspecting that this was a suppositious child, endeavoured to assail his claims, and affirmed that Archibald was not the son of Lady Jane at all. The case lasted for seven years, and during this time the excitement as to the issue of the trial was intense both in Edinburgh and London. Home, the dramatist, attributes the failure of his play, *The Fatal Discovery*, to the lack of public interest in anything but the Douglas Cause, [Autobiography of Alexander Carlyle, *p.509*] his former tragedy, *Douglas,* having been so popular as to evoke from an excited Scotsman in the gallery the celebrated remark: "Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare noo?" The Douglas Cause was indeed for a long time the only topic of conversation in Edinburgh, and elicited the most violent expressions of opinion from quite unexpected quarters. The old Dowager-Countess of Stair, one of the most interesting characters in Edinburgh society, round whose personality Walter Scott built his story of *Aunt Margaret's Mirror,* was as staunch a supporter of the Douglas family as the Duchess of Queensberry herself. In the evidence adduced at the trial was an account given by Sir John Stewart of Castlemilk of Lady Stair coming into a room in the Duke of Hamilton's house with a letter in her hand from the Earl of Dundonald in which he accused her of saying that the children of Lady Jane Douglas were fictitious. The old lady was terribly excited, and struck the floor three times with her stick, with every stroke calling the Earl a "d------d villain." [*This Lady Stair must not be confused with Margaret, Viscountess Stair, who died in 1692, and was suspected by the public of possessing necromantic powers. She, too, was an eccentric woman, and ordained in her will that her body should not be buried, but should stand upright in her coffin, promising that as long as it remained in that position the Dalrymples should continue to flourish. (See Chambers's* Domestic Annals of Scotland, *vol. iii. p47.) To this Lady Stair is attributed the witty reply to Graham of Claverhouse, (commonly pronounced Clavers), the persecutor of the Covenanters, who had been inveighing against John Knox. "Why are ye so severe?" asked the old lady. "Ye are both reformers.* He *gained his point by clavers (talk) while you attempt to gain yours by Knocks!" (Sir Walter Scott tells this story in* Old Mortality, *making old Lady Elphinstone the heroine of it.)*]

CATHERINE, DUCHESS OF QUEENSBERRY

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY W. GREATBATCH AFTER THE PAINTING BY G. P. HARDING

The claims of Archibald Douglas were finally upheld by the House of Lords, and the Duchess of Queensberry signalised this family triumph by giving a ball to all her supporters in her house in London. This entertainment was a very magnificent and successful affair. Lord Camden, the Lord Chancellor, invited himself, and afterwards wrote to the duchess asking permission to come in person and thank her for having sent an invitation to his wife and daughters, who were unable to be present. To this request the duchess sent the laconic reply: “Catherine Queensberry says ‘Content upon her honour,’” that being the form of assent given by the Peers at the close of the great case. [Lady Mary

Coke's Journal, *vol. iii. p.40*]

The duchess was not always so polite to those of her guests who tried to thrust their society upon her. She once told Lady Di Egerton, daughter of the Duchess of Bridgwater, that she would give a dance in her honour. But when the ball invitations were sent out, none reached the expectant Lady Di. Thereupon some member of the girl's family wrote to her Grace to point out this neglect, which was obviously and oversight, and received the following stinging reply:-

"The advertisement came to hand: it was very pretty and very ingenious; but everything that is pretty and ingenious does not always succeed: the Duchess of Q. piques herself on her house not being unlike Socrates's; his was small and held all his friends; hers is large, but will not hold half of hers; postponed, but not forgot; unalterable." [*Walpole's* Letters, *ii. p.241*]

The Duchess could, indeed, be extremely rude if she thought that the conduct of her acquaintances required correction. Her comments could be as biting, as caustic, and as satirical as those of old Lady Rosslyn herself. [*Lady Rosslyn was "at home" to her friends one afternoon when a rather notorious woman was announced. Immediately several of her guests rose to go. "Sit still, sit still," said the old lady, "it is na catching!"*] When paying an afternoon call, if in her opinion the tea-set of her hostess was too extravagant, the duchess would upset it on the floor, as though by accident, and break it. Ladies who came to see her in Scotland, dressed in their best clothes, would be taken for long walks through the dirtiest lanes she could find, and at the end of the afternoon the duchess would suddenly seat herself on a convenient manure-heap and invite her guests to sit beside her, which some of them, out of sheer fright, consented to do.

At Queensberry House, in the Canongate, Edinburgh, and at Drumlanrig Castle, in Dumfriesshire, the duchess spent much of her time. Both houses had been built by the first duke, and eccentric individual, who only slept one night at Drumlanrig, and is said to have left the bills for the building of that place tied up with an inscription: "The Deil pyke out his een that looks therein!" [*Chambers's* Traditions of Edinburgh.] In connection with Queensberry House – where, after Prince Charlie's victorious entry into Edinburgh during the '45, the loyal officers were imprisoned, and which is now a Refuge for the Destitute – a horrible story is told of the idiot son of James, 2nd Duke of Queensberry, one of the main instruments in carrying out the Union of England and Scotland. On the day that the Bill for the Union was passed, all Edinburgh went to the Parliament Close to hear the result of the debate. The idiot Lord Drumlanrig was left behind, with nobody to look after him but a little scullery-boy. On the return of the family to Queensberry House, they were horrified to discover the wretched maniac engaged in cooking the boy, whom he was roasting on one of the kitchen spits.

The duchess was devoted to her Scottish homes, but did not altogether approve of Scottish manners. One practice in particular – equally prevalent at that time in England – she especially detested. This was the dangerous and unattractive habit which some of her guests indulged in of conveying food from their plates to their mouths with a knife in place of a fork. "I have not met with any one in this country," she writes to Lady Suffolk, in 1734, from Edinburgh, "who doth not eat with a knife, and drink a *dish* of tea." [Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk, *vol. ii. p.67. (1824.)* Gay wrote to Swift in 1727, when the latter had been invited to Amesbury, begging him for the duchess's sake to put his fork to all its proper uses, and "suffer nobody for the future to put their knives in their mouths." [*Swift's* Works, *xviii. P.137.*] Swift, in replying, asked Gay to tell her Grace that he always thought of her when he dined, although it was difficult to obey her injunctions when the forks had only two prongs and the sauce was not "very consistent." He received many invitations to stay with the duchess – a "lady of excellent sense and spirits," as he tells Pope – whom he had not seen since she was a girl of five; but was never able to avail himself of them. Kitty and her secretary used to collaborate in a most amusing correspondence with Swift. Gay would concoct the main body of the letter, to which the duchess added a piquant postscript. She was always pressing her correspondent to pay her a visit, declaring herself convinced that hostess and guest would get on well together. "The duke is very much yours," she writes, as a further inducement to the convivial dean, "*and will never leave you to your wine!"* – a reference probably to a habit of the parsimonious Pope, who would produce a pint of wine for two guests, help himself to a couple of glasses, and then retire, saying, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine!" [Life of Alexander Pope, *p.409.*]

In 1731 we find the duchess once more urging Swift to visit her. "I only love my own way,"

she says, “when I meet not with others whose ways I like better. I am in great hopes that I shall approve of yours; for, to tell you the truth, I am at present a little tired of my own. I have not a clear or distinct voice, except when I am angry; but I am a very good nurse, when people do not fancy themselves sick… Pray set out the first fair wind, and stay with us as long as ever you please… If I do not happen to like you,” she adds, with characteristic candour, “I know I can so far govern my temper as to endure you for about five days.” [*Swift’s* Works, *xvii. p.409*] Later on in the same year she again writes to him, with the assurance that though she is “neither healthy nor young,” she manages to keep up her spirits and lives as simply as possible. She has no objection to his talking nonsense, she declares, provided he does it on purpose; for “there is some sense in nonsense, when it does not come by chance.” [*Ibid., xvii. p.407.*] In spite of these constant lures, Swift declined to renew his early acquaintance with the duchess, save through the unsatisfactory medium of the post.

As a girl the beautiful Kitty had wrung a thousand eulogistic verses from the pens of all the poets of the day, from Pope,

[*“The exactest tricks of body or of mind,*
We owe to models of an humble kind.
If Queensbury to strip there’s no compelling,
‘Tis from a handmaid we must take a Helen.”
-Moral Essays.]

to Congreve. Prior described her début in society in a poem which is as well known as anything he wrote:-

THE FEMALE PHAETON

Thus Kitty, beautiful and young,
And wild as colt untam’d,
Bespoke the fair from whence she sprung,
With little rage inflam’d:

Inflam’d with rage at sad restraint,
Which wise mamma ordain’d;
And sorely vext to play the saint,
Whilst wit and beauty reign’d:

“Shall I thumb holy books, confin’d
With Abigails forsaken?
Kitty’s for other things design’d,
Or I am much mistaken.

“Must Lady Jenny frisk about,
And visit all her cousins?
At balls must she make all the rout,
And bring home hearts by dozens>

“What has she better, pray, than I,
What hidden charms to boast,
That all mankind for her should die:
Whilst I am scarce a toast?

“Dearest mamma! for once let me,
Unchain’d my fortune try;
I’ll have an Earl as well as she, [*Lady Jane Hyde married the Earl of Essex.*]
Or know the reason why.

“I’ll soon with Jenny’s pride quit score,
Make all her lovers fall;

They'll grieve I was not loos'd before;
She, I was loos'd at all."

Fondness prevail'd, mamma gave way;
Kitty, at heart's desire,
Obtain'd the chariot for a day,
And set the world on fire.

To this Horace Walpole, who in later life took a kindly view of the duchess, added an extra verse:-

"To many a Kitty, Love his car
Would for a day engage;
But Prior's Kitty, ever young,
Obtained it for an age."

He describes her in 1773, when she was an old woman, as looking "more blooming than the Maccaronesses," and says that by twilight she would be mistaken for a young beauty of an old-fashioned century rather than an "antiquated goddess of this age." [*Walpole's* Letters, *vol. v. p.477.*] He was drinking her Grace's health one day, and by way of a toast said that he wished she might live to grow ugly. "I hope then," she replied at once, "that you will keep your taste for antiquities." [Autobiography of Mrs. Delaney.]

At the age of seventy the duchess was still so young at heart that she was always to be seen wherever there was a lighted candle, and would go ten miles to a party. And to the end of her life she continued those eccentricities of dress and conduct which rendered her such a conspicuous figure wherever she went. Like old Lady Stair, the first person in Edinburgh to keep a black servant, the duchess had a negro page-boy whom she taught to ride and fence, and indeed spoilt in every conceivable way.

There is a picture of her as a milkmaid by Jervas in the National Portrait Gallery in London, which depicts her as a remarkably handsome woman, and though she contracted smallpox in her youth, that then universal disease left no mark upon her complexion. In her old age neither beauty nor high spirits forsook her. We may get some idea of the clothes she was in the habit of wearing from a description given by Mrs. Delaney. [Autobiography, *ii. p.147.*] In this we read that the duchess's dress was of "white satin embroidered, the bottom of the petticoat *brown hills* covered with all sorts of weeds" – (except, of course, widow's weeds) – "*and every breadth had an old stump of a tree* that ran up almost to the top of the petticoat, … round which twined nastersians, ivy, honeysuckles, periwinkles, convolvuluses and all sorts of twining flowers which spread and covered the petticoat, vines with the leaves variegated as you have seen them by the sun…" and so on. She must, in fact, have looked more like a cross between a hothouse and a herbaceous border than a woman of fashion, and it is not to be wondered at that her appearance formed the subject of general comment.

The Duchess of Queensberry had two children, neither of whom survived her. Henry, Earl of Drumlanrig, her eldest son, was a soldier who served in two campaigns under the Earl of Stair, and in another under Charles Emanuel, King of Sardinia, when he particularly distinguished himself at the siege of Coni. In 1747 he obtained a commission authorising him to raise a regiment of Highlanders for service in Holland. His death was a tragic affair which affected his mother profoundly. In 1754, a short time after his marriage, he was travelling to Scotland in company with the duke and duchess and his newly-wedded bride, when, owing to the accidental discharge of a pistol, he shot himself, and succumbed almost immediately. His death was followed two years later by that of his younger brother Charles.

The duchess lived till the year 1777, when, if we are to believe Walpole, [Letters, *vi. p.461.*] she died of a surfeit of cherries. He compares her death to that of the old Countess of Desmond who "died of robbing a walnut tree," and declares that the duchess's beauty at the age of seventy-seven was as extraordinary as that of the countess at one hundred and forty. [*Walpole declares that at the coronation of George III. she still "looked well in her milk-white locks," and that "her* affectation *that*

day was to do nothing preposterous."]

The character of this remarkable woman, who is said to have exercised a strong influence over Pitt and the other statesmen of her day, cannot be better indicated than by a quotation from one of her own letters.

"If any body has done me an injury," she says, "they have hurt themselves more than me. If they give me an ill name (unless they have my help) I shall not deserve it. If fools shun my company, it is because I am not like them; if people make me angry, they only raise my spirits; and if they wish me ill, I will be well and handsome, wise and happy, and everything, except a day younger than I am, and that is a fancy I never yet saw becoming to man or woman, so it cannot excite envy." [*Swift's* Works, *xviii. P.70.*]

Miss "Nicky" Murray (d. 1777)

Scotland has always been justly famed for the hospitality of its inhabitants. During the eighteenth century in particular Edinburgh was the scene of a succession of social functions of the most convivial and at the same time unostentatious kind. Hosts were not ashamed of providing the simplest fare; guests were amply satisfied with it. Barley broth, salt beef, with a boiled fowl and "greens," were standing dishes at dinner in every gentleman's house, and nobody would have dreamt of demanding anything more delicate. The beverage offered to ordinary visitors consisted of home-brewed ale and a glass of brandy, or, on any very special occasion, claret and brandy-punch. Food was cheap and plentiful. Beef only cost two pence per pound, and it was possible to purchase a whole lamb's carcase for a shilling or eighteenpence. [My Own Life and Times, *1741-1814, by Thomas Somerville, pp.334-5.*] Simple manners prevailed, and even in private houses there was occasionally a dearth of crockery when an unusual number of guests had to be entertained. Dr. Somerville in his Memoirs describes how it was often necessary for a large company to make use of a single glass, and repeats the lament of one Armstrong of Sorbie (*Sorbet* would have been more appropriate), a noted toper, who, deploring in his latter days the degeneracy of the times, declared that "it was a better world when there were more bottles and fewer glasses." [My Own Life and Times, *p.356.*]

Scotland certainly clung to primitive customs up to comparatively recent times. The disgusting habit of throwing the household filth out of window at 10 P.M. every night when the city drum was beaten – a practice which sometimes made it necessary for residents to fumigate their bedrooms by burning brown paper – prevailed in provincial towns not more than a hundred years ago. But a country in which until 1750 there were only two turnpike roads, and where the mail took five days to reach Edinburgh from London, might well be considered backward in many things beside urban sanitation.

In some ways, however, this primitive condition of affairs was not without its compensating advantages. The extreme and almost ascetic simplicity which marked the fashionable entertainments of the Scottish capital brought them well within the range of all. The most impoverished younger sons could afford to give select parties in those "Oyster Cellars," which were long the popular resort of Edinburgh society during the winter months. The principal oyster-parties took place in a tavern in the Cowgate belonging to an old woman of the name of Luckie Middlemass. Here the young bloods of the day, accompanied by a bevy of fair friends, would spend the evening pleasantly enough, surrounded by plates of oysters and flagons of rum or brandy punch. Towards nightfall the tables were moved to one side, and the guests, exhilarated by their repast, would bring the evening's entertainment to a close with an impromptu dance. The bill for a party of this kind usually amounted to about two shillings a head, a modest sum, the very thought of which must fill with envy the bosom of a modern host.

An English visitor to Edinburgh in the year 1774 pays a generous tribute to the Scottish talent for hospitality as well as to the national gift of obtaining the maximum of amusement with the minimum outlay of cash. This he attributes to the fact that the Scottish character closely resembles that of the French. "That air of mirth and vivacity," he says, "that quick and penetrating look, that spirit of gaiety which distinguishes the French, is equally visible in the Scotch. It is the character of the nation, and it is a very happy one, as it makes them disregard even poverty." [Letters from Edinburgh written in the years 1774-5, *by Captain Topham, p.64*] Nowhere is this facility for enjoyment seen to

better advantage then in the accounts of the somewhat ingenuous amusements of Edinburgh society.

In the summer time, when the atmosphere of the Oyster Cellars became too oppressive to be pleasant, parties were formed to visit the “Comely Gardens.” Along the shady paths of this pleasant resort young people of both sexes could wander hand-in-hand together, while their elders sat and listened to the merciless moanings of the town band. There were no “water-chutes,” no “switch-backs” in those days. There was no “monster wheel” in which young couples could spend the greater part of the evening at an altitude which kept them well out of the range of the basilisk eye of their chaperons. But the quiet public gardens were as great a source of delight to the boy and girl of that age as are to their descendants of today the more elaborate haunts of West Kensington. Comely Gardens provided for the society of Edinburgh those simple pleasures for which their contemporaries in London sought at Ranelagh and Marylebone. They corresponded to Vauxhall, the “New Spring Gardens” where Mr. Pepys “with my wife and Deb and Mercer eat and walked;” [*Pepys’* Diary, *July 27, 1668.*] where Wycherley enjoyed a “cheesecake and syllabub”; where Addison and Sir Roger de Coverley met; [Spectator, *No.383, May 20, 1712*.] where Walpole, Fielding, Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and all the “red-heeled macaronis” of the day foregathered.

After a time, however, the Comely Gardens were voted commonplace, slow, and vulgar, and the “lover’s walks” and shady bowers were gradually deserted by the smart set of Edinburgh. In those days, as now, it was enough to stamp a place or an amusement as unfashionable to ensure its immediate decline in popularity. To do “the right thing” was the one aim of society. The Scottish world of fashion was so imbued with this idea that a contemporary writer declares that if the famous Lord Monboddo who took it into his head to inform mankind that they were originally born with tails, had got half-a-dozen friends to support his theory, in a short time every man in the country would have been feeling for his tail whenever he entered a room!

The dancing in Oyster Cellars and the flirting in Comely Gardens were not by any means the only, nor indeed the chief, amusement of the good people of Edinburgh. In the year 1707 they system of holding weekly balls in the Assembly Rooms was first inaugurated, and at once caught the public fancy. These entertainments, which originally took place in the West Bow, but were removed in 1720 to the Assembly Close, were managed by a committee of seven gentlemen who styled themselves directors, and who in their turn appointed some woman of fashion to superintend the social side of the assemblies.

This novel venture was, like all new schemes, regarded at first with suspicion and mistrust by some of the more conservative members of the community, and it was not without considerable opposition that the holding of weekly assemblies was finally instituted. Among the “unco’ guid” of the Scottish capital there was naturally a bigoted section which looked with horror upon the introduction of such a pastime as dancing, and strenuously endeavoured to rouse popular indignation against the harmless amusements of the Assembly Rooms. [*It had taken many years for dancing to be permitted at all in Scotland. In the reign of James II. dancing might not be taught in private or public without a licence from the magistrates. In 1681 the Duke of York, then Commissioner, tried to introduce balls and plays at Holyrood. But “the fanaticism of the times,” says Tytler of Woodhouselee, “could not bear such ungodly innovations,” and these profane entertainments were given up. The same fate befell a public masquerade which the citizens of Edinburgh tried to get up in 1786.*] By some, too, it was perhaps thought that the introduction of dancing would tend to enervate the Scottish character and encourage those habits of effeminacy which were opposed to the simple tastes of the shrewd, level-headed inhabitants of Edinburgh. The latter were already beginning to affect some of the airs and graces of London society. The charge of dandyism had more than once been brought against the young bucks of the Scottish capital. They were conscious of a growing inclination to practise the “nice conduct of a clouded cane” and otherwise emulate the doings of their more foppish contemporaries in the south. *The Tatler* of the day published a paragraph of a presumably facetious character dealing with this. [Advertisement. *The censor having lately received intelligence that the ancient simplicity in the dress and manner of that part of the island called Scotland begins to decay; and that there are at this time, in the good town of Edinburgh, beaux, fops, and coxcombs: his late correspondent from that place is desired to send up their names and characters with all expedition, that they may be proceeded against accordingly, and proper officers named to take in their canes, snuff-boxes, and all other useless necessaries commonly worn by such offenders.”* The Tatler, *No.144, March 11, 1709-10.*] There was, as a matter of fact, but little fear of Scotsmen becoming effeminate. Dandyism is a

quality altogether foreign to the Scottish blood. This is perhaps a pity, for surely no stage could be more appropriate for setting off the beauties of a beau's attire than Princes Street. It is broader than Bond Street; it is finer and more fashionable than Oxford Street. Here, as Lockhart once remarked, [Peter's Letters, *vol. iii. p.109.*] when the punch-bowl is empty and "night's candles are burned out," the macaroni might stagger down the steps of the Albyn Club and behold the "jocund day stand tip-toe on the misty mountains' tops" as the sun rose above Arthur's Seat. But the dandies themselves were missing. There was no Beau Brummel, No Nash, no D'Orsay in Edinburgh. The very Arbitri Elegantiarum, the Dilettanti Society, held their meetings in a tavern in one of the dirtiest closes of the city, "braving the risk of an impure baptism from the windows" as they entered or left.

The efforts of the "weaker brethren to frustrate the holding of assemblies were fortunately unsuccessful. [*Even the clergy refrained from censure. "There were fanatics in those days," says Lord Cockburn* (Journal, *vol. ii. p.197.), "but they let good society alone; and there was a race of agreeable and rational clergymen whose sense of decorum was not shocked by polite company, nor their piety deemed wasted if it was not all given to the poor or the pulpit."*] Their clamouring did not gain the public ear. There were plenty of broad-minded citizens of Edinburgh who realised that dancing could hardly be called a vice, and that the proposed weekly balls would not seriously affect public morality. Their sentiments were aptly voiced in a letter addressed to the managers of the Assemblies by Allan Ramsay as an introduction to one of his poems. [The Fair Assembly]. "It is amazing," he says, "to imagine that any one is so destitute of good sense and manners as to drop the least unfavourable sentiment against the Fair Assembly. It is to be owned, with regret, that the best of things have been abused. The church has been, and in many countries is, the chief place for assignations that are not warrantable. Wine, one of Heaven's kindly blessings, may be used to one's hurt. The beauty of the fair, which is the great preserver of harmony and society, has been the ruin of many." Then, bursting into song, he continues:-

"Sic as against th' Assembly speak,
The rudest souls betray,
When matrons, noble, wise, and meek,
Conduct the healthfu' play;
Where they appear, nae vice dare keek,
But to what's good gives way,
Like night, soon as the morning creek
Has usher'd in the day.

Dear Ed'nburgh, shaw thy gratitude,
And of sic friends make sure,
Wha strive to mak our minds less rude,
And help our wants to cure;
Acting a gen'rous part and good
In bounty to the poor;
Sic virtues, if right understood,
Should ev'ry heart allure."

In spite, therefore, of the grumbling of a prejudiced minority, the holding of assemblies soon became one of the most popular entertainments of the capital. [*In some respects the good people of Edinburgh do not seem to have been as particular as their descendants of today. "Promiscuous bathing has been very much in fashion this season," writes William Creech in 1785 (*Edinburgh Fugitive Pieces *(1815), p.220), "and the decency of an awning to the bathing-machines is not yet adopted; to the great satisfaction of the rude and the ill-bred, who triumph in insulting modesty."*] Tickets of admission were sold at "s.6d. a-piece (a charge which included such modest refreshments as tea, coffee, and sandwiches, and cannot therefore be considered excessive), and the proceeds of the entertainments were divided between the Charity Workhouse and the Royal Infirmary. The lady whose important duty it was to direct and control the dancing sat at the head of the room, wearing as a badge of office a large gold medal engraved with a motto and device "emblematical" (as we read in Arnot's *History of Edinburgh*) "of Charity and Parental Tendencies." Her power was autocratic; her will was law; but, as may be readily imagined, her office was by no means a sinecure.

Pre-eminent among those queens who held each in turn their petty court in the Assembly

Rooms of the capital stands Miss Nicky Murray, a daughter of Lord Stormonth, who for many years filled the post of Mistress of the Ceremonies with grace and distinction. Her rule, though arbitrary, was distinguished by a display of common sense and uncommon tact which ensured her popularity in the hearts of all her subjects. When “the Assembly Close received the Fair,” wrote Sir Alexander Boswell, in his poem on Edinburgh,

“Order and elegance presided there;
Each gay Right Honourable had her place,
To walk a minuet with becoming grace.
No racing to the dance, with rival hurry;
Such was thy sway, O famed Miss Nicky Murray!”

This famous lady directress lived in a flat, in a small tenement house styled Smith’s Land, at the head of Baillie Fyfe’s Close, which was then an aristocratic quarter of the town. She was a woman of the old-fashioned feudal type, who never troubled to disguise her favour for the Jacobite cause and her hopes that the exiled Stuarts might some day enjoy their own again. Her father had entertained Prince Charles Edward at Perth, on his way to Culloden. This occasion was particularly memorable to Miss Nicky, who had signalised it by insisting upon making with her own fair hands the bed in which her illustrious guest was to pass the night. Let us hope that the prince displayed adequate gratitude.

Mistress Murray’s management of the public assemblies gave complete satisfaction to all concerned. No one ever dreamt of opposing her will or attempting to supplant her. But hers must have been a troublesome task, and one that required patience, activity, and good sense.

The balls opened at four or five o’clock in the afternoon. [*Later on, in 1783, they met at 8 or 9 P.M., and the Lady Directress sometimes did not appear till 10 P.M. Country dances were substituted for the stately minuets, and the dance often degenerated into a game of romps.*] Mistress Murray was immediately surrounded by a group of clamorous chaperons, eager that their debutantes should not be overlooked. The room where these dances were held was so small that it was impossible to allow all the guests to take part at the same time. The dancers were consequently divided into different “sets.” It was the duty of the lady directress to assign the guests to their various places, and she was constantly besieged, now by fond and anxious mothers urging the claims of their respective daughters, now by impetuous lovers begging to be given tickets for those particular “sets” in which they could be sure of meeting the objects of their choice. To satisfy all and give offence to none was a task which might well have appalled the most tactful of women, but Miss Murray was more than equal to it.

Dancing in the public Assembly Rooms must in any case have been a doubtful pleasure. The door of the hall was so situated that a draught of cold air streamed in, flooding the room from end to end, and bearing with it clouds of smoke from the torches of the footmen who stood at the entrance waiting to escort their mistresses home. The unfortunate dowagers sat and shivered with cold, and the dancers themselves were half suffocated by fumes from the flambeaux of their domestics. The set of printed rules which hung up in one corner of the Assembly-room contained, amongst others, the following regulations, which give a curious glimpse of the character of the entertainments, but scarcely call for further comment: “No lady to be admitted in a night-gown, and no gentleman in boots.” “No misses in skirts and jackets, robecoats, nor stay-bodied gowns, to be allowed to dance in country dances, but in a sett by themselves.”

We are always told that Englishmen take their pleasures sadly, but if the account of the Edinburgh assemblies given by Oliver Goldsmith is to be believed, it must be admitted that in comparison with such social pastimes in vogue north of the border in 1753 (when the author wrote), the modern suburban Garden Party of Zenana Mission Meeting may truthfully be characterised as a rollicking form of entertainments.

Goldsmith describes the only assembly which he attended as the most melancholy and depressing function that it is possible for the human mind to conceive. One end of the room, he tells us, was taken up by the ladies, who sat dismally in a group by themselves. At the other end stood their pensive potential partners, but “no more intercourse was allowed between the sexes then there is between two countries at war.” [The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, *Ed. by Peter Cunningham, vol. iv.*

P.401. (London, 1854.)] The ladies, indeed, might ogle, and the gentlemen might sigh, but an embargo was laid on any closer commerce. At length, to interrupt hostilities, the lady directress fixed on a gentleman and lady to dance the minuet, which they did with a formality that approached despondence. “After five or six couples had thus walked the gauntlet,” continues the writer, “all stand up to country dances, each gentleman furnished with a partner from the aforesaid lady directress; so they dance much and say nothing, and thus concluded the assembly.” [Ibid.] After watching this lugubrious performance, Oliver Goldsmith told a Scottish gentleman that such silent ceremonial as was habitual in the Assembly Room reminded him of the ancient processions of Roman matrons in honour of Ceres. The Scotsman, however, patriotically snubbed Oliver for his pains, telling him plainly that he was a pedant and a prig, which was probably true. Goldsmith was, indeed, prejudiced in his point of view. At the time he wrote so captiously of the amusements of his hosts he was poor and unknown, and like Burns under similar circumstances, felt out of place amid such fashionable surroundings. He doubtless agreed with Talleyrand that life would be tolerable but for its pleasures. “An ugly and a poor man is society for himself,” said he, in relating his experiences, “and such society the world lets me enjoy in great abundance.” [The Works of Oliver Goldsmith, *vol. iv. P.402.*]

To obtain a less depressing and perhaps more truthful picture of the Assembly Rooms, we must turn to the writings of Captain Topham, that fashionable traveller and man of the world whose high opinion of the social delights of Edinburgh finds eloquent expression in the series of amusing letters which he wrote from the Scottish capital in 1774. He, at any rate, did not attribute the gift of silence to his Scottish friends. “Whenever the Scotch of both sexes meet,” he writes, “they do not appear as if they had never seen each other before, or wished never to see each other again; they do not sit in solemn silence, looking on the ground, biting their nails, and at a loss what to do with themselves; and, if some one should be hardy enough to break silence, start, as if they were shot through the ear with a pistol: but they address each other at first sight and with an *impressement* that is highly pleasing.” [Letters from Edinburgh, *p.66. (1776.)* With the ladies in particular he expresses himself as charmed. The men, as he explains, are naturally cold and reserved, but that is the very reason why the women shine so brightly in society. “To rouse the latent spark” – buried deep in the Scotsman’s bosom – “every effort is necessary,” says the gallant captain, so that it is in the interest of the ladies to be “perfect mistresses in the art of pleasing, and, indeed, they are arrived at such perfection in it as to be excelled by none in Europe.” [Letters from Edinburgh, *p.255.*] To see them at their best, he adds, is to see them at their entertainments.

If these entertainments were successful it was mainly due to the energy and skill of the queen of the revels, Mistress Nicky Murray. She was remarkable for her impartiality in the disposal of debutantes, and, as we are told by Robert Chambers, [Traditions of Edinburgh, *vol. ii. p.30*.] “never failed to give due preference to a *beauty* without forgetting the claims of titled precedence.” She could, nevertheless, be very unpleasant to any persons who offended against the unwritten canons of polite society. One wretched man, whose parentage was quite obscure and who had made his money in trade, instead of inheriting it or acquiring it by the sweat of other people’s brows like a gentleman, had the effrontery to put in an appearance at one of the assemblies over which Miss Murray presided. He was immaculately dressed – since nothing can prevent money, however honestly earned, from purchasing clothing of the very latest fashion. There was, in fact, little against him, save the unfortunate accident of birth. But no sooner had this wretch entered the room than the lady directress strode up to him and administered a few scathing comments on the subject of his unwarrantable intrusion. Thus addressed, the miserable parvenu realised the enormity of his offence and beat a hasty and undignified retreat from the presence of his social superiors. It is perhaps refreshing to think that two hundred years ago there was one door in Great Britain which could not be opened with a key of gold: against which millionaires might batter and hurl their purses in vain. We may, indeed, be inclined to smile at the prejudices and inconsistencies of a society which refused admittance to a self-made *nouveau-riche* of low birth, and yet welcomed the presence of Lord Kirkcudbright, a peer haberdasher, who combined business and pleasure by selling white gloves to his fellow-guests; yet it is doubtful whether our modern money-worship, which throws open every door, from that of the fashionable ballroom to that of the House of Lords itself, to the owner of millions, is not a characteristic of the times even more ignoble than that displayed by our ancestors.

It was the fashion in Edinburgh for ladies to go to bed early, and the assemblies closed punctually at eleven o’clock. But when that fateful moment arrived, a rush was always made by the younger and more energetic dancers to beg the good-natured Nicky for a few minutes’ grace. Their entreaties were usually vain. Mistress Murray’s views on the subject of retiring at a respectable hour

were not easily to be shaken. With a wave of her fan she stopped the musicians in the middle of their tune. The assembly broke up at once, the guests departed to their homes – the ladies to sleep, the gentlemen to foregather with genial boon-companion and toast their late partners with sufficient enthusiasm to superinduce a condition of pleasurable coma, from which they were with difficulty roused next morning. Claret was the only drink on such occasions, and was partaken of from huge pewter mugs, each of which held about a quart. There existed certain rigid rules of etiquette which prevented gentlemen from drinking too much in the presence of the fair sex. "They never thought of committing any excess," says Lockhart, [Peter's Letters, *vol. i. p.108*] "except in taverns and at night!" where –

"Beakers drained and seats o'erthrown,
Showed in what sport the night had flown."

It had, in fact, been made a matter of serious aggravation in the offence of a gentleman of rank, tried before the Court of Justiciary, that he had allowed his company to get drunk in his house before it was dark, even in the month of July! As for the ladies – of whom the same writer declares that never in any evening he spent in London did he see "a greater number of fine women, and of different kinds too," than that which met his delighted gaze at a party in Edinburgh [Ibid., *p.47*.] – it is to be feared that even they too were occasionally addicted, alas! to a slight overdose of alcohol. A writer in the *Edinburgh Magazine* [*August 1817*] has stated that in the eighteenth century, though it was a disgrace for ladies to be seen drunk, it was none at all to be a trifle intoxicated in good company. [*An old story, which recounts the adventures of three respectable middle-aged spinsters of Edinburgh, gives point to this indictment. After spending a merry evening together, these ladies started to go home to bed in a distinctly inebriate condition," brimming over with happy laughter." When the trio reached the Tron Church they were brought to a sudden halt by the shadow of the steeple which the moon threw across the street. After a brief confabulation the ladies came to the mournful conclusion that they were standing on the brink of a shallow river. With the courage born of excessive stimulant they sat down on the edge of the street, removed their shoes and stockings, kilted their skirts up to the knee, and proceeded to wade bravely across to the safe moonlight on the other side.*] But at any rate the Assembly Rooms were never the scene of any orgy, male or female.

That the assemblies made for the social welfare of the community there is little doubt. The young men of the day learnt manners there, while the young ladies continued the lessons in deportment which they had begun in the schoolroom. "The young Gentlemen have a *Hauteur,*" sys Daniel Defoe, in recounting his journey through Scotland somewhere about the year 1720, "which makes good the French saying, 'Fier comme un Ecossais.'" [A Journey Through Scotland, *p.198. (1723).*] Never in any nation, says the traveller, had he seen an "assemblage of greater beauties" than those he met in Edinburgh. "The Ladies," he continues, "are particular in a stately, firm way of walking, with their Joints extended, and their Toes out." [Ibid., *p.274.*] Nor was Defoe the only person to notice this. Captain Burt, who visited Scotland in 1758, commends the "upright, firm yet easy manner of the ladies walking in Edinburgh." [Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland, *p.102. (1759.)]* And no doubt they owed the elegance of their gait, their "extended joints" and pointed toes, to the instruction of the dancing-master. If he was responsible for their graceful bearing, the credit for their perfect manners much be assigned to the directress, who kept such an eagle eye upon her wards. The Assembly Rooms were, indeed, an excellent training-ground for the young of either sex, and both residents and tourists found them singularly attractive. Alexander Campbell, one of the latter, declares that the heart must indeed be insensible which "feels not the influence of female charms, while beholding a select party of Scottish ladies on the night of an Assembly." [A Journey from Edinburgh through Parts of North Britain *vol. ii. p.181*.] A French writer, too, of that day declares that they provided everything that the heart of the most fastidious could desire. All that might charm the eye, flatter the senses, or gratify the soul, was, in his opinion, to be found within the four walls of the Assembly Rooms. He thinks it necessary, however, to add a word of warning for those who are about to enter the precincts of this earthly Elysium. He begs them very earnestly to be careful of their conduct, to behave with particular decorum, "for the slightest gesture or glance which might wound Modesty, will be observed and repressed by the Lady Directresses, persons whom merit and distinguished virtue, as well as their high birth, have rendered worthy of the noble trust of which they acquit themselves with consummate prudence and universal approbation." [L'Eloge d'Ecosse et des Dames Ecossoises, *par Mr. Freebairn, p.17. (Edin., 1727.) (This Mr. Freebairn may have been the printer whose services were retained by the Earls of Mar and Breadalbane to publish revolutionary leaflets at the time of the "'45," or else perhaps the well-known publisher for whom Thomas Ruddiman*

did so much excellent work. His admiration for Scottish ladies was boundless. "Je prendrai seulement la Liberté de dire," he says, "pour reliever encore leur Gloirs, que les DAMES ECOSSOISES ont receu leur beau Teint, et tous leurs autres Agremens seulement du Ciel. Elles ne menagent point l'Avantage de rouge, de blanc, pour offrir un Visage nouveau, à nos Regards trompés." Ibid., *p.38.)*]

In the year 1775 the Assembly Rooms were moved to better quarters in Bell's Wynd, and, later on, to a new hall in George Street. The pleasant gatherings which Mistress Nicky superintended so capably continued to play an important part in the social life of Edinburgh for many years. That charming directress died, however, in 1777, and after her death the popularity of the assemblies seems to have waned. Finally, when the rooms in which they were held were burnt to the ground in 1824, these entertainments came to an abrupt and definite conclusion.

Susannah, Countess of Eglinton (d. 1780)

No account of the social entertainments of Edinburgh over which Mistress Murray presided so skilfully would be complete without some mention of a still more famous lady, who long adorned them with her presence and was generally admitted to be the most beautiful woman of her time. The sight of that lengthy procession of sedan chairs, of which contemporary chroniclers write in such glowing terms, bearing the lovely Susannah, Countess of Eglinton, and her seven equally lovely daughters to the Assembly Rooms, was one calculated to send the blood coursing more quickly through the veins of each fashionable dandy of the day, and make the oldest beau feel young again. It would not indeed be easy to call to mind the name of any woman who caused so great a stir in the society of the Scottish capital as did Lady Eglinton, perhaps the most famous "toast" of the eighteenth century.

Susannah Kennedy was the daughter of Sir Archibald Kennedy of Culzean, and the granddaughter of the first Lord Newark. When she first appeared in Edinburgh society her extraordinary beauty took the city completely by storm. No girl was so much admired, toasted, talked about. Rich suitors offered her their titles and fortunes; less eligible admirers hastened to lay their hearts and their debts at her feet. Amateur poets vied with one another in composing amorous sonnets in praise of her eyebrows: young bloods fought each other before breakfast, or shot themselves at twilight, victims of the jealousy or despair which she inspired. But Miss Kennedy rode proudly by, heedless of the havoc she was causing, dragging a crowd of captives at her chariot-wheels along a path strewn with the shattered hearts of rejected suitors.

Upon one admirer she deigned to smile, indeed, but only for a time. He, too, was shortly destined to join the melancholy band of the unaccepted. But he at least was permitted to cherish hopes, though his hopes were eventually doomed to disappointment. Sir John Clerk of Pennycuik was rich, good-looking, and very much in love. An accomplished and clever writer, he was generally acknowledged, as Anderson says, to be "one of the most enlightened men of his time." [*Anderson's* Scottish Nation, *vol. i. p.260.*] He is remembered as being the author of a humorous poem founded upon the old Scottish lay, "o merry may the maid be that marries the miller," as well as of several serious literary works, and was for many years a regular correspondent of Roger Gale, the English antiquary. At the time of his infatuation for Miss Kennedy, however, he had no spare moments to waste upon correspondence, but was kept busy trying to impress the haughty belle of Edinburgh with his undoubted personal attractions. He loaded the fair Susannah with presents, he overwhelmed her with polite attentions. One day he even went so far as to send her a flute as a love-offering, from which, blow as she might, the lady could extract no music. A careful examination of the instrument showed it to be blocked with a sheet of paper, which on removal proved to be a copy of verses in Sir John's handwriting. It is not usual to conceal amorous poems in the interior of an otherwise harmless wind-instrument, but lovers have been forced ere now to adopt stranger means of communication. Sir John's "jewels five words long" were not at any rate unworthy of their casket.

"Go happy pipe, (he sang) and ever mindful be
To court bewitching Sylvia for me.
Tell all I feel – you cannot tell too much –
Repeat my love at each soft melting touch,
Since I to her my liberty resign,

Take thou the care to tune her heart to mine." [*Chambers's* Traditions of Edinburgh, *vol. i.*

p.260.]

Small wonder if the “happy pipe,” declining to compete with such a rival, remained ingloriously mute.

But the bewitching Sylvia, or rather Susannah, was not to be won by even so inspired an outburst, and politely gave back his liberty (and the piccolo) to her poetic suitor. The world held in store for the beauteous Miss Kennedy a richer gift than Sir John could hope to offer. She was destined to occupy a high position on society as the bride of no less a personage than the proud old Earl of Eglinton, and her family was only too anxious to further the arrangements for so promising a match. It seemed as though the very heavens smiled upon the alliance, and that Fortune herself was in league with Lord Eglinton and the lady of his choice. For one fine day, as she was walking in her father’s garden at Culzean, a hawk, bearing upon its bells the name of the earl, alighted upon Miss Kennedy’s shoulder – an omen which the least superstitious of her relations could not utterly disregard, even if they had wished to do so. Since the gods themselves were determined upon this marriage, there was nothing left to be done, one would imagine, save to order the trousseau and address the invitations.

There were, however, several obstacles in the way. In the first place, the earl was many years older than Miss Susannah; in the second – and this was perhaps the more insuperable of the two – he was already married.

Alexander, 9th Earl of Eglinton, had already taken unto himself two wives; first of all, the Lady Margaret Cochrane, and subsequently the Lady Anne Gordon. The latter was still alive, and, anxious though Lord Eglinton may have been to wed the youthful Susannah, it may well be imagined that he shared the popular prejudice which exists against bigamy. His countess was, however, a confirmed invalid, and, after lingering on for a period which was not really so lengthy as it seemed to her impatient husband, tactfully passed away just in time to allow the earl to snatch Miss Kennedy from Sir John Clerk. This he at once proceeded to do, and his rival was forced to retire with the best possible grace. It is said that when Sir John proposed to Susannah, that young lady’s calculating father took the precaution of asking the advice of Lord Eglinton before allowing his daughter to reply to her importunate suitor. “Bide a wee, Sir Archie,” said that flippant old gentleman, with a twinkle in his eye, “my wife’s very sickly!” So strong a hint as this was not to be neglected. Sir Archie had a few words with his daughter, and Sir John was promptly dismissed. It is pleasant to learn that the poetic baronet mended his broken heart, survived to hold the office of one of the Barons of the Exchequer for many years, and was twice happily married.

Lord Eglinton was a warm-hearted old gentleman. Like old Lord Cromarty, [*Lord Mackenzie, 1st Earl of Cromarty, married at seventy a young, beautiful, and wealthy widow.*] he made a wife a kind though somewhat fatherly husband. [*“Susannah and the Elder” was the title given to this pair by facetious friends.*] But if there was one thing in the world that the earl desired, it was a male heir to carry on the title and uphold the dignity of his ancient family. For a long time it looked as though he would be disappointed.

The three sons of his first wife had died in childhood; his second wife had but one child, a girl; and for many years his third wife insisted upon bearing him a monotonous series of daughter – seven in all. Lord Eglinton was a short-tempered man, inheriting the impetuosity of his ancestor and namesake, the 6th earl, nicknamed “Greysteil” after the hero of an old Scottish ballad who was notoriously as quick with his sword as with his temper. Exasperated at length by his lady’s apparent inability to provide him with an heir male, he even went so far as to threaten her with a divorce. “By all means,” was her ladyship’s calm reply, “but first of all give me back all that I brought you.” The earl at once assured her that every penny of her marriage portion should be returned. “Na, na, my Lord, that winna do,” insisted the lady. “Return me my youth, my beauty, and my virginity, and then dismiss me whenever you please!” Whereupon the disappointed old peer melted, and, as if to reward him for his kindness and good sense, his wife presented him with a son before the year was out. Moreover, she continued the practice of this excellent habit, and, when Lord Eglinton died in 1729, he was the happy father of three sons as well as the seven original daughters, and could thus hope that the continuation of his line was secured. He was buried with all the ceremonial befitting his rank, one peculiar feature

of his funeral being the attendance of nearly a thousand beggars, many of whom came all the way from Ireland to share the £50 which by the old earl's wish was distributed among them.

On the death of her husband, the countess, by this time a woman of forty, retired into the country and devoted herself to the education of her children. At Auchans, the Eglinton seat, she lived for a long time in great state, and the entertainments she gave there and in her husband's house on the west side of Old Stamp Office Close, High Street, Edinburgh, were long noted for their magnificence.

As the guardian of her eldest son, Alexander, she exhibited the greatest ability in the management of domestic affairs. Her children were brought up in the stern old-fashioned manner, and taught to regard their mother with profound respect, tempered, however, by a very real affection. An unusual amount of strict ceremonial was always observed at Auchans in the home circle. Every day at the dinner-hour the eldest boy would take his mother by the hand, and the two would march solemnly down to the dining-room together. All the children invariably addressed their mother as "Your Ladyship," and the girls were taught to call their eldest brother "Lord Eglinton," even in the nursery. Such rigorous training did not in any way diminish the charms of the countess's lovely daughters, who were all, like their mother, "divinely tall and most divinely fair," and the "Eglinton air" became a common phrase in Edinburgh to signify all that was stately and dignified.

The enthusiastic French writer, from whose eulogy of Scottish women I have already quoted in a previous chapter, could scarcely find words adequate to express his emotions of first seeing the lovely countess and her daughters at one of the Edinburgh assemblies. "La Tristesse pensa m'accabler," he says, "quand la belle Famille D'EGLINTOUN se presenta à mes yeux, & Madame la COMTESSE à leur Tête, reluisant comme le Soleil à Midy, dardant de ses yeux mille Trepas. Les Petits Cupidons sembloient voltiger autour de My Lady MARY, & quelque fois alloient se reposer sur son beau Sein, & quelque fois se cacher dans ses aimables Fossettes. My Lady BETTY paroissoit toute charmant, par la petite Rougeur qui lui montoit au Visage, d'entendre élever de tous cotez, sa belle Taille & son beau Teint, jusqu'aux Cieux. Les Autres jolis Rejettons de cette Illustre Famille, dans fort peu de tems feront ravage parmi les Coeurs; & deja on est sur ses gardes." [L'Eloge d'ecosse at des Dames Ecossoises, *p.20.*]

The Montgomerie girls were indeed almost as much admired in society as their mother had been, and to a great extent shared her intellectual qualities as well. "What would you give to be as pretty as I?" Lady Eglinton once asked the eldest of them. "Not half so much as you would give to be as young as I," replied Lady Bettie at once.

The following amusing letter, [Memorials of the Montgomeries, *by Sir W. Fraser, vol. i. pp.113-114.*] written by six of Lord Eglinton's daughters to their guardian, Lord Milton, begging him to interest himself on behalf of some unfortunate man who had been thrown into prison for debt, says as much for their kindness of character as for their sense of humour:-

"The Petition of the Six Vestal Virgins of Eglinton to the Honourable Lord Milton. Humbly sheweth – that whereas your petitioners has taken upon them to solicite in behalf of Alexander Aickenhead, part of whose storie your Lordship knows already. His new misfortune is, that after he had received sentence of banishment for three years out of this regality, he was unhappily seduced by his principal creditors to come privetly to his own house to compound some debts, but was not an hour there before the malitious neighbourhood inform'd against him, and had him unexpectedly apprehended and carried to Irvine gaol; So we being importun'd by his wife (who is extremely handsome), join'd with our own inclinations to serve the poor man, we're in hopes that these two motives will have some ascendant over your lordship's natural disposition to relieve the distress'd; and to excite you still further to this good action, his wife, as the only acceptible reward she thinks she can make for this piece of humanity, she hopes from your lordship in favour of her husband's liberty, she protests you shall have as many kisses as you please to demand. (And we likewise bind and oblige ourselves to do the same, when your lordship makes your publick entrie here in May); but we once more beg you'll use your interest to get the man out of prison, which you'll do a particular good to his family and an infinite obligation to your pupils, whose ambition's to subscribe themselves.

"Your lordship's most affectionate children,

BETTIE MONTGOMERIE

ELEANOR MONTGOMERIE

SUSANNA MONTGOMERIE

MARY MONTGOMERIE

FRANCES MONTGOMERIE

CHRISTIAN MONTGOMERIE

"P.S. – We'll esteem it a favour if you lordship will honour us with an answer. But for heaven's sake remember that the wife is hansom.

"*To the* Honourable LORD MILTON,

At his lodgings, Edinburgh."

All Lady Eglinton's daughters who grew up, with one exception, married happily. One of them, Lady Margaret, enjoyed the privilege of helping Flora Macdonald to secure the escape of Bonnie Prince Charlie. She was the wife of Sir Alexander Macdonald, near whose family residence, Mougstot, in Skye, the fugitive Prince landed after Culloden. Sir Alexander was loyal to the crown, but was fortunately absent from home at the time. Flora appealed for help to Lady Margaret, who in her turn confided in her husband's factor, Macdonald of Kingsburgh, and with his assistance the Pretender's safety was ensured.

Like Mistress Nicky Murray the Countess of Eglinton was at heart a thorough Jacobite, and, warmly though she espoused the cause of Literature and the Arts, never surmounted her political prejudices so far as to patronise any of the Whig poets. She was, however, a patroness of many of the foremost literary men of the time. The unfortunate Boyse dedicated a book of verse to her. Allan Ramsay, in phrases of the most fulsome adulation, offered his *Gentle Shepherd* to the lovely countess, "whose superior wit and sound judgement shine out with an uncommon lustre, while accompanied with all the Diviner charms of goodness and equality of mind" – whatever that may mean. "It is personal merit," he adds, "and the heavenly sweetness of the fair that inspire the tuneful lays. Here every Lesbis must be excepted, whose tongues give liberty to the slaves which their eyes have made captive; such may be flattered; but your ladyship justly claims our admiration and profoundest respect; for whilst you are possessed of every outward charm in the most perfect degree, the never failing beauties of wisdom and piety which adorn you ladyship's mind command devotion." [The Gentle Shepherd: A Scots Pastoral Comedy, *by Allan Ramsay, p.iv. (Edin., 1725.)*] As though this were not enough, another poet, William Hamilton of Bangour, commended the *Gentle Shepherd* to the countess's favour in a lengthy rhymed address.

["*From the tumultuous rule of passions freed,*

Pure in thy thought, and spotless in thy deed;

In virtue rich, in goodness unconfin'd,

Thou shin'st a fair example to thy kind;

Sincere and equal to thy neighbour's name,

But swift to praise! how guiltless to defame!

Bold in thy presence bashfulness appears,

And backward merit loses all its fears,

Supremely blest of Heav'n, Heav'n's richest grace

Confest is thine, an early blossoming race;

Whose pleasing smiles shall guardian wisdom arm,

Divine Instruction! taught of thee to charm;

What transports shell they to thy soul impart

(The conscious transports of a parent's heart),

When thou beholds't them of each grace possest,

And sighing youths imploring to be blest.

After thy image form'd with charms like thine

Or in the visit, or the dance to shine!

Thrice happy who succeed their mother's praise,

The lovely Eglintounes of other days."

(See Works and Life of Allan Ramsay, *by E. Chalmers, vol. ii.p. 43.)*]

Even that old bear, Dr. Johnson, was captivated by the charms of the beautiful countess. He has always been accused of saying that women have no minds, and his dislike of Scotland and its inhabitants is notorious. To a friend who told him that Scotland had many "noble wild prospects," Johnson remarked that "the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England." [*Boswell's* Life of Johnson, *p.117. (Malone, 1791.)*] To another who said to him apologetically that, after all, God had made Scotland. "Certainly," he replied, "but we must always remember that he made it for Scotchmen, and – comparisons are odious, but God made Hell!"

Lady Eglinton certainly did not impress Dr. Johnson like that other old Scottish lady of his acquaintance whom he likened to a dead nettle, adding that, were she alive, she would sting. He visited Auchans in 1773, when its mistress was well over eighty, spent several hours there, and subsequently expressed himself as being hugely delighted with his reception, and particularly impressed with the charms of his hostess. "Her figure was majestick," says the inevitable Boswell, "her manners high-bred, her reading extensive, and her conversation elegant." [*Boswell's* Life of Johnson, *p.395. (Croker, 1860)*] She gave the biographer the original manuscript of Ramsay's great pastoral poem which the poet had presented to her, and enchanted the two fellow-travellers with her vivacity and the brilliance of her conversation. In the course of the interview it transpired that Lady Eglinton had married her husband the year before Dr. Johnson was born. Whereupon the old lady playfully remarked that she might have been his mother, and that she now adopted him. When he took his departure she embraced him, saying, "My dear son, farewell!" Boswell she laughingly called "the boy." "Yes, madam," said Dr. Johnson, "we will send him to school." "He is already in a good school, replied the countess, and expressed her hope of his improvement. "I was sorry to leave her," [Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., *vol. i. p.200. (Published by Hester Lynch Piozzi.)*] wrote Samuel to his friend Mrs. Thrale; and one can readily believe him. Later on, Boswell

recounted this interview to some friends, but erroneously stated that Lady Eglinton had adopted Dr. Johnson as a son in consequence of her having been married the year *after* he was born. The Doctor, who was present, corrected his satellite at once, declaring with a great show of annoyance that to make such a suggestion was to defame the countess. “Might not the son have justified the fault?” inquired an ingenuous young lady of the party – a remark which cause Dr. Johnson much satisfaction.

The young Earl of Eglinton was among Samuel’s staunchest admirers. One day at supper he was regretting the great man’s rough manners, and declared that he could not help wishing that Dr. Johnson had been educated with more refinement. “No, no,” exclaimed a fellow guest; [*Baretti, the Italian lexicographer.*] “do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear.” “True,” answered the earl, “but he would have been a dancing bear!” [*Boswell’s* Life of Johnson, *p.195. (Croker.)*]

The Countess of Eglinton was exceedingly fond of her beautiful daughters, but she was even more passionately devoted to her eldest son. It is said that during the whole course of his life she only refused him one request. Alexander’s father had been a Privy Councillor and Commissioner of the Treasury to King William and Queen Anne, and on the accession of George III., the son was appointed one of his Majesty’s Lords of the Bedchamber. Proud as he was of his mother’s beauty, which age could not in any way diminish, Alexander begged Lady Eglinton to take her rightful place in the Coronation procession. But the old lady asked to be excused, laughingly declaring that she was far too old to pay for new robes.

The tragic and untimely death of the young earl was a source of the deepest grief to his mother. Alexander was riding one day on his estate when he came suddenly upon a man poaching in the Eglinton preserves. This man was Mungo Campbell, an Excise officer who had formerly held a commission in the army, and son of old Provost Campbell of Ayr. An argument ensued, in the course of which Campbell shot and killed Lord Eglinton. This was a dastardly deed, as the murdered man was unarmed and therefore unable to defend himself. The earl’s servants arrived upon the scene too late to save their master’s life, but in time to arrest his assassin. It is said that they would have shot Campbell then and there had not Lord Eglinton, almost with his last words, forbidden them to ill-treat his murderer. Campbell was eventually tried at Edinburgh, and condemned to be executed, but anticipated his sentence by hanging himself in his prison cell. [*His body was buried privately, but the Edinburgh mob discovered the whereabouts of the grave, rifled its contents, and subjected the corpse to many indignities. Campbell’s friends managed at length to rescue his remains, and buried them at sea, out of reach of the fury of the populace. There was a legend prevalent at one time to the effect that Mungo Campbell had cheated the hangman of his due by taking the place of a drunken soldier who had died in prison. It was said that he allowed himself to be carried away in this man’s coffin, and “came to life” at the brink of the grave, much to the dismay of the sexton, who was about to bury him. There does not, however, seem to be much foundation in fact for this story.*]

With advancing years the aged countess lost none of her good looks and stately bearing, though, like many other old Scottish ladies of quality, [*As, for instance, Lady Lovat (who was so afraid of being poisoned that she lived for two years exclusively of eggs), the bearded Lady Hyndford, and old Lady Galloway, who was accustomed to pay ceremonious visits to her next-door neighbours, in the narrow Horse Wynd where she lived, in a coach and six.*] she became a trifle eccentric in her habits. One of her chief amusements consisted of taming and feeding the numerous rats which haunted the wainscotting of Auchans. After meals she would tap lightly upon one of the panels in the wall, and immediately a score of these disagreeable animals would appear and hungrily devour the scraps of food which she threw to them. At another signal they would scamper away to their holes again, thereby, as Lady Eglinton sagely remarked, comparing favourably with many of her human guests, who never knew when the moment had arrived to say “goodbye.”

She died at Auchans, 18th March 1780, in her ninety-first year. Even at that extreme age she retained the exquisite complexion of a girl. Its perennial freshness has been attributed to the fact that she made a practice of washing her face periodically in sow’s milk – a curious treatment, perhaps, but in her case eminently successful. Her beauty, which she bequeathed to her descendants, has become proverbial, and the dignity of her bearing and the charm of her character have combined to hand her memory down to posterity as that of an accomplished and admirable lady who, in the words

of Dr. Johnson, “for many years gave the laws of elegance to Scotland.” [Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson, *vol. i. p.200. (Mrs Thrale.)*]

Mrs. Alison Cockburn (1713 - 1796)

It is not easy to believe that the name of Alison Cockburn would have become a household word in Scotland had her only claim to fame rested upon the song with which it is always associated. “Flowers of the Forest” is surely not worthy of the excessive praise that has been lavished upon it by most of the compilers of Scottish song-books. Its success supplies but another instance of how little need there is for a song to possess unusual literary merit in order to become popular. The original words – for the ballad is of very ancient date – have been lost long ago, but the simple air to which they were wedded, after being handed down from generation to generation, has inspired several writers to compose appropriate lyrics. Mrs. Cockburn’s attempt is perhaps the most successful, but it would not be hard to pick holes in her poem. The very obvious flaws in its scansion and rhyme are sufficiently apparent.

THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST

I hae seen the smiling o’ fortune beguiling;
I hae felt all its favours, and found its decay:
Sweet was its blessing, kind its caressing:
But now ‘tis fled – fled far, far away.

I hae seen the forest, adorned the foremost,
With flowers of the fairest, most pleasant and gay,
Sae bonnie was their blooming; their scent the air perfuming;
But now they are wither’d and a’ wede away.

I hae seen the morning with gold the hills adorning,
And loud tempest storming before the mid-day.
I hae seen Tweed’s siller streams, glittering in the sunny beams,
Grow drumly and dark as they row’d on their way.

O fickle fortune! Why this cruel sporting?
Oh, why still torment us, poor sons of a day!
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me, nae mair your frowns can fear me;
For the Flowers of the Forest are a’ wede away.

Walter Scott and Robert Burns unite in praising this poem to the skies, so it is perhaps rather presumptuous to find fault with it. “A fine set of verses,” Scott calls it in one of his letters. But then Sir Walter was prejudiced in its favour by being personally acquainted with the author. He was forced, indeed, to admit that Mrs. Cockburn’s with and conversational talents made a stronger impression upon her contemporaries than her writings were ever likely to produce upon her descendants.

Burns, too, was a not altogether impartial critic. “‘Flowers of the Forest’ is charming as a poem,” he wrote, in 1793, to Thomson, when the latter had asked his advice as to the projected publication of a series of songs to suit a collection of the best Scottish airs. “The three stanzas beginning –

“’I hae seen the smiling of fortune beguiling’

Are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalise the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance.” (Once more we note the velvet glove of the friend lightening the touch of the critic’s iron hand.) “What a charming apostrophe,” he adds, “is

“’O fickle fortune! Why this cruel sporting?
Why, why torment us – poor sons of a day!’”

A charming apostrophe perhaps; but the rhyming of “fortune and “sporting” is distinctly less charming. Burns, however, could not well avoid feeling a kindly interest in this poem without exposing himself to a charge of gross ingratitude. He had known it from the days of his youth. He entertained, in fact, a sort of semi-paternal interest in it; for he himself had once made use of it as the foundation of a juvenile set of verses. It was therefore natural that he should keep a warm corner in his heart for a song which he had plagiarised at the early age of seventeen when he wrote:-

“I dream’d I lay where flowers were springing
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List’ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling, crystal stream;
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro’ the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms are warring,
O’er the swelling, drumlie wave.

Such was my life’s deceitful morning,
Such the pleasure I enjoy’d;
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming,
A’ my flowery bliss destroy’d.
Tho’ fickle fortune has deceived me,
She promis’d fair, and perform’d but ill;
Of monie a joy and hope bereav’d me,
I bear a heart shall support me still.”

A comparison of those verses with those of Mrs. Cockburn, which had appeared, eleven years earlier, in a paper called *The Lark*, shows that not only did Burns steal the idea of his poem from “Flowers of the Forest,” but that many of the actual words were taken bodily from the text of that song. The most that can be said for this offspring of his youthful pen is that it was quite as good, and as much deserving of immortality, as the source of its inspiration. After all, the same thing is true of songs as of verses, of which Dr. Johnson very truly said that it was easy enough to write them; the difficulty was to know when you had written a good one!

Had Mrs. Cockburn done nothing beyond writing “Flowers of the Forest” her name would have been forgotten years ago. Had this ballad been written by a less noteworthy woman, it would not long have survived the date of its birth. But Mrs. Cockburn made her mark upon the social history of her day by other and far more effectual means than as a mere writer of songs. She was for many years one of the best known and best loved characters in Edinburgh society. Her house was the rendezvous of all the interesting persons who inhabited or visited the Scottish capital. Her parties were characterised by an absence of formality, which did not detract form their charm; he hospitality was of that simple kind which insures the comfort of guests without laying them under too deep and obligation. The distinguished company she kept made up for an occasional scarcity of food, and she herself was fond of saying that her little repasts, at which such men as David Hume and Lord Monboddo were often to be met, resembled those of Stella:-

“A supper like her mighty self,
Four nothings on four plates of delf.”

People were not then so particular on the subject of cooking as they are nowadays, and Edinburgh society flocked to Mrs. Cockburn’s door in search of the rich mental fare that she supplied, which her friends infinitely preferred to the material food of many of her wealthier neighbours. In those days, as Lockhart tells us, people “did not deal in six weeks’ invitations and formal dinners; but they formed, at a few hours notice, little snug supper-parties, which, without costing any comparative expense, afforded opportunities a thousandfold for all manner of friendly communication between the sexes.” [Peter’s Letters to his Kinfolk, *vol. i. p.107*] David Hume, the historian, arriving at Mrs. Cockburn’s house one evening when most of the supper dishes had been consumed, his hostess at once made Herculean efforts to cater for his needs. He stopped her with a smile. “Trouble yourself very little about what you have, or how it appears,” said he. “You know I am no epicure, but only a glutton!” [Life of David Hume, *vol. ii. p.449.*] And her other guests were equally easy to please. They

asked for nothing but the stimulating society of their hostess and the witty conversation of her friends.

Alison Rutherford was the daughter of Robert Rutherford of Fairnilee, and of his second wife, Alison Ker of Shaw. She was born in 1713 at Fairnilee in Selkirkshire, that Tweedside country which Scott has immortalised in “Marmion.” Her childhood was not marked by any event of particular interest. One of the most vivid of her youthful recollections was of the old blind gardener at Fairnilee, to whom she paid a visit regularly every Saturday in order to clip his long white beard, a task which gave the child a satisfactory feeling of self-importance. Another early reminiscence to which she loved to look back was a summons from the minister of Galashiels, [*The Rev. H. Davidson, author of* Letters to Christian Friends, &c.] who begged her to come and see him when he lay dying. Alison at once mounted her pony and rode over from Fairnilee at six o’clock in the morning. She found the old gentleman in bed, wearing a Holland nightcap, and lying between sheets as white as his bushy hair. He embraced the girl and thanked her warmly for coming, assuring her that she would never forget the loss of a few hours’ sleep, since it had enabled her to see the last of an old man who was “going home.” The minister was about to give her that meticulous description of his various ailments which it is the pardonable weakness of chronic invalids to inflict upon their friends, when he checked himself, declaring that it was a shame to complain of a bad road which led to such a happy home. “And there,” he added, pointing to an open Bible which lay on a table by his side, “there is my passport. Let me beg, my young friend, you will study it. You are not yet a Christian,” he continued – (“He spoke true,” said Alison afterwards) – “but you have an enquiring mind, and cannot fail to be one.” With that and his blessing the old man dismissed her. Never, she subsequently affirmed, did she feel so happy as on that morning when she rode home from the deathbed which she had brightened for a few moments by the sunshine of her presence. [Letters and Memoirs of Mrs. Alison Rutherford or Cockburn, *edited by T. Craig-Brown, p.173. (D. Douglas, Edin.,)*]

Before Alison Rutherford had reached the age of seventeen, a young man of her own age, who was eventually destined to suffer a premature and tragic death, had fallen deeply in love with her. This was John Aikman, son of William Aikman, the artist friend of Pope, who painted Lady Grisell Baillie and John, Duke of Argyll, and whose portrait of Duncan Forbes still hangs in our National Portrait Gallery. “John Aikman’s affection, kindness, and sympathy for me surpassed the love of women,” wrote Mrs. Cockburn to a friend, more than forty years later; and she seems always to have kept one little corner of her heart, “empty and hush’d and safe apart,” sacred to his memory. For some reason or other – perhaps owing to the state of the young man’s health; perhaps because she did not return his love – Alison was prevented from wedding this youthful admirer. And in 1731 we find her marrying Patrick Cockburn, a young lawyer, who had been called to the Scottish bar a few years before, and was the son of old Lord Ormiston. [*Adam Cockburn, Lord-Justice-Clerk, afterwards appointed a Lord of Session with the title of Lord Ormiston.*] Within a month of her marriage with Cockburn, her friend John Aikman died, his death being promptly followed by that of his father, who only survived him a few days. [*The following epitaph is inscribed on the tombstone of this unfortunate pair in the Greyfriars’ Churchyard:-*

“Of virtue, as by nature, close allied,
The painter’s genius, but without the pride;
With unambitious wit afraid to shine,
Honour’s dear light, and friendship’s warmth divine;
The son, fair rising, knew too short a date,
But oh! much more severe the father’s fate;
He saw him torn unkindly from his side,
Felt all a father’s anguish, wept and died.”]

Alison Cockburn’s married life was as happy as she or anybody else could possibly have desired. In her youth, as she states in her Memoirs, she had had several “matrimonial, as well as dancing lovers.” But from the moment when she gave her heart as well as her hand to Patrick Cockburn, she never glanced aside or had cause to regret the step which was to bring her two-and-twenty years of wedded bliss.

For the first four years of their married life the Cockburns lived with Alison’s father-in-law, the old Lord Justice-Clerk. “The good old man’s affection for me,” wrote Mrs. Cockburn in after years, “Was infinitely more pleasing than all the adulation I ever met with, and I still remember it with

pleasure." [*Her* Memoirs, *p.4.*] That the charms of this amiable relative did not impress everybody to the same favourable extent may be gathered from the fact that he was popularly known as "The Curse of Scotland," a sobriquet which he earned by his ruthless zeal in harrying and oppressing those unfortunate people who took part in the rebellion of 1715.

It is curious to think that the whole income of the Patrick Cockburns when they married was only £150 a year – a modest competence in these luxurious days – upon which they managed to live comfortably without ever incurring a single debt. We moderns who, occupying a social position similar to theirs, think twice before we marry upon £1000 a year, may look back with something akin to envy at days when it was still possible to keep up appearances upon less than a quarter of that sum. But then we should probably turn up our noses in disgust at the style of living which more than satisfied our ancestors. Mrs. Cockburn's little parties would be voted "slow," unless they included a concert given by operatic "stars," or a dramatic performance by exponents of the latest music-hall sensation. We must all have our box at the opera, where we can sleep peacefully through the second act of *Lohengrin.* We must own a motor-car, in which we can escape from our friends, or pay surprise visits to other friends who cannot escape from us. We are not "gluttons" like Hume, but it is to be feared that we are all "epicures" nowadays. (This, however, is an unpardonable digression.)

Mrs. Cockburn had an only son to whom both she and her husband were much attached, and when the boy was old enough to be sent to school, his parents moved to Edinburgh so as to be near him. It was in September 1745, during their residence in the capital, that "Bonnie Prince Charlie" made his triumphal entry into Edinburgh, on his way to a week's lodging at Holyrood, an occasion upon which Mrs. Cockburn distinguished herself and very nearly got into serious trouble by allowing her sense of humour to outrun her discretion. The Cockburns of Ormiston were Whigs and Presbyterians, and strongly disapproved of the Pretender and his claims. This disapproval was voiced by Mrs. Cockburn in a set of verses parodying Prince Charlie's proclamation, and beginning:-

"Have you any laws to mend,
Or have you any grievance?
I'm a hero at my trade,
And truly a most leal prince.
Would you have war, would you have peace?
Would you be free from taxes?
Come chapping to my father's door,
You need not doubt of access." [Songstresses of Scotland, *vol. i. p80.*]

The author of this parody had watched the prince's state procession from her window with much secret amusement. She had listened with a smile while the heralds proclaimed King James the Eighth of Scotland and Third of Great Britain. When the cavalcades of Highland chieftains, of lovely ladies distributing Stuart favours to the crowd, of hardy veterans bristling with claymores, had passed, she drove out of the city to make a call at Ravelston, where lived her relatives the Keiths. Their political views, as she well knew, were antagonistic to those of her husband, and, doubtless with the object of chaffing her Jacobite relations, she carried her newly-written verses with her to Ravelston. On her return to Edinburgh, the Keith carriage in which she was driving was suddenly stopped at the City Gate by an officious captain of the Highland Guard, who declared that he had orders to search every incoming vehicle for hidden Whig papers. The position was an awkward one for Mrs. Cockburn. If the satirical verses were found upon her person it would be very difficult to prove their harmless character to a zealous Jacobite captain of the guard, who was unlikely to see the humour of any joke at the expense of his prince. Fortunately the danger was averted by the curiosity of a subordinate officer. Just as things were looking grave, this man happened to catch sight of the friendly Ravelston arms on the panel of the coach, pointed them out to his superior, and the carriage was at once allowed to pass unsearched upon its way. It is to be hoped that the bad quarter-of-an-hour which Alison Cockburn suffered at the City Gate was compensated for by the many subsequent hours of pleasure she gave her friends by her amusing descriptions of the adventure. The incident may not have cured her of writing political squibs, but it must certainly have taught her the folly of carrying them about on her person at times of popular excitement.

Somewhere about this time Patrick Cockburn was appointed commissioner – or, as we should call it nowadays, agent – to James, 6th Duke of Hamilton who never seems to have treated

him with the consideration he deserved. The ducal affairs were in a bad state, and it was hoped that the new commissioner would be able to place them upon a sounder financial footing. The duke owed his agent a debt of gratitude for having dissuaded him from joining the rebels in 1745, and was consequently more of less disposed to listen to the good counsel of so sage an adviser. In accordance, therefore, with Cockburn's advice, he promised to go abroad and remain away for five years in order that in his absence his expenses might be restricted and his affairs satisfactorily arranged. This promise was destined to be broken almost immediately. Within eighteen months of his going abroad, the Duke of Hamilton found prolonged exile from England unbearable. He thereupon wrote a letter of profound apology to his commissioner, explaining his inability to keep his pledge, and begging to be provided with sufficient credit to enable him to return. This done, he hastened home, and became engaged to the beautiful Miss Gunning, whom he married in a great hurry, and with that useful article, a curtain-ring, which has done duty on more than one similar occasion. One of the first things the duke did upon his return was to dismiss his agent, and turn the Cockburns out of the house they were then occupying. [*The Dukes of Hamilton seem all to have been somewhat impetuous and eccentric young man. It was a descendant of this duke's, Archibald, ninth of his line, who advertised for a hermit as an ornament for his park, stipulating that the holy man should only shave once a year. Archibald also had a fancy for peculiar pets, and once when a friend who was paying an afternoon call happened to ask if it were true that he kept a tame tiger, he whistled, and the animal came out from underneath the sofa. The friend immediately recollected a pressing engagement with his dentist, and left the house without stopping to take his hat.*] Luckily for them, an old bachelor friend of Patrick's, who lived in the neighbourhood, came to their assistance, and offered them a temporary asylum in his own home.

Within a year or two of his leaving the Duke of Hamilton's service, Patrick Cockburn developed a serious illness, and moved with his family to Musselburgh in search of health. Here the best physicians were consulted, among them Sir Walter Scott's grandfather, Dr. Rutherford, and an eminent surgeon, popularly known as "Kind old Sandy Wood," famous as being the first man to carry an umbrella in the streets of Edinburgh.

In spite of the treatment prescribed by these able doctors, Patrick Cockburn grew rapidly worse, and finally died in 1753, offering up with his last breath a prayer to heaven to preserve "the dearest and best of wives." She, poor soul, was heart-broken at the loss she had sustained, and for the next year lived in retirement at the house of her brother-in-law, Sir John Inglis of Cramond. She refused, however, to wear mourning – thereby no doubt shocking the feelings of her more conventional relatives – declaring that such a sorrow as hers was too sacred to be paraded with crape and all the usual paraphernalia of domestic woe.

Mrs. Cockburn subsequently moved to Edinburgh, and settled in a house in Blair's Close, Castle Hill, which had once been the residence of the first Duke of Gordon, whose coronet was still to be seen emblazoned above the doorway. From this house she subsequently moved to another in Crichton Street, where for fifteen years she and her sister Katherine (Mrs. Swinton) and the latter's son, who had both joined her in the meantime, lived happily together.

Of Mrs. Cockburn's friendship with David Hume we have already heard. The numerous letters that passed between them at this time show that they were on affectionate terms which permitted either to indulge in much good-natured chaff at the other's expense. "Idol of Gaul," she wrote to her famous friend, when he was in France, in 1764, "I worship thee not… I remember that, in spite of vain philosophy, of dark doubts, of toilsome learning, God had stamped his image of benignity so strong upon thy heart that not all the labours of thy head could efface it. Idol of a foolish people, be not puffed up!" [Life of David Hume, *by J.H. Burton, vol. ii. p.231*.] One of "these foolish people," however, she seems to have held in the profoundest regard. Rousseau, that sublime egoist, who was now at the very zenith of his literary fame, made a deep impression upon Mrs. Cockburn's sensitive heart. She delighted in his masterly but paradoxical condemnations of the ethics of civilisation. Like Hazlitt, another of the Frenchman's admirers, she too perhaps shed tears "as fast as the Arabian trees their medicinal gums" over the *Nouvelle Héloise.* "Lord bless you," she wrote to Hume in 1766, "bring Rousseau here. Sweet old man, he shall sit beneath an oak and hear the Druids' song… O bring him with you; the English are not worthy of him; I will have him! I cannot speak to him, but I know his heart, and am certain I could please it." "This is a high pitch of vanity," she adds, "but I am sure of it; and it's the only coquetry I'm mad about. Were Voltaire to call at my door, I would say, I will

not see him. Bring my dear old Rousseau; I am sure he is like my John Aikman." [Letters of Eminent Persons to David Hume, *edited by J.H. Burton, p.125. (1849.)*] Mrs. Cockburn can have had but little knowledge of the domestic life of her hero or she would never have compared him to that early love whose memory was always so dear to her. The publication of Rousseau's *Confessions* some twelve years before her death may perhaps have altered her opinion of the philosopher, but in her letters to Hume she can find no praise too strong for this her idol. "In every article I am him," she writes on another occasion, "except peevishness, which, God willing, men oppressing, and time serving, may bring about. A feeling heart is apt to sour; a cool philosopher who has no guide but reason, no aim but truth, no passions, no follies, but love of fame (a breath blown over his tomb), cannot possibly grow peevish. They only live for *their* sort of eternity; which we people of fancy, of warmth and imagination, who never will cease from ideas of enjoyment, cannot indulge in; we grow impatient, we do not meet with that perfection we are born with the ideas of, and we grow peevish for want of them; we forget we are in the nursery, and long for the dining-room." [Ibid., *pp.123-4.*] Mrs. Cockburn need not have been under any such apprehension as regards her own character, for she never grew peevish or impatient. Sorrow only served to increase her tolerance, and with advancing years she became more and more kindly and broad-minded.

In this pleasant, easy fashion Mrs. Cockburn kept up a voluminous correspondence with a number of friends, many of whom she christened with various appropriate nicknames and bantered unmercifully. One of these was "Bobbie" Chalmers, whom she always addressed as "Brownie," an Edinburgh solicitor whose combination of simplicity and conceit caused his friends a great deal of amusement. When Chalmers paid his first visit to London, an acquaintance who chanced to meet him at a ball took the opportunity of chalking on his back a notice which ran: "I'm little Bobbie Chalmers from Edinburgh!" The result of this practical joke was that every wag who read the inscription hastened to greet the bearer of it with a cordial "Halloa, Bobbie Chalmers, how are you?" and inquired anxiously for the latest news from Edinburgh. Chalmers was much impressed with the affability of London folk, and not a little puffed up to think that the reputation that had already preceded him was sufficient to insure so hearty a welcome at the hands of complete strangers.

Another of Mrs. Cockburn's correspondents was Miss Henrietta Cumming, a strange, romantic, hysterical creature, for a long time governess to the Balcarres family, and, like many governesses, very jealous of her position and careful of her sacred dignity. Lady Anne Lindsay describes her as being "so perfectly fantastic, unlike to others, and wild, that when Nature made her, she broke the mould." [Lives of the Lindsays, *vol. ii. p.312*] But Mrs. Cockburn was apparently very fond of this curious woman, and obtained much amusement from her various eccentricities of character and conduct. She was also devoted to the whole Lindsay family. Lady Balcarres, indeed, looked upon her, as Lady Anne tells us, as a second mother. "She was ten years her senior, but her mind was so gay, enthusiastic, and ardent, her visions were for ever decked with such powers of fancy, and such infinite goodness of heart, her manners to young people so conciliatory, and her tenets so mild, though plentifully Utopian, that she was an invaluable friend between the mother and the daughters." [Lives of the Lindsays, *ii. p.312.*]

Mrs. Cockburn's peaceful life in Edinburgh was fated ere long to be rudely interrupted by a series of tragedies. Her sister Katherine, who in early life had been almost a mother to Alison, became seriously ill, and died in 1770. In the same year Mrs. Cockburn's nephew fixed upon her house as a suitable spot in which to attempt suicide. But the chief sorrow of her life was the sudden death of the son whom she worshipped, for whose sake she had made endless sacrifices, and whose happiness, now that her husband was dead, had become the chief object of her existence. He had entered the army as a cornet in the 11th Regiment of Dragoons, but, owing to an illness which temporarily deprived him of the use of his limbs, resigned his commission and came to live with his mother in Edinburgh. Here he fell in love with a girl named Anne Pringle, whose father had married Mrs. Cockburn's niece. Unfortunately for the two lovers, the girl's father was utterly opposed to the match, and she herself, like a dutiful daughter, declined to marry without his consent. Mrs. Cockburn did all she could to smooth matters over, and very nearly succeeded in doing so. In fact, a date was eventually fixed for the wedding, and everything promised well for the happiness of the engaged couple. On the very morning of the ceremony, however, Anne suddenly arrived at Mrs. Cockburn's house, dressed in black from head to foot – she evidently possessed a strong dramatic sense – and after a lengthy private interview with her lover, summarily broke off the engagement. The unfortunate young man's feelings were so harrowed by this incident that he at once took to his bed and never

again quitted it alive.

MRS. ALISON COCKBURN

FROM MINIATURES IN THE POSSESSION OF J. COCKBURN, ESQ.

(see page 178)

His mother was now left alone in the world. She was still, however, the centre of an ever-widening circle of sympathetic friends, only too anxious to mitigate her grief, who delighted in her society. After a time, when the first poignancy of her sorrow had worn off, she gradually began to entertain again in a quiet, simple way, and was to be met once more at small parties given in the houses of intimates, where her strong sense of humour, which adversity could not destroy, added greatly to the general enjoyment of her fellow-guests.

Sir Walter Scott declares that Mrs. Cockburn maintained in the society of Edinburgh the rank which French women of talent usually held in that of Paris. Her little parlour used to assemble a very distinguished and accomplished circle of eminent men, and resounded with the conversation of the choicest wits of the day. Laughter was no stranger in her house. One evening, a relative of hers who had slightly exceeded his share of the wine provided by his hostess, locked the door of the room where the hats and coats of the other guests had been left, and went away with the key. When the time came for the party to break up, it was found impossible to gain entrance into this cloakroom, and the guests had to go round to neighbouring houses and borrow suitable attire in which to walk home. The ludicrous effect produced by David Hume's appearance, in a hat which was much too small for him and boots several sizes too large, was the cause of much hilarity among his fellow-guests, and perhaps made them feel less intolerant of the practical joker and his doubtful humour. [Life of David Hume, *vol. ii. p.449. (Hume, by the way, seems to have possessed a peculiar talent for placing himself in ridiculous situations. He used often to tell the story of his falling into a swamp at the back of Edinburgh Castle, and imploring an old Scottish woman who was passing to help him out. "Are na ye Hume the Atheist?" she inquired. "Well, well, no matter," said the philosopher; "Christian charity commands you to do good to every one." "Christian charity here, or Christian charity there," replied the old woman, "I'll do naething for ye till ye turn Christian yersel'. Ye maun repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, or faith I'll let ye grovel there as I found ye!" Hume, the sceptic, who was by this time up to his armpits in the marsh, readily rehearsed the required formulae, and so saved his life.*]

Mrs. Cockburn was always very proud of her hair which, like that of Lady Grisell Baillie, was of a rich auburn colour, and never turned grey. She declined to wear a cap such as other old ladies

wore, but instead tied a lace hood over her head and under her chin. Her features somewhat resembled those of Queen Elizabeth. This likeness she heightened by wearing sleeves puffed out in the Elizabethan fashion, which was uncommon then, became popular some years ago, has since grown unfashionable, but will very likely regain its place in the affections of the dressmaker before another decade has elapsed.

During the course of a long life she came across many of the most distinguished men of the day, and could count Lord Monboddo and Adam Ferguson among her friends. A letter she wrote to the Rev. Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels, who was Sir Walter Scott's friend and sold the first acres of Abbotsford to its future owner, is famous as containing one of the earliest descriptions of the great novelist. It is facetiously dated "!5th Nov., 1777, Saturday night 15 of the gloomy month in which people of England Hang and drown themselves," and contains the following notice of the lad who was afterwards to make such a name for himself in the world of letters:-

"I last night sup'd in Mr. Walter Scot's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on. It was a description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm: he lifted his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he, 'I had better read you somewhat more amusing.'"

The young author, who was not yet six years old, then chatted freely and intelligently with Mrs. Cockburn, gave her his opinion on Milton, and observed how strange it was that Adam, just new into the world, should know everything. "He reads like a Garrick," said the amazed old lady. "You will allow this an uncommon exotick." [*Lockhart's* Life of Scott, *p.126. (1853)*]

Lockhart attributes to Mrs. Cockburn the authorship of those "lines to Mr. Walter Scott – on reading his poem of 'Guiscard and Matilda,'" written when the future novelist was only fourteen years old, which show that the writer possessed the true prophetic instinct:-

"Go on, dear youth, the glorious path pursue
Which bounteous nature kindly smoothed for you;
Go, bid the seeds her hand hath sown arise;
By timely culture, to their native skies;
Go, and employ the poet's heavenly art,
Not merely to delight, but mend the heart.
Than other poets happier mayst thou prove,
More blest in friendship, fortunate in love,
Whilst fame, who longs to make true merit known,
Impatient waits, to claim thee as her own."

Robert Burns was another of the men, afterwards destined to become famous, whom Mrs. Cockburn met during the last years of her life. "The town is at present agog with the ploughman poet," she wrote, in 1786, "who receives adulation with native dignity and is the very figure of his profession – coarse and strong – but has a most enthusastick heart of *LOVE.* He has seen dutchess Gordon and all the gay world. His favrite for looks and manners is Bess Burnet – no bad judge indeed." [*The lady in question was Lord Monboddo's lovely daughter, of whom Burns wrote:-*

"Fair Burnet strikes the adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work divine."]

Of Robert burn's own work Mrs. Cockburn admired "The Cottar's Saturday Night" the most. She predicted that its author would most certainly be spoilt by the worship of the fashionable world, though she was forced to admit that his manners were simple enough and that he had hitherto apparently succeeded in keeping perfectly sober in society.

This was certainly a most interesting period in the social and literary history of Scotland, when so many young eagles were testing their flying powers. Edinburgh had always been the centre

of literary thought. Sir Walter Scott has declared that the *vieille cour* of the northern capital was more like that of Paris than that of St. James's. There was an absence of formality and ostentation about the social gatherings of Edinburgh in which they resembled the little French parties where "wit and brilliant conversation superseded all occasion for display."

The ideas of entertaining one's friends were different then from what they are today. There was more genuine hospitality and less make-believe. Guests stayed at country houses for weeks on end, instead of arriving by the last train on Saturday night and leaving by the first on Monday morning as they do now. Poor relations quartered themselves indefinitely upon their kindred, after a fashion that is only followed to-day by the mothers-in-law of screaming farce. Indeed, it was not always easy for a good-natured hostess to get rid of her guests when they showed signs of outstaying their welcome. One old Scottish lady, noted for her extreme hospitality, was much imposed upon by unscrupulous friends who paid her interminable visits. At length, when she had determined that the moment had arrived to accelerate their departure, she would come downstairs in the morning and remark with a smile, "Mak' a gude breakfast, Mr……., while yer aboot it; ye dinna ken whaur ye'll get your dinner!" Even the most thick-skinned guest could scarcely fail to take such a broad hint as this, and hurried away to pack his portmanteau. Society was, of course, much smaller then. Its gates were not necessarily open to the man with the largest banking account. Nor yet was it so select – to use the word in its modern sense – as to preclude the admission of anyone whose pedigree was not as long as that of a prize bulldog. Intellect and humour were two safe passports to this land of pleasant literary friendships and frank social intercourse. Both of these Mrs. Cockburn possessed to an unusual extent, and was consequently sure of a warm welcome wherever she went.

In this society women – and especially elderly women – were most conspicuous. Foremost among these was Alison Cockburn. "Even at an age advanced beyond the usual bounds of humanity," wrote Sir Walter Scott, "she retained a play of imagination and an activity of intellect, which must have been attractive and delightful in youth, but are almost preternatural at her period of life. Her active benevolence keeping pace with her genius rendered her equally an object of love and admiration." [Lives of the Lindsays, *vol. ii. p.317.*] So it was that Mrs. Cockburn found herself, at the age of eighty, the very centre of the most interesting element in Edinburgh society, and that when she died two years later she left a gap which it was not easy to fill, and a reputation for brilliancy of intellect and kindliness of disposition which has survived until to-day

Elspeth Buchan (1738 - 1796)

"Fanatics have their dreams," says Keats, "wherewith they weave a paradise for a sect," and in the middle of the eighteenth century fanatics were very busy dreaming, and sects fought far and wide for a congenial paradise. There were no Christian Scientists then to give the humourist an excuse for saying that their doctrine was neither Christian nor particularly scientific. No Mrs. Eddy had arisen to teach people that such things as death and disease are mere mental hallucinations; that nothing, in fact, exists – except her fees. But there were other founders of equally zealous and earnest sects who attracted to their side numbers of emotional and visionary enthusiasts, and were themselves in most cases, like the majority of their converts, women. There was, for example, the famous Anne Lee of Manchester, a devout member of the Society of Friends, who implicitly believed in the imminence of Christ's Second Advent, and, after suffering much persecution in England, seceded from her denomination and went over to America. There, in 1774, she instituted a body of devotees distinguished for the extreme strictness of their lives, who, owing to the violent fits of hysterical trembling to which they were subject during the performance of their religious rites, were known as "Shakers." American humourists have made them the objects of much good-natured satire, to which they doubtless laid themselves open. But like the inhabitants of Zion or Salt Lake City, and many other communities of equally peculiar people, they evoked a certain measure of grudging admiration, if only by reason of the steadfastness of their faith, which not even ridicule could kill.

The days of enthusiasm are over. We look with tolerant contempt upon people who take themselves too seriously. It is not the fashion to become excited over a question of faith or a political doctrine. We are inclined to smile at "Revivals," to be amused by the ravings of those modern prophets who predict eternal pains for all who do not happen to agree with their particular tenets. And when – to paraphrase Praed –

"…religious sects run mad,

We hold, in spite of all their learning,
That if a man's belief is bad,
It will not be improved by burning."

But no one who ever visited Zion City when it was at the height of its prosperity, or who has seen the work done by the Mormons in reclaiming lost lands in the prairies of Canada, can fail to appreciate the sincerity of the motives which stimulated the followers of the polygamous Joseph Smith and the "Profit" Dowie to such commendable industry. There must always, indeed, be something of the admirable in genuine fanaticism.

In the same year that the sect of Shakers was founded in America by Anne Lee, another sect of a less austere and far more fanatical order was being formed in Scotland by a woman of the name of Elspeth Buchan. She was uneducated and illiterate, the daughter of a innkeeper, the wife of a potter, with no rank, no wealth, no influence – with nothing in fact but a practical knowledge of human nature and a supreme confidence in herself and her mission. The success to which she attained by sheer force of character is all the more surprising when one considers the circumstances in which she had been placed and the obstacles which she was called upon to surmount.

Elspeth was the daughter of John Simpson, a publican who kept the half-way house at a little place called Fetney-Can, between Banff and Portsoy. She was born in 1738, and form early youth seems to have been troubled by religious doubts which – as is the way with such things – no one could help her to solve. Writing in later life to an English clergyman, who had expressed an interest in her work, she gives the following account of her childhood:-

"My mother according to the flesh died when I was a child of two years old, and my father married again. In a word, I never was fed nor cloathed, nor educate by parents according to the flesh; but he who feeds the ravens, clothes the lilies, teaches babes, has had a goodly heritage prepared for me, and has made Jesus Christ my tutor, and the angels his servants, ministering spirits; and indeed all things has hitherto wrought so much for my good, that I would not have it otherways for a thousand worlds. I was put to school as soon as I could speak, or pronounce words, so that I could have read the Bible when I was very young, and I thought so very deep on what I read, that I troubled every person I had opportunity with, to tell me what they understood about the Scriptures; but I rather troubled and tired them, than got satisfaction to my perplexed mind.

"It was either between five or six, or six and seven years of my age, one day in the fields, after a long consideration, how death came into the world, I fixed my eyes on a certain object. How long I stood I cannot tell, but in that place I was informed in my judgement, that God created all things by the breathing of his mouth, but I heard that man and woman was formed of the element of earth, a most beautiful structure, in the image, figure, or similitude of God, and that God breathed breath, or air, or wind into his nostrils, and his whole person, or soul, or whole man, became living, and that God made him, and all his creatures, to make them happy, and to live in the element they were made of; and that the earth, when all things was finished, was so fertile and fruitful, that Adam would have needed to dress and keep down the great growth in the Garden of Eden, if he had continued in obedience to God. Then I understood that death and disobedience to God, was so joined together that the one was the because, and the other the effect."

This account of the growth of her faith, taken from one of her letters, [Eight Letters between the People called Buchanites and a Teacher near Edinburgh. (*1785.)*] is certainly somewhat obscure, and one cannot wonder that it failed to satisfy her correspondent.

As a girl Elspeth Simpson went to Glasgow to enter domestic service, and here she met and married a man named Robert Buchan who was employed as a workman in her master's pottery. There is no record of this union in the parish register of Ayr, so perhaps the couple may have decided to dispense with the conventional marriage ceremony. In any case, they lived together as man and wife for some years, during which Elspeth bore her husband three children, a son and two daughters. She had been brought up in the Scottish Episcopal Communion, but her husband was a Burgher Seceder, and, like a dutiful wife, she at once gave up her faith for his, though her perplexed soul

found little comfort in the change.

Shortly after their marriage, the Buchans moved to Banff, where Robert set up a manufactory of earthenware on his own account; but this experiment proving a financial failure, he deserted his wife and family, and went off alone to Glasgow, leaving Elspeth to provide for herself and her children as best she could. This she attempted to do by starting an infants' school, in which she taught needlework and the rudiments of spelling to a number of small children of the locality. The neighbours soon began to regard the new schoolmistress with curiosity not unmingled with admiration. She would attend all the weekly meetings at which it was the custom of the good people of Banff to foregather for the purpose of theological discussion, and her enthusiasm as well as the eloquence of her arguments warned for her a reputation for possessing oratorical powers of an almost supernatural order. But the parents of Banff grew gradually chary of entrusting their children to the care of one whom they were slowly coming to look upon as a religious maniac. Her infant-school became deserted, and, finding it impossible to exist upon faith alone, she decided to leave Banff and rejoin her husband.

At Glasgow Elspeth recommenced her attendance at "Fellowship Meetings," visiting all the local ministers, and exhorting them to adopt her curious religious views; but though she was everywhere kindly received, her doctrines were far too unorthodox to meet with anything more than a frigidly polite hearing from the dignitaries of the Scottish Church. One day, however, she happened to be present when a country minister name Hugh White was preaching in a Glasgow kirk, with perhaps more impetuosity than eloquence, on the text "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow will the lord do wonders among you." Elspeth was so impressed by the power of the preacher's exhortation and the vehemence of his style, that she at once wrote off and told him how deeply he had stirred her. He was the first minister, she said, who had spoken effectually to her heart, and she expressed a longing to make his acquaintance. The Rev. Hugh White was naturally flattered by her importunity, and for four months he and Elspeth carried on an intimate correspondence by means of long weekly letters. White, who was then minister of the Relief Church at Irvine, showed some of those letters to various members of his congregation, who were so impressed by the devotion and enthusiasm of his correspondent that they readily fell in with his suggestion that she should be invited to pay them a visit.

On receipt of Mr. White's invitation, Elspeth Buchan promptly said good-bye to her husband, and hastened to Irvine, where she received a warm welcome, became a member of White's household, and was for some time considered a valuable acquisition to the Relief Church. She soon began to promulgate her fanatical opinions among the people of Irvine, and spent much of her time paying house-to-house visits, expounding the Scriptures, solving the doubts of the perplexed, and giving advice to all who asked for it as well as to a number who did not. So wild did her utterances gradually become, and so much influence did she acquire over White, that at length a section of his congregation became alarmed, expressed doubts as to the orthodoxy of Elspeth's religious views, and begged their minister to dismiss her.

White resolutely declined to do anything of the kind, and the town of Irvine was soon divided into two factions – those who supported the minister, and those who were afraid of the power which Mrs. Buchan was gradually acquiring in the Relief Church. The latter party finally referred the matter to the Presbytery, who sided with the malcontents, urged White to free himself from Mrs. Buchan's thrall, and, on his refusing to do so, proceeded to depose him from his ministry. White, however, clinging tenaciously to his post – and more especially to the salary that accompanied it – disregarded the sentence of suspension passed upon him, and declined to give up the keys of his church. This, however, he was eventually forced to do by the now indignant Presbytery, who formally dismissed him. [The History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church, *by the Rev. G. Struthers, p.337. (1843.)*]

A certain number of White's former followers still continued to stand by him. He held large daily meetings, at first in a tent, and afterwards in his own house, whither many of the faithful flocked, to listen to his impassioned oratory and to the strange doctrines expounded by "Luckie" Buchan. Public curiosity and excitement were aroused to an extent unprecedented in the annals of Irvine. The doings of the ex-minister and of the woman who had seduced him from the path of orthodoxy became the sole topic of public and private discussion. Families were divided in their opinions, parents

quarrelled with their children, customers deserted tradesmen who supported the seceders, labourers were thrown out of employment for attending their meetings. Popular feeling ran so high that the windows of White's house, which was now the temple of the new religion, were repeatedly broken, and drunken sailors were encouraged to molest all persons who entered or left it.

Persecution, as is always the case, only served to fan the flame of Luckie Buchan's enthusiasm to a still higher pitch of fervour. She now began to publish the most extraordinary statements with regard to her possession of spiritual powers. She even went so far as to declare that she was the woman mentioned in chapter xii. of the Revelations, who appeared as a "great wonder out of heaven; clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." She further stated that White was the "man-child" whom this woman had brought forth, and who was destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Utterances so blasphemous as this naturally roused the indignation and fury of the populace, who assembled in their hundreds outside White's house and demanded that the witch, as they called her, should be delivered up to them.

One night a number of local hooligans pursued Elspeth Buchan to the home of one of her converts, dragged her out, in spite of her struggles, and carried her in a nearly nude condition for a distance of eight miles along the road to Glasgow. Every now and then Elspeth's tormentors would lift her high up into the air, adjuring her to fly heavenwards after the manner of Elijah, and then let her drop heavily on to the ground, saying, "She can't fly yet; we must take her farther on and try again." [The Buchanites from First to Last, *by J. Train. (1846).*] She managed at length to escape from these ruffians, and returned in an exhausted condition to Irvine. Her persecutors would no doubt have ill-treated her again if the local magistrates had not interfered and passed a sentence of banishment upon the woman whose presence was causing so much popular excitement and ill-feeling.

Attended by a few loyal friends and by a concourse of people who had collected to escort her out of the town, Luckie Buchan drove off in a cart to Glasgow. Here she once more quartered herself upon her long-suffering husband, and, by the lavishness of her hospitality to persons who were complete strangers to Robert Buchan but who came to hear his wife preach, is said to have reduced that unfortunate man to beggary.

After a short stay at Glasgow, Elspeth returned to Irvine, only to be once again expelled by the authorities. This time her exodus took the form of a triumphal procession, for she was joined by White and about six-and-forty devoted friends who were determined to share her exile. At the head of the cavalcade rode Mother Buchan herself, clad in a red cloak and mounted on a white pony. Behind her came the body of the Buchanites. They were so impressed with the imminence of Christ's coming, as preached by their prophet, that they left their doors open, their cows tethered, and their clothes at the well, not thinking it worth while to settle their affairs in this world, in view of the far more important matters which would shortly occupy their attention in another. The procession moved off eastward – in accordance with the scriptural text to the effect that "as the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth towards the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" – expecting the Redeemer to meet them upon the road at any moment.

They must have been a picturesque group, these faithful followers of Luckie Buchan, ignoring the showers of mud with which the village urchins pelted them, They were bare-headed, and their locks, permitted to grow unusually long, were restrained from falling in a fleece over the back and bosom by small buckling-combs." [Castle-Douglas Miscellany.] As they marched along they sang a song, which for literary merit does not compare unfavourably with most of the hymns heard at modern revival meetings or at the services of the Salvation Army:-

"We march and we sound
Our trumpets around,
We'll all in short time in sweet glory be found.
Though many do press us,
We ne'er look about,
Though Satan distress us,
We still keep our route.
We never shall fly,
Nor yet shall we die.

Our warfare's below, and our peace is on high.
Well armed we stand,
And God by our hand,
Our armour's immortal, and God doth command.
While God leads the van,
We never fear man,
O bright shall shine glory, for bright is the dawn."

Eastward they travelled through Mauchline, Cumnock, Sanquhar and Thornhill, until they finally reached a farmhouse at New Cample in Nithsdale, thirteen miles from Dumfries, and close to the caves in which the hunted Covenanters of old had concealed themselves. Here Mother Buchan called a final halt. All through their pilgrimage she had kept up the spirits of her flock by continual exhortations and prayers, cheering the depressed, preaching to the weary ones, coaxing the lazy ones on – though not, perhaps, like Father O'Flynn, with her stick. She herself never tires, though stopping occasionally to take a few whiffs from a small black clay pipe in which she seems to have found habitual comfort.

At New Cample the Buchanites founded a community whose principles were entirely altruistic. They shared a common purse, of which, however, Mother Buchan kept entire control, as well as of all provisions, which she doled out daily with a frugal hand to the members of her sect. On one occasion, when the funds were running low, Elspeth declared that she had had a divine revelation informing her of an imminent supply of cash from a heavenly source. She persuaded a member of her congregation to accompany her to an adjacent hill-top, where they spread out a large sheet, of which they each held two corners, and waited for the rain of money to commence. After standing there for some time, the clouds meanwhile giving no signs of bursting into showers of gold, Mrs. Buchan's disciple became bored with the entertainment and went home. Shortly afterwards the prophetess reappeared at "New Camp," as the Buchanites called their residence, clasping to her bosom a five-pound note which she affirmed had come direct from God. She abused her impatient follower for his lack of faith, which had, of course, as she lucidly explained, made it impossible for the Divine donation to be delivered with the promised punctuality.

In the course of her preaching, Elspeth Buchan had the satisfaction of making a large number of converts. One of the first was the wife of a certain Captain Cook, commander of the *Prince of Wales* revenue cutter. But the conversion of Mrs. Cook was not a complete success. Her husband was a blunt, short-tempered sailorman who "stood no nonsense." Not only did he insist upon removing his wife from the sphere of Buchanite influence, but actually shut her up in a dark room for three weeks, and went about breathing threats of the dire personal chastisement that would ensue if he ever chanced to meet Luckie Buchan face to face.

Another notorious convert was an English lieutenant of Marines, named Charles Edward Conyers, who declared himself so infatuated with the Buchanite doctrines that he resigned his commission in his Majesty's service and took up his abode permanently at New Cample. Here he became a most zealous worker in the cause, and was of great assistance in helping Mr. White to transcribe hymns for the use of the elect and make up the monthly accounts. Alas! one fine day this lieutenant of Marines was shown up in his true colours. His motives for retiring to the comparative obscurity of New Camp proved to be of the most ignoble kind. It was not even from idle curiosity that he had sought refuge with the persecuted sect, nor yet for the sake of having a good story to relate to the Marines on his return. To secure an immediate translation to heaven was not his desire so much as to evade the clutches of the law upon earth. He had defrauded a London Insurance Company of a large sum of money, and, in his anxiety to escape the consequences of his crime, had hastened to avail himself of any form of concealment which might answer his purpose. He was arrested, however, made a final appearance upon the scaffold at Tyburn, and his introduction to another world was not, perchance, as painless as a true Buchanite might have been led to anticipate.

Yet another member of Mrs. Buchan's flock was the girl, Jean Gardner, immortalised as being one of Robert Burns' numerous flames – the "darling Jean" mentioned in one of his best-known poems. She was an attractive young woman with a "light foot and an ensnaring eye," [*Cunningham's* Life of Burns.] and the poet is said to have spent a whole day and night in a vain attempt to persuade her to leave the society of Mother Buchan, by whose pictures of the primitive enjoyment of a simple

religious life she had been completely captivated. [*A list of many other people who fell victim to the wiles of the "Friend Mother in the Lord," as Mrs. Buchan styled herself, is given in a curious poem published in 1784 under the title of "Satan's Delusions," more notable for its quaintness than for any other quality:-*

"Thou Irvine art an ancient Burgh
The seat of presbytery;
And many famous ministers
Have occupied in thee.
For upwards of an hundred years,
Thy privilege hath been
To have the best of ministers,
As history may be seen.

The streams of gospel ordinance
In thee were pure and sound:
No Buchanitish doctrine then,
In thee was to be found.
Against thy present ministers,
Though no objection be;
Yet damnable delusions,
Are springing up in thee.

A cursed woman Jezebal,
By Satan introduced;
Who by her corrupt doctrines,
Hath some people seduced.
This wicked one from Glasgow came
In April eighty-three;
She lodged her span among thy sand
And now her fry we see.

Mr. White beginning of her strength
In order first appear'd;
Mistress Hunter second did come forth,
Mistress Gibson third I heard.
The rest came mostly in a breast,
As here you may them see,
Both Peter Hunter, John Gobson,
And Thomas Neil all three.

James Gowan, his wife and maid,
James Stewart and his wife now,
With Mistress Muir and Mistress White,
And Agnes Willie too.
There's William Lindsay and his wife,
John Henderson a wright,
Mary Francis and Kate Gardner,
Eliz Dunlop, these in sight.

The Buchanites of Irvine,
Do now a party make;
Tis evident to every one,
How grossly they mistake.
By heark'ning to this Jezebel,
Have caused much confusion,
Whilst some of them appear to be,
Given up to strong delusion."]

Once comfortably settled at New Cample the Buchanites began to build themselves a residence capable of accommodating the entire community, which had now reached a total of sixty souls. This house was locally known as “Buchan Ha’,” and here the society lived in an overcrowded and insanitary condition which did not, however, in any way stifle their religious ardour.

The discipline in force at Buchan Ha’ was extremely rigorous. If any member of the society showed signs of wavering in his belief, he (or she) was ducked in cold water until the attack of apostasy was over. It required, therefore, a certain amount of courage to become a pervert. But the Buchanites did not need much persuasion to remain true to their faith. They were all upheld by the sublime idea that the Day of Judgement was close at hand; they believed that until there was a body of elect persons living and waiting for the Coming of Jesus, He would not come, and that they themselves had been chosen to play this important role. They also denied the existence of the human soul separate from the body, and were confident that they would be snatched up to heaven, body and soul complete, when the hour was ripe.

They are said to have been temperate, industrious, discreet and civil, as may be gathered from the following description of them, written in 1784 by a gentleman who had attended their meetings and inspected their mode of living:-

“The Buchanites pay great attention to the bible; being always reading it, or having it in their pocket, or under their arm, proclaiming it the best book in the world. They read, sing hymns, preach, and converse much about religion, declaring the last day to be at hand, and that no one of their company shall ever die, or be buried in the earth, but soon shall hear the voice of the last trumpet, when all the wicked shall be struck dead and remain so for one thousand years; at the same moment they, the Buchanites, shall undergo and agreeable change, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, from whence they shall return to this earth, in company with the Lord Jesus, with whom, as their king, they shall possess this earth one thousand years, the devil being bound with a chain in the interim. At the end of one thousand years, the devil shall be loosed, the wicked quickened, both shall assail their camp, but be repulsed, with the devil at their head, while they fight valiantly under the Lord Jesus Christ, as their captain-general.

“Since the Buchanites adopted their principles, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, nor consider themselves bound to any conjugal duties, or mind to indulge themselves in any carnal enjoyments; but having one common purse for their cash, they are all sisters and brothers, living a holy life, as the angels of God; and beginning and continuing in the same holy life, they shall live under the Lord Jesus Christ, their King, after his second coming. The Buchanites follow no industry, being commanded to take not thought of to-morrow; but, observing how the young ravens are fed, and how the lilies grow, they assure themselves God will much more feed and clothe them. They, indeed, sometimes work at mason-wright and husbandry work to people in their neighbourhood; but then they refuse all wages, or any consideration whatever, but declare their whole object in working at all, is to mix with the world, and inculcate those important truths of which they themselves are so much persuaded.” [The Scotsman’s Library, *p.608. (1825.)*]

They dressed in clothes of their own manufacture, of a bright green colour, and became famous for making the wheels and chack-reels upon which yarn is wound.

Mother Buchan forbade her followers to marry, and this gave rise to an ugly rumour accusing them of destroying any infants that might appear in the community. Indeed, Buchan Ha’ was frequently searched by the local authorities, who were much disappointed at not finding there the corpses of any murdered babies. This accusation of infanticide reached such proportions and gained so general a credence that at one time the inhabitants of the surrounding country became enraged and made a nocturnal attack upon Buchan Ha’, where they broke up a meeting which was in progress, as well as most of the furniture. The local sheriff was at length forced to interfere and arrested the ringleaders, but at the subsequent trial none of the Buchanites, whose only desire was to be left in peace, could be persuaded to prosecute. Hugh White wrote an account of this attack in one of those fatuous Buchanite hymns which he turned out with such a prolific but undistinguished pen –

“The people in Closeburn parish residing,
Came often our sermons to hear,

And rudely they questioned our word, though most pure,
Our persons they threatened to tear.
They often with batons and cudgels combined,
With billets of wood and with stones,
But He who has power all men to control
Prevented them breaking our bones." [The Buchanites from First to Last.]

(The Divine protection did not apparently extend to their windows, which were all broken on this occasion).

Elspeth Buchan (continued) - Isobel Pagan (1741 - 1821)

Elspeth Buchan had always, as has been explained, held out to her followers the promise that they would be carried to heaven without tasting death. They consequently lived in a continual state of pleasant anticipation, expecting the last trump to sound at any moment. The Rev. Hugh White was determined not to risk being shut out of the heavenly kingdom for the lack of a wedding garment; so he always walked about, dressed in full canonicals, and wearing a brand-new pair of gloves, scanning the heavens for a sign of the archangel who was to sound the fated note.

Time after time did Mrs. Buchan lead her flock to the top of some hill in the neighbourhood of New Cample, where solemn ceremonies were performed while the congregation anxiously awaited the descent to the angel host whose duty it was to catch the elect up into heaven. On one of these journeys heavenward they passed Logan House, near Kilmarnock, the owner of which became alarmed at seeing the approach of such a concourse of odd-looking people, and sent out hurriedly to inquire who they might be and if their intentions were peaceful. The Buchanites replied that they did not wish to disturb anybody, and were merely going to Heaven. On receipt of this reassuring message the Laird of Logan expressed his intense relief, declaring that he was only too delighted to think that his house should stand on the road to that blessed country.

Frequent disappointments did little to diminish the hopes of the Buchanites, and the "Friend Mother in the Lord" always found some fresh excuse for Heaven's apparent unwillingness to receive her expectant flock. One night, when the congregation was praying together at Buchan Ha', a sudden gleam of light seemed to illumine the big room in which they were assembled. "He comes! He comes!" cried Elspeth, in an ecstasy of religious fervour, "He comes to reign!" The excitement among the elect was intense. They all began to sing different hymns at the same time in various keys, and, working themselves up into a state of mind bordering on hysteria, awaited with such patience as they could muster the long-promised advent of their heavenly Master. One member of the congregation, a little man name Hunter, who had been Fiscal at Irvine and had forsaken his profession to follow Mrs. Buchan, was so afraid of being lost sight of and left behind when the great moment came, that he climbed on to a table, opened his long coat and flapped it about, like the children in *Peter Pan,* as though rehearsing his flight. Another elderly enthusiast, who happened to be in bed on the first floor at the time of the alarm, was in such a hurry to arrive at the scene of all this excitement that he fell the whole way downstairs on his back, reaching the basement in record time.

To the expectant throng every moment seemed an age. They longed to soar away to realms of bliss, and were most impatient of delay. Meanwhile the light which had stirred them to such a pitch of enthusiasm grew more and more vivid, until it finally resolved itself into a lantern which some local farmer was carrying along the road on his way to work. Mr. Hunter shamefacedly got down from the table, and buttoned up his coat. The old man who had fallen downstairs went up to bed again muttering darkly to himself. Even Luckie Buchan herself was a trifle depressed. Indeed, it must certainly have required the most firm and resolute faith to stand many such poignant disappointments.

On another occasion, in accordance with Elspeth's inspired commands, the Buchanites formed a procession and climbed to the top of Templand Hill, in the vicinity of Buchan Ha', where they were confident that the hour of translation would at last arrive. Platforms were erected on the hillside, upon which the chosen people were to stand and await the crucial moment. Mother Buchan's platform was exalted above all the others, so as to give her the advantage of a slight start towards the heavenly regions. All the men were arrayed in their Sunday best; all the women had cut their hair short, with the exception of a tuft on the top of the head, by which the angels might the more easily

draw them up to heaven.

At length the momentous hour arrived. The elect took up their positions on the platforms, expecting at any moment to be wafted to the land of light. Suddenly there came a great gust of wind, but, alas! instead of wafting them upwards, it merely capsized the platform upon which Mrs. Buchan was standing, precipitating her ignominiously on to the ground below among her followers. [The Gallovidian Encyclopedia (1824).]

Further misfortune was in store for the faithful. Before starting out upon this expedition the high priestess had advised her flock to lay aside all their jewellery and ornaments. The majority had consequently thrown their watches and rings on to the dust-heap. On their melancholy return to Buchan Ha' they were surprised to find that some thoughtful person had visited the ash-pit, collected their discarded trinkets, and removed them beyond reach. They were too loyal to suspect Elspeth Buchan, but perhaps if they had summoned up courage to ask her such a tactless question, she could have told them what had become of their jewellery.

Mrs. Buchan was, indeed, a woman of infinite resource, and at once set about, as usual, looking for an excuse to account for the Templand Hill fiasco. She finally decided that the reason the elect had not been carried up to heaven was that they were not light enough. In order to remove this obstacle she ordained a fast of forty days' duration. For six weeks, accordingly, the inmates of Buchan Ha' were condemned to subsist on eight gallons of molasses and a little oatmeal. During the whole of that time no cooking was done in the house, and the unfortunate fanatics were kept alive by spiritual food alone. Mrs. Buchan would occasionally allow them a drink of treacle and water (which sounds an unsatisfactory beverage for a starving person); otherwise they lived exclusively on hope and fresh air. The long hours were passed in prayer and hymn-singing, varied by an occasional discourse from Mother Buchan. None of those who underwent this prolonged abstinence seems to have suffered any ill-effects, except one wretched old woman who was both blind and deaf, and consequently could neither see what was going on, nor obtain any comfort from the hymns and sermons with which the tedious days were freely punctuated. The fast was not altogether a success, however, and several of the Buchanites had their eyes enlightened through their appetites, and returned to Irvine, thinner but wiser for their recent experiences. [History of the Relief Church, *p.344.*]

At New Cample Elspeth and her followers were not allowed to remain in peace for very long. The local authorities soon grew alarmed at the penury of these enthusiasts, and required them to find some sureties that they would not become a burden on the parish. This they were unable to do, and so were forced to move off once more, and, after the usual period of wandering, settled at last at a place called Auchengibbert, a wild desolate spot in Kirkcudbright, where they might safely hope to be left alone.

By this time the funds of the society were running very low. Mrs. Buchan could not induce Heaven to drop any more five-pound notes into her lap, and, though she continued to have fresh followers until 1796, many of those who had joined her from England, Methodists for the most part, were by this time reduced to beggary, and deserted her.

In this same year she fell ill, and was wise enough to realise that, inspire of all her hopes of immortality, her end was rapidly approaching. She thereupon summoned the faithful disciples to her bedside, and assured them that, although she might appear to die, they were not to be alarmed, for that in a short time she would return and lead them to the new Jerusalem. She reiterated her claims to being the Woman of Revelations who was driven into the wilderness, and declared that she had been wandering about the world ever since the days of our Saviour, and had only sojourned in Scotland for a short time. "I go where my words will not be rejected," she said. With that she died, and her body was laid in a coffin and deposited in an outhouse close by. [*The following mock epitaph on Mrs. Buchan was written by David Sillar, the friend of Burns, who evidently did not believe in her divine powers:-*

"Stop, stranger, here lies one interred,
Who was on earth by some revered
And superstitiously adored,
As the great Saviour and Lord:

Till death, stern, cruel, unrelenting,
In murder steeled, far past relenting,
Sent off at once, it mak's na' whither,
He Godhead and her soul thegither."]

One very devoted and zealous Buchanite was so determined that her death should be as dramatic as her life and that her followers should not be disappointed, that he secreted her body during the night in a stack of straw. When the others came to the barn next morning, this enthusiast showed them the empty coffin, and pointed triumphantly to a neat hole which had been cut in the roof of the barn, through which, as he explained, Mother Buchan had ascended to heaven. Her corpse was, however, discovered and replaced in the coffin, but the Buchanites for a long time declined to bury it, until forced to do so by the neighbours who complained of the nuisance and obtained an order for its burial from the local Justices of the Peace.

It took a long time for the Buchanites to understand that their high priestess was really dead. Mr. Hunter, whom I have already mentioned as being one of her original followers, but who had been induced to leave her and go home to his family in Irvine, met an acquaintance just returned from Dumfries in 1796, and asked him what news there was from that country. "None that I remember," said the other, "except that your old friend Luckie Buchan, is dead." "Oh no, John, that's impossible," protested Hunter, "that cannot be, and never will be in this world." "Well," replied John, "if she is not dead, all I can say is that her friends in Galloway have played her a shabby trick, for they buried her last Tuesday!"

After Luckie Buchan's death the sect she had founded gradually faded away, until in 1839 there were only two Buchanites left in Galloway. Hugh White sailed for America, where he had once taught in a theological college, and nothing more was heard of him. He had been a loyal and devoted adherent to the cause of this strange woman who had cast so potent a spell over him, but on the subject of her curious religion he seems to have been consistently vague. During Elspeth's lifetime an Edinburgh teacher had tried hard to engage White in lengthy correspondence on the matter. He had begged the minister repeatedly to give him some definite information as to the exact tenets which distinguished the Buchanites from other professors of Christianity. But White could only reply evasively, in long letters full of Scriptural quotations and platitudes, which only irritated his correspondent and left him no wiser than before. Eventually the teacher declared that he proposed to publish the whole of their correspondence, a threat which elicited from Mrs. Buchan herself an extravagant letter which gives some idea of her views and of the style in which she was wont to express them to the world.

"Sir," she wrote, "you have troubled us with your letters, and indeed I was jealous of your Satanick and self righteous design. You said in your first letter, that you heard, that we believed in a millennium, and you thought, that this doctrine had no small countenance from the Scriptures; but let me inform you, that neither you, nor none for you, can know, what God means by prophecy, nor precept, law nor gospel, unless they be taught of God; for the wisdom of the world, is folly with God, and it is as sure, that the wisdom of God is folly with the world, and methinks, that all the letters that ever I have seen, yours was the most serious, for mixing Christ and Belial together. Indeed we read but little of it, nor could I have read it, or heard it read, for there was nothing in it, but such as is the views of all worldly and carnal minds have of God at this day. I know the world will love your views, because they are their own, and the world will love its own; and if we were of the world, it would love us, but, because we are not of the world but God has chosen us out of the world, therefore doth the world hate us, but it appears to me, that you are a man who has a desire to show your abilities to the world; and as unbelief always calls God a liar, you will get many to join you standard; and I own that truth has oftener than once fallen in the streets of this world; and those that departed from iniquity made themselves a prey; but glory be to God, that the time is fast approaching, that he that will come, shall, come, and blessed are they, and for ever blessed shall they be, that wait for him; and none will wait for him but such as live in his love, by his promise, on his bounty, to his praise walks in the spirit, and makes no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and as you wanted a proof (like the Jews of old of Jesus, whether he was the Christ or not) I answer, you had better come and see what we are, before you begin to publish your controversy. Living words had always more weight than dead letters…..Sir, I hope you will publish this with the rest, for I am not afraid of men." [Eight Letters

between the People Called Buchanites and a Teacher near Edinburgh.]

Of all the acts of the Buchanites which furnished their enemies with a good cause for hostile criticism, the most foolish perhaps was the publication of a ridiculous book entitled “The Divine Dictionary; or a Treatise indicted by Holy Inspiration, concerning the Faith and Practice of this People (by this world) called Buchanites, who are actually waiting for the second coming of our Lord, and who believe that they, alive, will be changed and translated ‘into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with the Lord’ (Thess. iv. 17). ‘And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman’ (Rev. xii. I).” To this was added the following attestation: “The truths contained in this publication the writer received from the Spirit of God in that woman, predicted Rev. xii. I. Though they are not written in the same simplicity as delivered – by a babe in the love of God, Hugh White. Revised and approven of by Elspat Simpson.”

A study of this book throws no light upon the Buchanite religion, since it is merely a jargon of magniloquent, and in many cases blasphemous nonsense, with few lucid gleams of reason.

The sect professed to believe in the community of goods and in frugal living, but Mrs. Buchan did not herself practise abstinence or mortification of the flesh. “as to self-denial,” she wrote in one of her letters, “it would not do with me to be self-denied, but even to be denied self-denial, for God is my all, and my only portion, and shall be for ever and ever” – a statement which, in common with most of hers, adroitly evades the point at issue. She did not approve of matrimony, though many of her followers, including her own daughters, married while they were living at Buchan Ha’, and others seized upon her odd ideas on the subject as an excuse for licence. “Another capital mistake,” wrote Hugh White, “is that all men and women, whatever station, sphere, condition, business of life, they occupy, they conclude that God has placed them there, and consequently that they behoved to be active in their various departments, and ought not to recede from it. Such conclusions of God are blasphemous. Shall the unhappy matrimonial connection, who, through worldly interest, or some such abominable reasons, enter into their legal bonds, conclude that God bound them together? The day is coming when they shall know that God’s will had no hand in any such thing.” It is curious, by the way, how often the question of so-called “free-love” is involved in any fanatical new religion.

One of Mrs. Buchan’s adherents has stated that she always addressed any of her family or society as “my child,” strangers as “dear,” and when speaking of divine things, invariably made use of the expression “O! O! O!” so one may be pardoned for suggesting that she was perhaps a trifle mad.

She is said to have been a tall, good-looking woman, and a most eloquent speaker, who always got the better of those who attempted to argue with her on religious matters. She suffered a great deal of persecution and many rebuffs, which she bore with exemplary courage and cheerfulness. Once, when she was maintaining to a minister that she was the Spirit of God, the reverend gentleman gave her a violent blow on her back and said “I am sure there are both flesh and blood there, which is proof enough that you are no spirit.” Another time, she attempted unsuccessfully to convert a gardener who was hoeing turnips in his master’s field. “James Macleosh,” said she, “quit Mr. Copland’s garden and come and work in that of the Lord.” “Thank ye,” replied the dour old man, “But the Lord was na’ owre kind to the last gardener he had.” {*Cunningham’s* Life of Burns.]

We have no exact counterpart to Luckie Buchan in this country today, but if a second “Friend Mother in the Lord” were suddenly to arise in our midst, she could make sure of attracting a large audience to her meetings for at least a month. The modern thirst for novelty must be slaked at all hazards. We flock to hear the sensational preacher who denounces the sins of a society of which he knows little or nothing except what he has presumably heard at the confessional. We hasten to consult clairvoyants, astronomers, and soothsayers, who are kind enough to sell us information which we already possess on the subject of our habits and character. A revival mission, run upon purely commercial lines, can be certain of financial success if its methods are sufficiently hysterical to appeal to our desire for original entertainment. But though some modern prophetess of the Buchan type might easily induce her congregation to live upon a diet of nuts and vermicelli, one cannot help suspecting that, if she were to be so unwise as to suggest a forty days’ fast, her followers would very quickly begin to entertain doubts as to the orthodoxy of her teaching. The prophet Buchan was only mortal after all, like the prophets Dowie, Harris, or Eddy. The one immortal thing is the credulity of the

human race.

A contemporary of Mother Buchan, who was also a very remarkable character, at this time notorious in the south of Scotland, was Isobel Pagan. Like the high priestess of New Cample, Isobel was a woman of little or no education. Unlike her contemporary, however, she led a life of frank immorality and intemperance, and, if she had any influence at all upon her associates, it was by no means a beneficial one.

Isobel Pagan was born in the parish of New Cumnock, in Ayrshire, about 1741, and spent most of her life in the neighbourhood of Muirkirk. From early youth she made a practice of writing doggerel rhymes upon a variety of subjects, mostly connected with sport. These verses she set to the popular airs of the day, and would sing with so much spirit and humour that people came from far and wide to hear her. Indeed, she contrived to subsist almost entirely on the donations of those who formed her audience on such occasions. Once, at the urgent request of a gentleman who had staked a large sum upon her success, she entered a singing competition in Ayr, where, much to the annoyance of the manager and the delight of her backer, she defeated the leading vocalist of a theatrical touring company which happened to be performing in the town.

Probably the best known of her poems is that one which Robert Burns admired so much and upon which he founded a song of his own, beginning, “Hark the mavis’ evening sang”:-

CA’ THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES

Ca’ the yowes to the knows,
Ca’ them where the heather grows,
Ca’ them where the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie.

As I gaed doun the waterside,
There I met my shepherd lad,
He row’d me sweetly in his plaid,
An’ he ca’d me his dearie.

“Will ye gang doun the water side,
And see the waves sae sweetly glide
Beneath the hazels spreading wide?
The moon it shines fu’ clearly.

“Ye shall get gowns and ribbons neat,
Cauf-leather shoon to thy white feet,
And in my arms ye’se lie and sleep,
And ye shall be my dearie.”

“If ye’ll but stand to what ye’ve said,
I’se gang wi’ you, my shepherd lad,
And ye may row me in you plaid,
And I shall be your dearie.”

“While water wimples to the sea,
While day blinks in the lift sae hie,
Till clay-cauld death shall blin’ my e’e,
Ye shall be my dearie.”

In childhood Isobel Pagan had been deserted by her parents, of whom nothing is known, and drifted into the household of an old woman whom she calls “a good religious wife who lived a quiet, sober life.” But the religious wife seems to have failed to inculcate any rudiments of religion or the wifely virtues into her ward, nor does Isobel appear to have made the slightest attempt to emulate the example of quiet and temperance set by her respectable old guardian. Her career was marked from

the outset by persistent insobriety, and she possessed a capacity for alcoholic consumption which was the envy of all the topers for miles around.

She was, as I have said, a woman of no education, and could not even write her own name. She learned to read the Bible, however, and in later life could repeat the greater part of the Scriptures by heart. But a frequent perusal of Holy Writ does not seem to have suggested to her the advisability of following any of the excellent precepts therein laid down, and she early acquired irregular habits from which she never made the slightest attempt to free herself.

Isobel, as a girl, was singularly ill-favoured, being so lame that she could not walk without the aid of crutches. A severe squint and a huge tumour in her side, from which she also suffered, did not tend to improve her appearance. But she was so witty, so vivacious and high-spirited, that her acquaintances soon learnt to forget her physical deformities, and she acquired a peculiar popularity in the district of Muirkirk. One brave man, Campbell by name, even went so far as to make her an offer of marriage, but his courage forsook him on the wedding morning and he failed to put in an appearance at the church. This was all the more unfortunate for Isobel, as there were several urgent reasons, not unconnected with the courting of the faithless Campbell, why she should possess a husband. But she was destined to remain a spinster – in name at least – to the end of her days.

For thirty years Isobel Pagan lived in a wretched little hovel by the banks of Garpel Water, on the property of Lord Dundonald. Her house was nothing but an improvised shelter erected beneath a low arch, which had originally been built as a brick-store in connection with some local tar-works, and was scarcely fit for human habitation. But she seems to have been perfectly satisfied with so squalid a residence.

When I sit in my cottage,
I may be well content,
The Lady she is kind to me,
The Laird will pay my rent,”

Is the drift of one of her songs, and so long as she was kindly treated and paid no rent, she was quite resigned to such a life.

In this hovel of hers Isobel Pagan entertained all the worst characters of the country-side, and though she had no licence permitting her to sell spirits, the array of empty bottles which adorned her ashpit, as well as the number of intoxicated revellers who left her door at dawn to tack their way home by a circuitous route, spoke eloquently of her fine disregard of the licensing laws.

Her cottage was the scene of nightly orgies indulged in not only by the local peasantry, but also by gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Attracted to Isobel’s bacchanalian concerts by her ready flow of wit, they made up parties to visit the strange old woman and be entertained by the clever impromptu rhymes and the indifferent whisky for which she was notorious. In the month of August, when grouse-shooting had begun and sportsmen flocked from far and near to the Ayrshire moors, these soirées were plentifully attended by visitors from England, who had heard of Mother Pagan’s vocal talent and were anxious to make her acquaintance and enjoy her good stories. Many of her poems were written for use on such occasions, and contain allusions to the local lairds and their Sassenach guests who were staying in the north for the shooting season.

Isobel was not a woman who could safely be made a butt of, and many who came to laugh at her physical peculiarities found the tables turned upon themselves. She was in the habit of satirising those who annoyed or offended her in verse which was not marked by any delicacy or the desire to spare the feelings of her victims. If the latter were too thick-skinned to appreciate such verbal castigation, she had recourse to still more drastic measures. She was cursed with a violent and uncontrollable temper, and would emphasise the point of her jokes with the aid of her crutch in a way that imbued the dullest-witted of her listeners with a temporary sense of humour. In consequence of her intemperate habits and of the outbursts of violence to which she was constantly addicted, her popularity was founded upon a basis of wholesome fear, and friends who were not always able to appreciate her wit soon learned to stand in awe of her sarcasm. One day she passed the tent in

which a worthy minister was preaching at great length upon some tedious question of theological dogma. Isobel stopped to listen for a while, and then put her head in through an opening and nodded genially to the reverend gentleman. “Weel,” she said, “ye’re still borin’ awa’, I see,” and moved on, leaving the unfortunate minister utterly incapable of resuming the thread of his discourse.

In 1803, Mother Pagan published a book of her songs which, as she was unable to write, she dictated to a friend. In this volume, however, one of her happiest efforts in song-making is not included, and for this reason there has always existed a certain element of doubt as to whether she really was the author of this particular poem. It has often been imitated by more modern rhymesters, but as an example of simple peasant minstrelsy must always evoke admiration, and there is no reason to suppose that the writer of “Ca’ the Yowes to the Knowes” could not equally well have composed this charming ballad in praise of the Lowland Shepherd:-

THE CROOK AND PLAID

Ilk lassie has a laddie she lo’es aboon the rest,
Ilk lassie has a laddie, if she like to confess’t.
That is dear unto her bosom, whatever be his trade;
But my lover’s aye the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

Ilk morn he climbs the mountains his fleecy flocks to view,
And hears the lav’rocks chanting, new sprung from ‘mong the dew,
His bonnie wee bit doggie sae frolicsome and glad
Rins aye before the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

And when that he is weary, and lies upon the grass,
What if that in his plaidie he hide a bonnie lass?
Nae doot there’s a preference due to every trade,
But commen’ me to the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

And when in summer weather he is upon the hill
He reads in books of history that learns him meikle skill,
There’s nae sic joyous leisure to be had at any trade
Save that the laddie follows that wears the crook and plaid.

What though in storms o’ winter, part of his flock should die,
My laddie is aye cheerie and why should not I?
The prospect o’ the summer can weel mak’ us glad,
Contented is the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

King David was a shepherd while in the prime o’ youth,
And following the flocks he pondered upon truth,
And when he came to be a king and left his former trade
‘Twas an honour to the laddie that wears the crook and plaid.

Isobel Pagan died in 1821, and though it would scarcely be true to say that she was universally mourned and regretted, her funeral was attended by crowds who came from all parts of the country, less perhaps to do honour to her memory than out of morbid curiosity to see the last of so extraordinary a woman.

Jane, Duchess of Gordon (1749 - 1812)

Two hundred years ago vagrant swine were as common in the streets of all the capitals of Europe as dogs are to-day. [*Lord Gardenstone, a well-known Scottish judge, became so attached to a pig of his acquaintance that he allowed it to sleep at the foot of his bed. When the animal grew too big for this sleeping-place it used to retire for the night on the heap of clothes which the judge had just removed, thereby, as Lord Gardenstone pleasantly remarked, keeping them nice and warm until it was time to put them on again in the morning.*] If you had been alive then and had chanced to be passing down the High Street of Edinburgh on a certain spring morning of the year 1760, you would

not have been much astonished at seeing a number of these unalluring animals wandering in and out of the narrow alleys and wynds that debouch upon the main thoroughfares of the city, performing with rough and ready efficiency the duties which are now relegated to the street scavengers. But you would certainly have been given cause for surprise – if you were still young enough to be surprised at anything – had you met an exceptionally good-looking girl riding astride on the back of one of these pigs, which her sister, another equally pretty child, was violently belabouring with a broom-handle. Such, however, was the spectacle that presented itself to the wondering gaze of an old gentleman who was on his way to pay an afternoon call upon Lady Maxwell of Monreith in Hyndford's Close. Later on, the elderly visitor was much scandalised to learn that the two girls who were amusing themselves in this peculiar fashion were none other than Lady Maxwell's own daughters. He would no doubt have been still further shocked had he been able to look forward into the future and realise that the pretty girl who was beating the pig with such vigour would one day become the famous Lady Wallace, while her sister who sat the animal with such unladylike skill, was eventually destined to make a name for herself in the history of the world as Jane, the beautiful and witty Duchess of Gordon.

In the whole annals of the scheming and intrigue which played so sordid and important a part in the political history of the eighteenth century, there is probably no figure which stands out so clearly as that of Jane, Duchess of Gordon. Few women have occupied a more conspicuous position on the political stage of England; none have succeeded in putting such advantages of birth and station as they possessed to better use, for the purpose of securing the aggrandisement of their own family and the advancement of the party with which they had chosen to cast in their lot.

"Jenny of Monreith," as she was generally called, was the second and loveliest daughter of Sir William Maxwell, and was born in Edinburgh, about the year 1749. Hyndford's Close was a narrow, gloomy back-street of Edinburgh, and the house which Lady Maxwell and her daughters inhabited was thoroughly in keeping with the squalid surroundings of the neighbourhood. To reach the dining-room it was necessary to traverse a dark passage and pass by the open door of the kitchen, so that guests were made aware on arrival of the nature of the viands which were being prepared for them. In this same passage the finer garments of the Maxwell family were usually exposed, after washing, to dry on a screen; while the coarser articles of dress, such as petticoats, were hung decently out of sight at a back window. "so very easy and familiar were the manners of the great in those times" (we read in Chambers's *Traditions of Edinburgh) "*that Miss Betty, afterwards Lady Wallace, used to be sent with the tea-kettle across the street to the Fountain Well, for water to tea." This was the atmosphere in which the Maxwell girls were brought up; so it is not perhaps to be wondered at if their natural high spirits occasionally found an outlet in such a pastime as that of riding the neighbours' swine along the High Street.

"The Scotch may be compared to a tulip planted in dung," said Oliver Goldsmith. "You may see a well-dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close." And the poet might well have brought Jane Maxwell forward as a typical example. Of the two sisters, she was perhaps the greater hoyden, the more boisterous and wild, the least controlled, as she was certainly the more intelligent and beautiful. The propriety of her juvenile manners might indeed be open to unfavourable criticism, but no fault could certainly be found with her qualities of body or of mind. We need only recall the supreme part she played in the political arena of her time, and the unfailing wit of her conversation, to admit the justice of her claim to be called "the cleverest woman of her day." We have but to look at the famous portrait painted by Romney, [*This picture was long attributed to Sir Joshua Reynolds, but in 1882, when it was exhibited at Burlington House, the hanging committee recognised and catalogued it as the work of Romney. Nine years later it was sold by the duchess's great grand-nephew, Sir Herbert Maxwell, to Mr. Wertheimer, for 5,500 guineas.*] when she was six-and-twenty, to appreciate the exquisite beauty of outline and colouring which caused her to be popularly known as "the flower of Galloway" and to be continually surrounded by a host of admirers.

That Jane Maxwell was extraordinarily beautiful and witty there is no doubt, but the more captious among her contemporaries have declared that she lacked one of the most essential parts of beauty. As in girlhood she seems to have possessed all the characteristics of a romping schoolboy, so in later life she is said to have lacked feminine delicacy, both in face and mind. And if she possessed more wit than her great rival the Duchess of Devonshire and the other eminent women of her time, she was certainly much coarser than they either dared or desired to be. With her brothers

and sisters she shared the privilege of inheriting a measure of the blunt, rough character of her father, a typical specimen of the shrewd, old-fashioned Scottish laird. Dean Ramsay tells a story of a certain Monday visit paid by Jane's brother, Sir William Maxwell, to the Earl of Galloway, when that nobleman had been newly appointed Lord-Lieutenant of the county. "I am very glad to have seen you," said Lord Galloway to his departing guests, "but you are not perhaps aware that I have a day of my own for receiving. I set apart Friday for seeing my county friends, and shall always be glad to see you on that day whenever you will honour me with a call." "My lord," replied Sir William with some asperity, "I ken but ae Lord wha hae a day o' his ain, and, God forgi'e me, I dinna keep that day; and d----- me if I'll keep yours!"

It was not to be imagined that so pretty and accomplished a girl as Jane Maxwell would be long allowed to remain unmarried. While still in her teens she became engaged to a young officer in the army. But her lover was suddenly ordered abroad with his regiment, and, after a brief absence, the report of his death reached the ears of his fiancée. She thereupon allowed herself to accept the heart and hand of a more eligible suitor, and in her eighteenth year married Alexander, fourth Duke of Gordon, who was desperately in love with her. It is said that while on her honeymoon she received a letter from her soldier lover stating, no doubt, that the report of his death had been "grossly exaggerated" and that he was returning home to claim his bride. On receipt of this news the duchess swooned away and was found in an unconscious condition in the garden by her husband, who read the fatal letter and thus learnt for the first time that he only occupied a secondary position in his wife's affections.

JANE, DUCHESS OF GORDON

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY W. DICKINSON AFTER THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

The Duke of Gordon was one of the handsomest noblemen of his time, but quite unsuited both by temperament and character to be the husband of so ambitious and energetic a woman as Jane Maxwell. He has been described as being the “greatest subject in Britain, not from the extent of his rent-roll, but from a much more valuable property, the number of people whom Providence had put under his government and protection.” But neither the size of his rent-roll nor the number of his dependants could prevent him from experiencing the hardships of a severe financial crisis, from which his fortunes were with difficulty extricated.

The duke and duchess were, indeed, an ill-matched couple – he finding his pleasure in country pursuits and field-sports, and taking little interest in public affairs; she reserving all the energies of her nature for political purposes, an active and determined partisan, in whom and round whom all the intrigues of the Whig party centred and revolved. A horse, a hound, a gun: these satisfied the simple needs of the duke. Worldly ambition, love of power, a passion to succeed: these alone meant life and happiness to the duchess. Small wonder, then, that two persons who possessed such divergent interests and tastes should fail to find much in common.

The duchess may very probably have been lacking in some of the wifely virtues of sympathy and tolerance. But as a mother she affords a truly noble example of self-sacrifice and maternal solicitude. She had two sons and five daughters, and, in her efforts to provide suitable husbands for the latter, deemed no exertion too severe, no sacrifice too great. As a successful matchmaker she is probably unique in our national history. The devoted and designing mothers of the present day, who compose that pathetic human dado which lines the wall of every ballroom, and strive with such infinite toil and patience to secure satisfactory matches for their unmarried daughters, might well follow her example, even if they did not care to emulate all her peculiar methods. In the fulfilment of her purpose she left no stone unturned; her pertinacy overcame every difficulty; her zeal swept aside all obstacles. Barriers, as George Meredith says, are for those who cannot fly; and Duchess Jane had always soared high. No eligible young man was safe from her clutches until he had got married. She bestowed infinite pains upon the education of her daughters, but none of them inherited a tithe of her mother's intelligence or beauty, and the dowry with which the duke was able to provide them was an insignificant one. Nevertheless, they all contrived to marry well – to use a term which implies matrimonial success from a purely worldly point of view – a result which they owed entirely to the indefatigable labours of the duchess. She is probably the only instance in history of a mother who has allied three of her five daughters in marriage to English dukes, and the fourth to a marquis. [*Charlotte married the Duke of Richmond, Susan the Duke of Bedford, and Louisa the Marquis Cornwallis.*]

A typical example of the lengths to which she condescended in the pursuit of these objects is given by Samuel Rogers, the poet, who declared that he could vouch for the truth of the story, having had it from the duchess's own lips. Lord Brome, the eldest son of Lord Cornwallis, fell in love with her Grace's daughter Louisa, and a marriage was arranged between them. At the last moment, however, Lord Cornwallis tried to break off the match, on the plea that there was madness in the Duke of Gordon's family. The duchess thereupon proceeded to interview Lord Cornwallis, and assured him that, while she thoroughly respected his reason for disapproving of the marriage, he might set his mind at rest upon the question of a possible taint of insanity, as there was "not a drop of Gordon blood in Louisa's body!" Lord Cornwallis appears to have been satisfied with this statement, and in due course the marriage took place. Thus readily did the duchess sacrifice her honour on the altar of her daughter's happiness. Again, another daughter, Georgiana, became engaged to the Duke of Bedford, but her fiancé died before the marriage could be celebrated. The duchess did not despair. Bidding Georgiana array herself in widow's weeds, a dress that was particularly becoming to her, she sent for the Duke of Bedford's brother and heir to comfort the girl. The young man found the fair one clad in black and looking so bewitching in her distress that he at once fell passionately in love with her, and eventually married her.

The duchess's struggles to provide her daughters with suitable husbands were not always crowned with success. She occasionally suffered rebuffs which might have disheartened a less dauntless mother, but which only inspired her to still more strenuous efforts. She entertained at one time a project of marrying her eldest daughter, Lady Charlotte Lennox, to Pitt, and would take her to drive to Wimbledon whenever she knew the Prime Minister to be there. This scheme was frustrated by Henry Dundas, Pitt's intimate friend and trusted lieutenant, who did not wish his Chief to make such a connection. With all the guile of an astute politician, Dundas devised the expedient of pretending to be about to offer his own hand and heart to the Lady Charlotte, a project which he confided to Pitt. His object was easily and immediately attained. Pitt at once ceased his attentions, and withdrew from the field in favour of his rival, an example which the latter speedily followed as soon as he had gained his point. Perhaps the duchess recalled this incident when she remarked contemptuously to Dundas one night, as the guests were leaving an assembly in London, "Mr. Dundas, you are used to speak in public; will you call my servant?"

In 1802 she was accused of having taken her youngest daughter, Lady Georgiana, to Paris,

in an attempt to secure Eugène Beauharnais as a son-in-law. Here again she did not meet with the success to which she aspired, and the fact that on her return she was reported as saying that she hoped to see Bonaparte “breakfast in Ireland, dine in London, and sup at Gordon Castle,” did not enhance her popularity.

On one other occasion her designs met with failure. William Beckford, the eccentric author of *Vathek*, who lived at Fonthill, was reputed to be a man of enormous wealth. What more upon earth could be desired by a managing mother for her daughter? The duchess determined to pay a surprise visit to Fonthill to judge for herself as to the suitability of such a man for the post of son-in-law. Beckford, however, made up his mind to outwit her, and having received a hint as to the date of her arrival, resolved to give her what he calls a “useful lesson.” By his commands Fonthill was put in order for her reception, and arrangements for her welcome were made upon a lavish and extensive scale. This done, says Beckford in his Memoirs, “I ordered my *mayor-domo* to say on the duchess’s arrival that it was unfortunate – everything being arranged for her Grace’s reception, Mr. Beckford had shut himself up on a sudden, a way he had at times, and that it was more than his place was worth to disturb him, as his master only appeared when he pleased, forbidding interruption, even if the king came to Fonthill.” [The Memoirs of William Beckford, *pp. 337-9. (1859.)*] The duchess, though somewhat surprised at Beckford’s apparent peculiarities, accepted the situation calmly. She expressed herself as much gratified by her mode of reception and by the luxury of the house, and was all the more anxious to see her host. “Perhaps Mr. Beckford will be visible tomorrow?” was her daily consolation. But to-morrow came, and to-morrow, and the day after, and still no Mr. Beckford! The duchess remained seven or eight days, magnificently entertained, and then went away without ever having seen the owner of Fonthill. He meanwhile sat in his study, surrounded by a number of new books, recently arrived from London, and chuckled to himself at the thought of his solitary guest and her complete discomfiture. The duchess was naturally indignant at the treatment she had received at the hands of her unwilling host, and subsequently took every opportunity of heaping contumely upon his head. She must indeed have rejoiced when in later life he was reduced to such financial straits that he was forced to sell all the pictures and works of art which had adorned Fonthill on the occasion of her famous visit. Beckford’s ideas of hospitality were always somewhat strange, as may be gathered from the fact that when Samuel Rogers went to stay at Fonthill, the poet was informed that neither his servant nor his horses could be admitted, but that his host’s steeds and domestics should be placed at his entire disposal. But the visit of the Duchess of Gordon was the only occasion upon which he played the part of absentee host so thoroughly and with such malevolence.

In a volume of *Public Characters,* published in 1799, there is a quaint description of the beautiful duchess and of the effect she produced upon society. From this we learn that she had the power of making “all persons who came within the sphere of her action” pleased with themselves, a faculty that implies the possession of the most consummate tact. “She was eminently distinguished for her engaging deportment, for being the life and soul of elegant parties, especially those met for festive amusement, for her agility and grace in the performance of those exercises which display beauty and symmetry on the one hand, and for the gaiety, spirit, and brilliancy of humour which so agreeably set off acute and vigorous understanding on the other.” The author of this curious biographical work remembers being at an inn at Blair one evening with a party of county gentlemen who had recently been staying at the Duke of Athol’s mansion close by, where they had been fellow-guests of the Duchess of Gordon. Her charms, her beauty, her accomplishments, even her manners, were the theme of universal praise “for several hours,” and “were renewed with equal warmth in the morning.” Conversing with the youngest member of the company, whom he knew to be possessed of “vigorous talents and punctilious discernment,” “Pray, Charles,” said the chronicler, “what appears to you to be her Grace’s secret for enrapturing your father and all our worthy friends?” The reply of the talented and discerning Charles must be given in full: “Careful forbearance of her display of superiority in rank, in the distribution of her attention,” said he; “no marked consideration of that diversity in other, when met together at the same table; and giving every one an opportunity of speaking on a subject on which she supposed he could speak well.” (I feel sure that Charles supposed he could speak well on any subject.) “Not all her engaging qualifications,” continued this youthful prig, “made such an impression on my father as the conversation in which he was enabled to bring forward his favourite opinions on planting trees and potatoes, as most beneficial to gentlemen and the poor. His good neighbour was no less captivated by her Grace’s discourse with him on sheep-farms.” It is disappointing to think that we must be kept in perpetual ignorance of the duchess’s views of the same conversation. But one cannot help admiring the tact which enabled her to discuss such tedious subjects as the rotation of crops or the conduct of sheep-farms with the worthy squire

and his good neighbour, without displaying any signs of the weariness which such topics must inevitably have produced in the mind of such a sprightly and intelligent woman of the world. That she was not invariably so tolerant of bores is well known. The frankness of her expressed sentiments was not always agreeable to her hearers, for she made a practice of what is called “speaking out her mind,” a euphemism adopted by candid friends to describe that essentially personal criticism, punctuated by what are known as “home truths,” which is always so very hard to bear. Even the author of *Public Characters* admits that the duchess did not ever suffer fools gladly, but could be severe at times, and records an occasion on which she abused a “well-known peripatetic, and exposed his conduct in so humorous and strong satire that it is said she almost recalled to his recollection that there is such a feeling as shame in the human mind.” I cannot help wishing that the author had given us some hint as to the nature and humour of the satire, or, for the matter of that, had explained to us what on earth is a “peripatetic,” and why he should be incapable of shame. On these questions, however, he maintains a discreet if irritating silence.

The secret of the duchess’s great success lay not so much in her with and beauty – “she is *beautiful indeed,*” wrote Mrs. Delany, “very natural and good-humour’d, but her *very* broad Scotch accent does not seem to belong to the very great delicacy of her appearance” [The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, *vol. v. p.215*] – as in her determinations to succeed at all hazards. “Any contest I shall *rise* in – never fall, I assure you,” [An Autobiographical Chapter in the Life of Jane, Duchess of Gordon.] she once wrote to Francis Farquharson, an intimate friend and adviser of the Gordon family; and from this sentence one can gain the key to her whole character. She was determined, masterful, undaunted. “I have been acquainted with David Hume and William Pitt,” she used to say, “and therefore I am not afraid to converse with anybody;” [Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers, *p.143.*] and converse she did, freely and fluently, though not always in a language that was understood by her listeners. “Rax me a spaul o’ that bubbly jock,” she once observed at dinner to a flustered Englishman who was carving a turkey and at the same time boasting somewhat prematurely of his intimate knowledge of the Scottish vernacular.

Her energy and vitality were a source of constant wonder to her friends. Horace Walpole gives in one of his letters a description of her daily life, and relates how she “first went to Handel’s music in the Abbey; she then clambered over the benches and went to Hastings’ trial in the Hall; after dinner to the play; then to Lady Lucan’s assembly; after that to Ranelagh, and returned to Mrs. Hobart’s faro-table; gave a ball herself in the evening of that morning, into which she must have got a good way; and set out for Scotland the next day.” [The Letters of Horace Walpole, *vol. ix. P.318.*] Hercules himself, as Walpole remarks, could not in the same time have achieved a quarter of her labours.

Jane, Duchess of Gordon (continued)

If the Duchess of Gordon was tireless in the performance of her social duties, her exertions in the wider sphere of politics were even more remarkable. Her desire to enrol the name of Gordon in the lists of fame side by side with those of Pitt and Dundas, her qualities of masculine determination and independence, her caustic wit, as well as the rank, sex, and beauty which exempted her from those restraints usually imposed on a woman by the exigencies of social intercourse, combined to make her the most active and useful partisan of Pitt’s administration. As the blandishments of the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire were of infinite assistance in the electoral campaign of Charles James Fox in 1784, so were the talent for intrigue and the personal attractions of Jane, Duchess of Gordon, assets of inestimable value to William Pitt and his advisers. In her splendid town house in Pall Mall – a house that was once the property of the Marquis of Buckingham, afterwards became the headquarters of the War Office, and is now, alas! an automobile club – she collected a crowd of all the most distinguished Whigs of the day, as well as a number of admiring satellites and sycophantic hangers-on. It is even said that, relying on her immunity from any obedience to the recognised usages of society, she would send for members of Parliament who showed signs of wavering in their allegiance, and use every means in her power to confirm their adherence to the Government. [The Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxhall, *vol. iii. p.267. (1836.) (In the* Life of Sir James Mackintosh, *vol. i. p.189, we read of her unsuccessful efforts to detach that distinguished philosopher from his party.)*]

As a firm follower of Pitt, and consequently of the Queen, she was naturally unpopular among the partisans of the Prince of Wales. On one occasion the Prince’s secretary uttered some ribald remark at the expense of her Majesty in the presence of the duchess. “You little, insignificant, good-

for-nothing, upstart, pert, chattering puppy," said she; how dare you name your Royal Master's Royal Mother in that way?" She was not, indeed, a woman whom it was safe to irritate or offend, and the freedom of her speech, too often of a coarse and unrefined nature, gained her an unusual number of enemies. Once, when the Earl of Buchan was speaking with unnecessary eloquence of the brilliant talents of his family, she ingenuously inquired whether it were not the case that they had been inherited from the mother, and were consequently "all settled on the younger sons." When Sir William Nairne was raised to the bench in 1786 the duchess asked him what title he had chosen. "I am Dunsinnan," replied the eminent lawyer. "You astonish me," said her Grace, "for I never knew you had begun." And similar examples of her dry humour are numerous, but could not, for the most part, be printed in these pages without incurring the just strictures of even the least censorious reader. A certain lack of reserve in speech and thought was evidently a heritage of the Maxwell family. Lady Wallace, the duchess's sister, wrote a play entitled *The Whim* which contained passages so freely expressed that it was refused the Lord Chamberlain's licence. The duchess herself was an adept in the art of vituperation, and possessed a fine uninterrupted flow of language and an extensive vocabulary which she was never ashamed to use. She evidently agreed with that other Scotswoman who, while lamenting a relative's continual use of oaths, was wont to add apologetically that "Nae doot, 'tis a great offset to conversation." [*The use of strong language was prevalent at that time among all classes of society. There is a well-known story of how that staunch old Jacobite, Lady Strange, when some tactless individual referred to Charles Edward in her presence as "The Pretender," rebuked him by exclaiming, "Pretender, indeed, and be damned to you!" Sir William Stirling Maxwell, in one of his essays, recounts an amusing anecdote of an old Scottish lady of distinguished family who, while driving home from a ball one night, was awakened by the carriage being stopped by the old coachman, who put his head in at the window to tell her that he had seen a falling star. "And what ha'e ye to do wi' the stars, I wad like to ken?" asked his indignant mistress. "Drive on this moment and be damned to you!" adding in a lower tone, "as Sir John wad ha' said, if he had been alive, honest man."*]

The duchess was a dangerous enemy, but a good friend. Her friendships, "once formed were very sincere and not easily shaken," says a contemporary. [Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, *by R. Gillies, vol. i. p.298.*] By her indomitable perseverance and courage she acquired a measure of political power such as probably no woman, with the brilliant exception of the Duchess of Lauderdale, has ever possessed in this country before or since. It was through her influence that her husband, who lacked both her initiative and energy, received the Great Seal of Scotland, while his brother, Lord William Gordon, was made Deputy Ranger of St. James's and Hyde Parks, a sinecure then much in request.

In 1787, when the Prince of Wales's debts had reached the alarming total of £200,000, and both Pitt and Dundas were anxious that matters should be arranged without any disclosures being made in the House of Commons, the Duchess of Gordon was entrusted with the delicate task of settling the affair. The allowance of the heir-apparent had always been a meagre one, at any rate in the opinion of his friends. The King had appropriated to his own use the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall during his son's minority, and declined to give any account of their expenditure. Public opinion was consequently on the side of the prince, and the government of the day thought it wise policy to accommodate him. At Pitt's suggestion the duchess spent many evenings in the prince's society, talking with all her accustomed freedom upon the subject of his debts, and thus paving the way for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who subsequently interviewed him and gave the much-needed promise of financial aid. Later on, when the question of George III.'s insanity was the subject of a select committee, and had divided the nation into two opposing and bitter parties, the Duchess of Gordon threw the whole weight of her influence into the balance on the side of Pitt, and consequently drew down much odium upon her own head.

She did not, however, confine her exertions entirely to the promotion of party or family interests, and at a time when the defeat of General Burgoyne's army was arousing sentiments of patriotism and loyalty throughout the country, was one of the first to offer her personal assistance. Determined to employ her enormous influence in promoting the enlistment of the required troops, she left London in the very depth of winter, just as the gay season was commencing, and set out for the Highlands, where her presence inspired the peasantry to form a corps of volunteers. It must have been a great sacrifice to this leader of Society to leave the centre of gaiety and fashion and make a laborious pilgrimage by coach to the snow-swept North. But the Duchess of Gordon was not to be stayed by any minor considerations of personal discomfort. When duty, whether national or maternal,

called her, she obeyed without a question. In 1793 when the French Republic, then in the throes of an internal revolution, declared war against Great Britain and Holland, the Duke of Gordon offered to raise another regiment of Highlanders to send abroad. His wife's efforts to further such a project were as strenuous as they were successful. The feeling in Scotland for "Jenny of Monreith," with her broad Scots accent and her still broader sense of humour, was a very deep one. Wearing a military bonnet on her head, she rode to all the country fairs, and, following the example of another duchess, her great rival, distributed kisses to all men who were willing to enlist. In the striking but not very flattering portrait of her by Gainsborough, which was exhibited a Burlington House in 1907, she is shown as wearing the headgear of the famous Highland regiment which she assisted in raising, which is now one of the most sacred possessions of the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders (late 92nd). It is said that she would hold a guinea between her lips and allow the fortunate recruit to take it as a bullfinch takes seed from its mistress. One young Highland blacksmith, whom every recruiting sergeant had besieged in vain, was unable to resist the Duchess's lure, took the kiss and the guinea, and then threw the latter to the assembled crowd to show that his motives were anything by mercenary. Several farmers are said to have "taken the shilling" so as to obtain one of her Grace's kisses, and then paid the £1 fine, termed "smart money," which enabled a recruit to withdraw his enlistment. A kiss from Duchess Jane was well worth a pound, said they, and probably they were right. The corps thus raised, and known as the Northern or Gordon Fencibles, was afterwards reviewed in Hyde Park by George III., being the first Highland regiment seen in London since the review of the Black Watch in 1743.

JANE, DUCHESS OF GORDON

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, P.R.A., IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS. CUMMING

It was on this journey to the Highlands that the duchess was deeply shocked at discovering the methods – more drastic than her own – in use in some parts of Scotland to encourage recruiting. One day, as she was passing through a provincial town where a battalion was at drill, she observed a sergeant beating some unfortunate recruit with what appeared to be unnecessary violence. On inquiring the nature of the crime which demanded such stringent punishment, “No crime at all, if it

please your Grace," replied the sergeant; "this is in our corps the way we have of making volunteers!" [*Was the duchess the heroine of Dean Ramsay's famous story of the witty woman who administered so well-merited a snub to a conceited Perthshire cavalry colonel? He had been complaining of the inefficiency of his officers, and saying that the whole duties of the corps devolved upon himself. "I am my own captain," he declared, "my own lieutenant, my own cornet, and my –" "Your own trumpeter!" added the lady.*] On her return to London the duchess took occasion to mention this incident to Pitt, who no doubt promised to give the matter his attention, just like any modern Prime Minister. (Perhaps he even sent a memorandum on the subject to the Secretary of State for War, who handed it to the Military Secretary, who forwarded it to the Adjutant-General, who referred it to the Inspector-General (or Director) of Recruiting, who initialled and passed it on to the Director of Auxiliary Forces, who communicated its contents to the Officer commanding the unit concerned, who ordered a Court of Enquiry to assemble. That Memorandum may still be drifting along the sluggish channels of military correspondence, to return to the War Office in time to find that the question of the treatment of Volunteers has been settled by the simple process of their total abolition.)

The presence of the duchess was always sufficient to secure the success of any social entertainment. In 1775, she appeared at a masquerade held at Banff – much to the scandal of the local elders – in the house of a certain Mr. Abercromby. On this occasion she was dressed as a flower-girl, but changed this simple costume before supper for a superb court dress. When she unmasked and disclosed her entrancing beauty and the glitter of her diamonds to the public gaze, the admiration of her fellow-guests knew no bounds. "I had read the Arabian tales," says an officer of Marines who was present (and evidently possessed those imaginative qualities usually attributed to members of his amphibious profession), "and was transported to the regions of that fanciful work." [Personal Memories, *by Pryse Lockhart Gordon, vol. i. p.37.*] This same officer, who afterwards joined the Duke of Gordon's Fencibles, was entertained as a poor subaltern at Gordon Castle by the duchess and her daughters – "beautiful and interesting nymphs" he calls them. [Ibid., *p.67.*] He describes the ardour with which Lord Monboddo, another of the duchess's guests, remarked to him, "Sir, her Grace had a brilliancy and radiance about her like the rays round the head of an apostle!" [Ibid., *p.399.*] Her laugh, too, as another contemporary tells us, had "a mesmeric influence, was unequalled, and, once heard, could not be forgotten"; [Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, *vol. i. p297.*] so it is not surprising that she won all hearts.

The duchess was always ready to lend the weight of her influence to the advancement of literature and art, in which she took a deep, if not very intelligent, interest. "Her Grace's present ruling passion is literature," wrote Mrs Grant of Laggan, in 1808. "To be the arbitress of literary taste and the patroness of genius – a distinction for which her want of early culture and the flutter of a life devoted to very different pursuits, has rather disqualified her. Yet she has strong flashes of intellect, immediately lost in the formless confusion of a mind ever hurried on by contending passions and contradictory objects, of which one can never be obtained without relinquishing the others." [Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, *vol. i. p.182*] Byron, too, in one of his letters, [The Letters of Lord Byron, *p.92. (Moore, 1875.)*] says that his cousin, Lord Alexander Gordon, told him that the duchess requested he would introduce his "poetical lordship to her Highness," as she had bought his volume, in common with the rest of the fashionable world, and wished to claim her relationship with the author.

It was through the kindness of the duchess –

"Her Grace,

Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,

And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass," –

That Robert Burns, like herself a native of Ayrshire, was introduced to the delights of the New Assembly Rooms at Edinburgh, where he suffered such acute discomfort and felt so thoroughly out of place. Of the ploughman-poet she once confessed that she had never met a man whose conversation "so completely carried her off her feet." [*Allan Cunningham's* Life of Burns, *vol. i. p.131*] Burns paid several visits to Gordon Castle, [*In 1787 Burns paid a brief visit to Gordon Castle, which in his diary he calls a "fine palace, worthy of the noble, the polite, and generous proprietor." The duke*

and duchess were both extremely kind to him. "The duke makes me happier than ever great man did," he writes; "noble, princely, yet mild and condescending and affable – gay and kind. The duchess charming, witty, kind and sensible. God bless them!"] and, indeed, the intimacy of the friendship that existed between the duchess and the poet gave rise to a great deal of ill-natured gossip at the time.

Sir Walter Scott, however, does not seem to have been very favourably impressed by her charms, though he would sometimes attend her *soirées* and read portions of *Marmion* to her guests. [Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, *vol. i. p.323.*] "The duchess stayed here [Edinburgh], a day or two on her way to Ireland," he writes to Lady Abercorn in December 1809. "I rather wonder that your viceroy [*Charles, 4th Duke of Richmond.*] has not contrived to parry this visitation from *la chère maman.* She is not, begging her Grace's pardon, altogether the conciliatory sort of person that is best calculated to endure, and to restrain, and to mitigate, all the little heart-burnings which must arise in every court whether regal or vice-regal." [Familiar Letters of Walter Scott *(D. Douglas. Edin., 1894), vol. i. p.157.*]

The duchess, on the other hand, accused Sir Walter of not paying her sufficient attentions, a neglect for which he apologised by declaring that he had but little time at his disposal, and that he should therefore be an object of pity rather than abuse. They were, however, as he says, very civil whenever they met, though there was evidently little love lost between them. Mrs. Grant of Laggan relates how she saw Walter Scott at the duchess's house in Edinburgh in 1809. On this occasion her Grace told Mrs. Grant that her respect for the prejudices of the Scotch was so great that she never "saw company," played cards, or went out in Edinburgh on a Sunday. In England, added the duchess, she was not so particular, because there every one else did what they pleased, and she naturally followed the fashion, but was unwilling to introduce habits of laxity in the matter of Sabbath observance into Scotland. "I stared at these gradations of piety," writes the sage old lady, "growing warmer as they came northward; but was wise enough to stare silently." [Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, *vol. i. p.199.*]

One of the duchess's many guests at Gordon Castle was Dr. James Beattie, poet and essayist, who maintained a prolific correspondence with her. His epistolary style was of a somewhat florid description. " I pray that you Grace may enjoy all the health and happiness that good air, goat's whey, romantic solitude, and the society of the loveliest children in the world can bestow," [The Letters of James Beattie, L.L.D., *vol. ii. p.51. (1820.)*] he wrote when she was staying at Glenfiddich, the duke's shooting-box in the Grampians. In 1780 he sent the duchess some whisky contained in bottles bearing upon the seal a representation of the Three Graces, "whom I take to be you *Grace's* near relations," he says, "as they have the honour, not only to bear one of your titles, but also to resemble you exceedingly in form, feature, and manner. If you had lived three thousand years ago, which I am very glad you did not, there would have been four of them, and you the first." [Ibid., *p.81.*] In return for all this flattery the duchess gave her correspondent a copy of Sir Joshua Reynolds' famous picture of herself.

The Duke of Gordon, himself a writer of comic songs, [*"There is Cauld Kail in Aberdeen" was his.*] had encouraged the musical genius of his butler, a man of the name of Marshall, whom Burns has termed "the first composer of strathspeys of the age"; and the duchess was one of the first to patronise Neil Gow, the "father of Scotch ball music," who wrote the famous "Farewell to Whisky," and whom she met at Athol House. Under her protection Scottish music began to rise towards a deserved eminence. She introduced and popularised dancing as an accomplishment worthy of study, and by making it fashionable at routs and assemblies, did good work in diminishing the passion for gambling, which had hitherto been the sole amusement indulged in at evening parties by members of the upper class. Reels and strathspeys took the place of *rouge-et-noir* and faro; round games were abandoned for country (if not for round) dances. "If," says the author of *Public Characters,* in a burst of inspired oratory which compares favourably with the impassioned tirades against so-called "smart society" nowadays so prevalent in the pulpit and the press – "if the flow of hilarity tends more to beauty than anxiety, avarice, and rage; if a fine young woman appear to more advantage interweaving in the animating dance than with her whole soul wrapt up in the odd trick" – "bridge" had not then been invented, or I fear the rival attractions of the ballroom would have been scarcely strong enough to oust so alluring a game; - "if it is better to enjoy innocent pleasure than to lose sums that may involve circumstances or distress relations; then is dancing superior to gaming; and the person who has substituted so delightful a recreation in the place of so pernicious a pursuit, and who has substituted it into those circles in which it chiefly prevails, and which inferior classes are so apt to envy, has

produced a beneficial change on society." "Such," concludes the chronicler, pausing a moment to take breath, "has resulted from the countenance of the Duchess of Gordon."

That countenance, however – of which Wraxall writes that it was overclouded by occasional frowns of anger or vexation, but much more frequently lighted up with smiles – was destined to be sadly darkened by the shadows of adversity and unhappiness. The violent conduct of her brother-in-law, Lord George, who incited the mob to the famous riots of 1780, caused the name of Gordon to be publicly execrated, and did incalculable harm to her prestige. In 1808 her youngest and best-beloved son, Alexander, died suddenly in his twenty-third year, and the shock of his death completely prostrated her. But she retained her good looks to the end of her life, and when Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe called upon her four years before she died, he found her looking "perfectly beautiful, covered with lace veils and artificial roses," and surrounded by what he called the "three ugly yellow London babies" of the Duchess of Manchester. Occasionally she would retire to her little house at Kinrara, on the banks of the Spey.

"Here lived the lovely Jane, who best combined

A beauteous form to a superior mind,"

playing the part of Lady Bountiful, and spending her time in "embellishing that mountain residence, and improving the situation of the inhabitants in its neighbourhood." [Correspondence of Sir John Sinclair, *vol. i. p.159.*] At Badenoch she established a "farming society" for her tenants, and started a manufactory of woollen stuffs designed to give employment, as she said, to "Highland spinsters." "Now I have lost my daughter," she writes in 1804, "agriculture and adorning nature are my only delights." [Ibid., *p.180.*] And again, "Books, peace, and solitude are the blessings I value." [Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, *vol. i. p.295.*] But permanent rural seclusion was not suited to her tastes. Her love of gaiety did not ever altogether desert her. And five years before she died we read of her presence adding much to the brilliancy of the winter season at Edinburgh. Her health and spirits were no longer what they had been, but her conversation was still as lively as ever, her looks as bright and attractive.

Her last days were fraught with tragedy. As the years advanced she had gradually lost that unique political power which it was her one ambition to retain. She had lost – if, indeed, after the tragedy of her honeymoon she had ever possessed – the love and affection of her husband, with whom she was no longer on speaking terms. She accused him of meanness; he retorted by accusing her of extravagance: and no doubt both these accusations were founded upon a solid basis of truth. Estranged from most of her relations, she led a wandering life, having no fixed home and few loyal friends, until eventually this "Empress of fashion," as Walpole calls her, died in London, at Pulteney's Hotel, Piccadilly, on April 11, 1812. It is said that her body was exhibited by the waiters of the hotel to a curious public, who were only too ready to pay their shillings to view the remains of so illustrious a woman.

Once, long before, when she was regretting the removal from her old house in George Square, Edinburgh, to the more fashionable New Town, but declared that really the Old Town was intolerably dull, the ever-courteous Henry Erskine had replied, "Madam, that is as if the sun were to say, 'It seems vastly dull weather – I think I shall not rise this morning!'" [Henry Erskine: His Kinsfolk and His Times, *by Lt.-Col. Alexander Fergusson, p.278. (W. Blackwood, 1882.)*] So, in the evening of her life, this social sun may perhaps have found the weather "vastly dull," as she sank to rest beneath the political horizon which for so many years she had illumined and brightened by her presence.

Lady Anne Barnard (1750 - 1825)

Scotland has probably produced a greater number of popular songs than any other country, with the exception perhaps of Germany. The picturesque character of the scenery, the dramatic simplicity of peasant life, the mellifluous music of the dialect, combine to clothe the romantic ballads of the north with an atmosphere of pathos, of grace and humour, which cannot be surpassed or rivalled south of the Border. Of the many ballads to which I refer, several of the best known and the most popular are the work of Scottish women. Sir Walter Scott, in one of his letters, gives several instances of these:- "Flowers of the Forest," by Miss Elliot of Minto; "An' were na my heart licht, I wad dee," by Lady Grisell Baillie; Lady Elizabeth Wardlaw's ballad of "Hardyknute"; "I have seen the smiling of fortune beguiling," written by Mrs. Cockburn to the same

air that inspired Miss Elliot; and lastly, “Auld Robin Gray,” by Lady Anne Lindsay. To these the novelist might well have added the two ballads composed by Miss Oliphant of the “Auld Hoose of Gask” – afterwards Lady Nairne – “The Laird o’ Cockpen” and “The Land o’ the Leal,” whose genuine charm and humour still survive the passage of years. “Place ‘Auld Robin’ at the head of this list,” says Sir Walter, “and I question if we masculine wretches can claim five or six songs equal in eloquence and pathos out of the long lists of Scottish minstrelsy.” It may, therefore, be of interest to note the circumstances under which the most famous of these songs was written, and to make the acquaintance of its author.

The characteristics peculiar to each of the great national families of Scotland have been described from time immemorial by the alliterative epithets which tradition has affixed to their names. Thus we read of “the gay Gordons,” the “doughty Douglasses,” the “gallant Grahams,” the “haughty Hamiltons,” the “handsome Hays,” the “mucklemou’ed Murrays,” and the “light Lindsays.”

[Cf. *“From the greed of the Campbells,*

From the ire of the Drummonds,

From the pride of the Grahams,

From the wind of the Murrays,

Good Lord deliver us!”]

Of these, by no means the least interesting is the light-hearted family of Lindsays, whose name appears in Doomsday Book, and whose history supplies a chapter of romance worthy of the pen of a Stevenson or a Balzac.

Lady Anne Lindsay, the author of “Auld Robin Gray,” was the daughter of James Lindsay, 5th Earl of Balcarres, by his wife Anne, daughter of Sir Robert Dalrymple of Castleton. She was the eldest of a family of ten, and was born at Balcarres, on the Fifeshire coast, in the year 1750. Her father was an accomplished gentleman as well as an intrepid soldier. In the famous rising of 1715 he fought in the Stuart cause, but later on was wise enough to stifle his private feelings for the sake of his country’s welfare, and served with gallantry in the army of George II. at Dettingen and Fontenoy. At heart he was ever a Jacobite, a fact which he found some difficulty in reconciling with the habits of a Whig. He could not always conceal his partisanship for the Stuarts, and was inclined on every possible occasion to expatiate upon the beauties and the wrongs of Mary, Queen of Scots, and deplore the union of the two crowns of England and Scotland. He was, however, affirm believer in the old Jacobite adage that “when war is at hand, though it were shame to be on any side save one, it were more shame to be idle than on the worse side, though blacked than rebellion could make it.” At Sheriffmuir he had led his three famous troops of gentlemen-rankers, who fought as common soldiers for the Pretender and routed double their number of the King’s dragoons. But when subsequently pardoned, he was willing to accept an English commission in the Scots Greys, in which regiment he conspicuously distinguished himself on several occasions.

The Lindsays were all born soldiers. Lady Anne’s brother James suffered the unique experience of being struck at the battle of Ticonderoga in 1777 by thirteen bullets, of which all but one passed through his clothes without injuring him. Another brother, John, was taken prisoner by Hyder Ali in 1780, and confined at Seringapatam, together with Captain (afterwards Sir David) Baird, the son of Mrs. Baird of Newbyth. [*When the news of her son’s capture was broken to this ruthless of lady, and it was stated that the captive officers had been chained together, two and two, “Lord pity the chiel that’s chained to our Davy!” was her now celebrated comment.*] Alexander, the predecessor of James, Earl of Balcarres, and uncle to Lady Anne Lindsay, anticipated by a couple of centuries the famous remark of an English Statesman, [*The late Viscount Goschen.*] who, at the time of the Fenian riots, when asked by a terrified colleague, “What are we to do?” answered at once, “Do? Why, make our wills and do our duty!” He was in command of a small body of troops besieging a town in Flanders in 1707, and was being threatened by a superior force. On his determining to persevere in the siege, a timid subordinate inquired anxiously, “What are we to retire upon?” “Upon Heaven!” replied the earl.

Lady Anne’s father, Lord Balcarres, was something of a philosopher, a man of large impulses and

generous instincts, and universally popular in his own countryside. At one time a number of robberies had been committed in Fifeshire, and the criminals were at length brought before the County Court. “Why did you never come to my house?” asked Lord Balcarres. “My lord,” they replied, “we often did. Everywhere else we found closed doors, but at Balcarres they stood always open, and where such is the case it is a rule among us not to enter.”

The story of Lord Balcarres’ wooing is a romantic and curious one. When a comparatively elderly man he fell desperately in love with Miss Dalrymple, a girl who was forty years his junior, and who naturally declined the honour of his hand. The rejected suitor thereupon tool to his bed, and became so ill that his life was despaired of. He was well enough, however, to make a will in which he left half his estate to the object of his choice. And she, hearing of this remarkable bequest, “first endured, then pitied, then embraced,” and so consented to marry the old earl, who at once recovered his health with commendable promptitude.

Lady Balcarres is said to have been a charming woman, high-spirited and vivacious, and it is rather difficult to understand her reasons for accepting as a husband a man who was very deaf, rather gouty, and quite old enough to be her father. It must, however, be admitted that Lord Balcarres was a remarkable old gentleman, something of a *litterateur,* noted for his courtesy, and the very soul of chivalry. Lady Balcarres was a strict but devoted mother, as her children testified, and that she could be a good friend was proved by Sir Walter Scott, when as a shy youth he basked in her smiles at parties or took shelter in her box at the theatre. [Familiar Letters of Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.228*]

In the memoirs of her family, which Lady Anne wrote, she has given an amusing account of her own birth and of the events that immediately preceded it. “There had long existed,” she says, “a prophecy that the first child of the last descendant of the house of Balcarres was to restore the family of Stuart to those hereditary rights which the bigotry of James had deprived them of. The Jacobites seemed to have gained new life on the occasion; the wizards and witches of the party had found it in their books; the Devil had mentioned it to one or two of his particular friends… Songs were made by exulting Tories, masses were offered up by good Catholics, who longed to see the Pope’s bull once more tossing his horns in the country.” [Lives of the Lindsays, *vol. ii. p.301.*] Judge then of the amazement and dismay of the soothsayers, of the annoyance and astonishment of the Pretender’s partisans, when, on December 1, 1750, Lady Balcarres gave birth to a *daughter.* No doubt the wizards burnt their books, the Devil’s particular friends wished they had been a trifle more particular, the Tories transposed the music of their songs to a minor key, and the good Catholics regretted the masses they had expended so lavishly and with such indifferent success. Lord and Lady Balcarres, however, welcomed the arrival of their small daughter with suitable expressions of delight, and their satisfaction was perhaps a matter of greater importance than the disappointment of the Pretender’s followers.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the bringing up of children was a far sterner business than it is nowadays. The discipline of the nursery was a severe one, and the modern practice of sacrificing everything to the comfort and happiness of the young would have been considered both sinful and foolish. Some idea of the spirit of family life prevalent in those times may be gathered from a letter written to a friend by Lady Strange, wife of the celebrated engraver, in which she declares that her children, from the youngest to the eldest, love her and fear her “as sinners dread death.” [Life of Sir Robert Strange, *by J. Dennistoun, vol. i. p.309.*] And in the Life of the first Lord Minto we read of the rigorous parental control which he, in common with all the fathers of that date, exercised over his children, and how, when one of his sons (Andrew, afterwards Governor of New York) objected one day to boiled mutton at dinner, “Let Mr. Andrew have boiled mutton for *breakfast,*” said the stern parent, “and boiled mutton for *dinner,* and boiled mutton for *supper,* till her has learnt to like it!” [Life and Letters of Gilbert Elliot, 1st Earl of Minto, *vol. i. p.22*]

Lady Anne and her brothers and sisters were kept in the most excellent order from earliest infancy. Their mother, acting on the good old principle that children should be “seen but not heard,” snubbed their heads of whenever they dared to open their mouths. So strict was she, in fact, that old Lord Balcarres used now and then to feel called upon to expostulate when he considered the treatment meted out to his children a trifle too severe. The little Lindsays of that age did not have as happy a childhood as do, no doubt, the little Lindsays of to-day. And one fine morning, six of them, goaded to insurrection, organised a dramatic flight by which they hoped to escape once and for all from the tyranny of parental authority. The fugitives were fortunately discovered by the old shepherd, Robin Gray, before they had gone very far, and ignominiously carried back to the nursery, there to be soundly dosed with tincture of rhubarb.

Lady Balcarres always declared that she found her eldest daughter the most difficult child in the world to punish. If Anne were sentenced to a diet of bread and water, she ate it up contentedly and with apparent satisfaction. The crimes she committed were never serious enough to deserve a whipping. (Had they been, she would doubtless have behaved like that stoical child whose father assured her that the corporal punishment he was inflicting hurt him far more than it hurt her, and who at once brightened up and begged him to continue the castigation without further regard for her feelings.) From the accounts of Anne's childhood, one would come to the conclusion that she was either a very good little girl indeed, or else was particularly successful in avoiding detection. In either case she deserves the fullest credit.

While Lady Balcarres looked after the discipline of her children, their education was relegated to the care of a meek tutor name Small, who was assisted by a certain Miss Henrietta Cumming, whom we have already mentioned in a previous chapter as being an eccentric and hysterical creature of the "decayed gentlewoman" class. This governess found a permanent and extremely comfortable home at Balcarres. Here she gave instruction to the children, and spent her spare time engaged in the Early Victorian pastime of ornamenting silk with painted designs of birds and flowers. She presented a dress which she had decorated in this fashion to Queen Charlotte, and in return received a small pension. Henrietta shared the responsibility for bringing up Anne and her sisters with another equally curious character, of whose influence over the children she was always supremely jealous. Miss Sophia Johnstone was the daughter of the laird of Hilton, a notorious debauchee, who did not believe in giving his children the benefits of a proper education, but allowed them to grow up ignorant and illiterate. She had arrived at Balcarres on a visit at the time of the old earl's marriage. Once comfortably installed there, Sophia decided to prolong her stay indefinitely. Here, then, she remained for thirteen years, during which time she occupied herself in mothering the little Lindsays, quarrelling with Henrietta, and making fancy horseshoes in a small forge which with curious taste she had erected in her bedroom.

Of all her family Anne seems to have been the most devoted to her sister Margaret, a girl of singular accomplishments and beauty. [*It was of her that Sheridan wrote:-*

"Mark'd you her eye of heavenly blue,

Mark'd you her cheek of rosy hue;

That eye in liquid circles roving,

That cheek abashed at man's approving.

The one love's arrows darting round,

The other blushing at the wound."] It was soon after the latter's unfortunate marriage with Mr. Alexander Fordyce [*Fordyce was a banker who absconded, thereby ruining many unfortunate people. His brother, a Presbyterian minister, married Miss Henrietta Cumming.*] of Roehampton, in 1771, that Anne wrote that charming ballad for which she is so justly famous. In the absence of her favourite sister she was feeling depressed and lonely, and sought comfort in the society of the Muse. The result was a song which has become a veritable classic in the chronicles of Scottish minstrelsy.

AULD ROBIN GRAY

I

When the sheep are in the fauld, when the cows come hame,

When a' the weary world to quiet rest are gane,

The woes of my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e,

Unken'd by my gudeman, who soundly sleeps by me.

II

Young Jamie lov’d me weel, and sought me for his bride;

But saving ae crown-piece, he’d naething else beside.

To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea;

And the crown and the pound, oh! they were baith for me.

III

Before he had been gone a twelvemonth and a day,

My father broke his arm, our cow was stown away;

My mother she fell sick – my Jamie was at sea –

And Auld Robin Gray, oh! he came a-courting me.

IV

My father cou’dna work – my mother cou’dna spin;

I toil’d day and night, but their bread I cou’dna win;

Auld Rob maintain’d them baith, and wi’ tears in his ee

Said, “Jenny, oh! for their sakes, will you marry me?”

V

My heart it said na, and I look’d for Jamie back;

But hard blew the winds, and his ship was a wrack:

His ship was a wrack! Why didna Jenny dee?

Or, wherefore am I spared to cry out, Woe is me!

VI

My father argued sair – my mother didna speak,

But she look’d in my face till my heart was like to break;

They gied him my hand, but my heart was in the sea,

And so Auld Robin Gray, he was gudeman to me.

VII

I hadna been his wife, a week but only four,

When mournfu' as I sat on the stane at my door,

I saw my Jamie's ghaist – I cou'dna think it he,

Till he said, "I'm come hame, my love, to marry thee."

VIII

O sair, sair did we greet, and mickle say of a';

Ae kiss we took, nae mair – I bad him gang awa.

I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to dee;

For O, I am but young to cry out, Woe is me!

IX

I gang like a ghaist, and I carena much to spin;

I darena think o' Jamie, for that wad be a sin.

But I will do my best a gude wife aye to be,

For Auld Robin Gray, oh! he is sae kind to me.

The secret of writing a song that shall outlive the passing fashion of an hour, and win for itself and its author an eternal place in the memories and affections of men, is one which it would be difficult to specify or to define. It seems to have eluded the grasp of the great masters of English prosody, and revealed itself alone to humbler bards such as Lady Anne Lindsay. One cannot readily call to mind the name of any distinguished national poet – with the exception of Shakespeare and Robert Burns – who has written songs that can be truly said to have achieved immortality. The works of every well-known poet, from Herrick to Tennyson and Browning, have been ransacked to find suitable lyrics. But the result has never yet rivalled in popularity such comparatively undistinguished ballads as "The Last Rose of Summer" or "Auld Robin Gray."

The literary merit of a song is, after all, a matter of little consequence. Can any one seriously pretend that his feelings would be very deeply stirred by a first perusal of the words of "The Lost Chord," or even "Auld Lang Syne," in a book or magazine? Yet no one can hear either of these ballads sung without experiencing a thrill of very genuine emotion.

The composer's share is, of course, an important one, but it cannot altogether account for the popularity of any single song of this kind. Divorced from its words, the air of "Home, Sweet Home," would strike the critic as obvious and unoriginal. That of "God Save the King" – "that tiresome tune," as Queen Victoria is said to have termed it – is not of a very high order. But the music of either is, at any rate, congruous and sympathetic. It can safely be relied upon to stimulate the loyal or domestic sentiments to which it is primarily intended to appeal. By its means the lyrics find expression in the most perfect and eloquent fashion. Music, indeed, as a French philosopher has said, makes us feel what we are thinking, and the airs of these old ballads conjure up an apt dramatic setting for the stories which the poet narrates so vividly in the text. The grandest things, as Edward Fitzgerald truly remarked, do not depend on delicate finish. And the popular song must, above all, rely for success upon qualities of simplicity, elemental humour, and pathos, which speak directly to the heart of the listener. It is for this reason that the folk-song and the ballad are immortal. For though the popular taste may change from year to year, and the modern thirst for entertainment be only satisfied with ignoble music-hall songs, in which the dubious humour of domestic infelicity, conjugal infidelity, and inebriety plays a prominent part, there is still room in the affections of even the least refined section of the community for the old favourites of the past. The audience which has just laughed itself hoarse over the antics of a low comedian, who has graphically described the methods he employs to outwit his mother-in-law or avoid the just payment of his debts, will accord a warm and perpetual

welcome to the ballad-singer whose repertoire consists of “Annie Laurie” and “The Old Folks at Home.” There is always a place in the public favour for any homely theme culled from the familiar drama of daily life, and so it is that, though times change and fashions vary, the primitive love of the old and the simple still sways the populace, and the songs of long ago are ever the favourites of to-day.

As Miss Jane Elliot always maintained a dignified silence on the subject of the authorship of “Flowers of the Forest,” and Lady Nairne for forty years kept the secret of having written “The Land o’ the Leal,” so did Lady Anne make an invariable practice of denying any share in the composition of “Auld Robin Gray.” One person alone, a Mrs. Russell of Ashestiel and aunt of Sir Walter Scott, who happened to be staying at Balcarres when the song was written, was admitted to the confidence of its author.

Many years afterwards, in a letter dated July 1823, Lady Anne gave Sir Walter a very interesting description of the composition of her famous ballad. “’Robin Gray,’” she wrote, “so called from its being the name of the old herd at Balcarres, was born soon after the close of the year 1771. My sister Margaret had married, and accompanied her husband to London; I was melancholy, and endeavoured to amuse myself by attempting a few poetical trifles. There was an ancient Scotch melody of which I was passionately fond; [“The Bridegroom Greits when the Sun Goes Down.”] Sophie Johnstone, who lived before your day, used to sing it to us at Balcarres. She did not object to its having improper words, though I did. I longed to sing old Sophie’s air to different words, and give to its plaintive tone some little history of virtuous distress in humble life, such as might suit it. While attempting to effect this in my closet, I called to my little sister, now Lady Hardwicke, who was the only person near me, “I have been writing a ballad, my dear; I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes. I have already sent her Jamie to sea – and broken her father’s arm – and made her mother fall sick – and given her auld Robin Gray for her lover; but I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow within the four lines, poor thing! Help me to one.’ ‘Steal the cow, sister Anne,’ said the little Elizabeth. The cow was immediately lifted by me, and the song completed.

‘He hadna been gane a twelvemonth and a day

When my father brake his arm, and the cow was stown away;

My mither she fell sick – my Jamie was at sea,

And auld Robin Gray came a-courting me.’

“At our fireside and amongst the neighbours, ‘Auld Robin Gray’ was always called for. I was pleased in secret with the approbation it met with; but such was my dread of being suspected of writing *anything,* perceiving the shyness it created in those who could write nothing, that I carefully kept my secret.” [Auld Robin Gray: *A ballad by the Right Hon. Lady Anne Barnard, born Lady Anne Lindsay of Balcarres. (Edin., James Ballantyne & Co., 1825).*]

Lady Anne proceeds to relate how Lady Frances Scott guessed her secret, and how the laird of Dalzell, on hearing the song, exclaimed, “Oh, the villain! Oh, the auld rascal! I ken wha’ stealt the poor lassie’s coo – ‘twas auld Robin Gray himsell!” This old gentleman also begged Lady Anne, when she next sang the song, to alter the line –

“To make the crown a pund, my Jamie gaed to sea,”

To “To make it twenty merks,” for, said he, a Scottish pound was but twenty pence, and “Jamie was nae such a gowk as to leave Jennie and gang to sea to lessen his gear!”

Meanwhile the authorship of the verses became a matter of popular dispute. Some people affirmed that it was a very ancient ballad, composed perhaps by David Rizzio; others that it was a modern song of but little importance. A reward of twenty pounds was offered in the newspapers to the one person who could ascertain beyond a doubt the truth as to its author’s identity. Mr. Jernyngham, secretary of the Antiquarian Society, had an interview with Lady Anne upon the subject. To him she declared that the ballad in question had me with attentions beyond its deserts. “It set off with having a very fine tune put to it by a doctor of music,” [*The Rev. William Leeves, rector of Wrington, wrote the air to which “Auld Robin Gray” is now usually sung.*] she informed her interviewer, “was sung by youth and beauty for five years and more, had a romance

composed from it by a man of eminence, was the subject of a play, of an opera, and of a pantomime, was sung by the united armies in America, acted by Punch, and afterwards danced by dogs in the street, but never more honoured than by the present investigation."

Several persons laid claim to having written "Auld Robin Gray." There was a clergyman on the coast, says Captain Basil Hall, Sir Walter Scott's friend and constant guest, in his Journal, "whose conscience was so large that he took the burden of the matter upon himself, and pleaded guilty to the authorship." Finally the author of *Waverley* mentioned Lady Anne by name in *The Pirate* [*vol. ii. p13.*] as the author of "Auld Robin Gray," and she determined to reveal her secret to the world.

On the death of her father she left Balcarres and went to live in Edinburgh with her mother. She had previously paid frequent visits to he grandmother, Lady Dalrymple, a clever old lady who lived there and was intimate with all the leading Scotsmen of her time. During her residence at the Scottish capital Lady Anne continued the friendships which she had thus begun with such eminent men as Dr. Johnson and Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling,* while David Hume was a constant visitor at her house.

LADY ANNE BARNARD

FROM THE MINIATURE BY RICHARD COSWAY

At what were facetiously called the Dinners of the *Eaterati* – convivial meetings at which the literary and fashionable people of Edinburgh foregathered – she made the acquaintance of a number of interesting men of all kinds. These gatherings were of a mixed character, and it was not unusual to find such uncongenial spirits as Principal Robertson and David Hume hobnobbing together over a bottle of port, just as though such a thing as the Thirty-Nine Articles had never existed. “To see the lion and the lamb lying down together, the deist and the doctor, is extraordinary,” writes Lady Anne of one occasion; “it makes one hope that some day Hume will say to him, ‘Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.’” [Life of David Hume, *by J.H. Burton, vol. ii. p445.*]

When the young Earl of Balcarres married, Lady Anne said a final farewell to the home of her childhood and settled in London, in a house in Berkeley Square, with her sister Lady Margaret Fordyce, whose husband’s death had followed immediately upon his bankruptcy and disgrace. Here she soon formed

a wide circle of friends, among other the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, with both of whom she maintained a close correspondence extending over a great number of years. The list of her acquaintances also included such men as Pitt, Burke, and Henry Dundas, - at that time leading figures in the world of politics. For the last-named statesman she conceived the strongest attachment, but her feelings were not reciprocated, and when Dundas, who had divorced his first wife, became engaged to Lady Jane Hope, Lady Anne turned elsewhere for consolation. Shortly afterwards she made up her mind to marry Andrew Barnard, son of the old Bishop of Limerick, who was very much in love with her, and of whom she was very fond. Her father-in-law was a well-known public character, and had been Bishop of Killaloe. Dr. Johnson, it will be remembered, composed an amusing charade on the Bishop's name.

[*My* first *shuts out thieves from your house or your room,*

My second *expresses a Syrian perfume,*

My whole *is a man in whose converse is shar'd*

The strength of the Bar and the sweetness of Nard."] It was to Dr Barnard too that Johnson made the celebrated remark to the effect that "the Irish are a fair people; they never speak well of one another!" [*Boswell's* Life of Johnson, *(Malone), p.235.*] And when the bishop and the crusty old doctor quarrelled in an argument as to whether a man's mental and physical qualities improved or deteriorated after the age of forty-five, Johnson was extremely rude to Dr. Barnard, and the latter retaliated by addressing some caustic verses to his friend, of which the last stanza runs as follows:-

"Let Johnson teach me how to place

In fairest light each borrowed grace,

From him I'll learn to write;

Copy his clear and easy style,

And from the roughness of his file,

Grow as himself – polite!"

Lady Anne Barnard was fifteen years older than her husband. They were both of them excessively poor. But they seem nevertheless to have been a singularly happy and devoted couple. By the kindness of Dundas, who was then in office, Andrew Barnard was appointed Secretary of the Cape Colony in 1797 when Lord Macartney [*George, 1st Earl Macartney*] was sent to South Africa as Governor. Lady Anne accompanied her husband to Cape Town, and, in the absence of Lady Macartney, undertook the position of hostess and chatelaine at Government House. She soon became a prominent and popular figure at the South African capital, though she writes of the colonists in a tone of good-natured superiority, declaring that their manners and refinement left a great deal to the imagination and that their parties reminded her of second-rate subscription dance at home. She was of a curious and inquisitive disposition, was for ever seeking information upon every possible subject, and accepted without question the most incredible stories which the astute natives chose to pour into her ingenuous ears.

The Barnards bought a small farmhouse on a hillside outside Cape Town, where during the hot months of the year they lived a rustic, peaceful existence. Lady Anne was especially fond of animals, and in the grounds of "Paradise," as her country residence was called, there might be seen a strange variety of domestic pets, ranging from jackals to penguins, from tame springboks to chameleons, while a young sea-calf disported itself in a pond close to the house. She thoroughly enjoyed her stay in South Africa, and was always organising expeditions to various places of interest in the Colony. When she and a number of friends ascended Table Mountain for the first time, she donned certain masculine garments which she borrowed from her husband, to whom she laughingly declared that this was the first and last occasion on which he could ever accuse her of wearing such things. On reaching the summit of the mountain, she handed glasses of Madeira round to the whole party, and insisted that all should join in singing "God Save the King." Later on she and her husband undertook a lengthy tour into the very interior of the country. They travelled in a huge

wagon drawn by oxen, loaded with provisions and an assortment of cheap but attractive-looking presents in the form of beads, shawls, &c., with which the secretary and his wife proposed to ingratiate themselves with the natives.

On the subsequent cession of the Cape of Good Hope to the Dutch, in 1802, Andrew Barnard returned to England. Four years later, however, when the English again conquered the Cape, he was once more appointed secretary, this time to Lord Caledon, who was Macartney's successor. Lady Anne made every arrangement to follow her husband to South Africa, but was stopped at the last moment by the news of his sudden death in 1807. The heart-broken widow then returned to her sister's house in London. Here she continued to live after Lady Margaret Fordyce had married Sir James Burgess, in 1812, until her death.

Probably no woman ever left such abundant material for a future biography as did Lady Anne. Alas! no woman ever loaded a possible biographer with so many restrictions. Among her papers, now in the hands of her descendants, are eighteen large folio volumes filled with personal memoirs and recollections, every single page of which is rife with human interest. In these books Lady Anne provides a complete and most humorous picture of London and Edinburgh life at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. She also gives characteristic accounts of her experiences in Paris on the occasions of her various visits to that city, then the very focus of the world's gaze. Her descriptions of Marie Antoinette, Madame du Barri, the Duc de Choiseul, and other great personages connected with the French court are of absorbing interest. And when she returns to London, we find her in the closest touch with all the principal character of her day. Sheridan, Burke, Reynolds, and a hundred more notabilities, appear to have been on the most intimate terms with her. Indeed, it would seem that she knew and was known by everybody, that she inspired more confidence and received more confidences than any other woman of her contemporaries.

These volumes are a perfect gold-mine of valuable information, and the fact of not being allowed to delve therein is all the more tragic. Unfortunately Lady Anne left with these memoirs the strictest possible injunctions forbidding the reproduction in print of any matters that they contained. The letters from eminent personages, the anecdotes in which these recollections are particularly rich, must therefore remain unpublished. And no doubt Lady Anne was perfectly right in her desire that the secrets of her intimates should be respected after her death. For though one may deplore the loss of so much valuable material, it is impossible not to appreciate the views of one who could not anticipate an age when self-advertisement would be universal and "personal paragraphs" the very breath and essence of social life.

Lady Anne was, as has already been mentioned, a particular friend of the Prince Regent. After her husband's death she sent his portrait to the prince, at the same time begging him not to trouble about replying. He was determined, however, to acknowledge her gift, and sent her a letter which speaks eloquently of his whole-hearted affection.

"My dear and old friend (he wrote), you are right in thinking that perhaps it would be better, both for you and me, that no letter should pass between us in consequence of this recent mark of your kindest recollection and affection. But there are certain feelings which one is only individually responsible for, and that which perhaps in one instance is better for one person not to do, it is impossible for another to resist, It is not from any selfish conceit or presumption that I presume to differ from your much better reasoned an conceived opinion, but from the ingenuous and paramount impulse and feelings of a heart that you have long, long indeed known, which from the earliest hour of its existence has glowed with the warmest and most transcendent feelings of the most affectionate friendship for those who love and know how to appreciate it – and to whom can this be better applied, dearest Lady Anne, than to yourself? To tell you how much and how highly I value your present, and what, (if it be possible) is much more, the affectionate manner in which you have done it, is that which I not only can never express, but can never forget. That every blessing and happiness may for ever attend you is the earnest prayer of

"Your ever and most affectionate friend,

GEORGE P.

"P.S. – My heart is so full that I hope you will forgive this hasty scrawl, for I write the very instant I have received your letter. Pray tell me that you forgive me."

During a serious illness George IV. sent for Lady Anne to come and see him, and presented her with a material token of his affection. “Sister Anne,” he said to her on this occasion, “I wish to tell you that I love you, and beg you to accept this golden chain for my sake. I may, perhaps, never see you again.”

Lady Anne had always been fond of writing. During her sojourn in South Africa she sent a number of extremely graphic and descriptive letters to Dundas, giving an interesting account of her life in the Cape Colony. She possessed a strong sense of humour, and could invest the most commonplace and trivial incidents with a dramatic interest which was the outcome of her effective literary style. Sir Walter Scott at one time projected the publication of a book of verses, to be styled “The Lays of the Lindsays,” and Lady Anne sent him several songs of her own. Unluckily, just before the book was circulated, she changed her mind, and had the whole edition suppressed with the exception of the song “Auld Robin Gray.” It was probably to compensate Sir Walter for the financial loss he had incurred over the publication of these lays that Lady Anne left him a legacy of £50 in her will.

At her father’s request she began a history of the family, and, out of compliment to her mother, who was always wishing to hear how the “unlucky business of Jennie and Jamie ended,” she attempted a continuation of “Auld Robin Gray.” This, like most sequels, would have been better left unwritten. The “vagrant scraps,” as she termed her occasional writings, which she has left behind, show her to have been a woman of ready wit, rich fancy, and an original turn of mind. She is said to have been a delightful conversationalist, and the life and soul of every party she attended. She was a great story-teller, and it is related that at a dinner party which she was giving to some friends, her old family servant caused some amusement by whispering in her ear, in an undertone audible to the whole company, “My lady, you must tell another story, the second course won’t be ready for five minutes.”

Besides being the possessor of literary ability of no mean order, Lady Anne had a remarkable taste for painting. Whatever her sketches lacked of real artistic merit they made up for in observation and character. “She does not, indeed, place mountains on their apex,” wrote Scott to his friend, J.P. Morritt, in 1811, “like that of Zarenta in Bruce’s travels, or those of Selkirkshire in Miss Lydia White’s drawings, but what her representations lose in the wonderful they gain in nature and beauty.” [Familiar Letters of Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.228.*] But whatever else she may have been or done that was admirable or worthy of praise, she would still most certainly have earned the gratitude of the whole English-speaking race had her only contribution to the literature of her country been the ballad of “Auld Robin Gray” – “the most pathetic that ever was written,” as Leigh Hunt calls it [Men, Women, and Books, *by Leigh Hunt, p.284.*] – with which her memory must ever be associated.

Mrs Grant of Laggan (1755 - 1838)

“For a small place, where literature sticks out,” wrote Lord Cockburn in his Memorials, “Edinburgh has never been much encumbered by professed literary ladies; and most of those we have had have been exotics.” [Memorials of His Time, *by Henry Cockburn, p.268.*] One of the foremost of these “professed literary ladies” who may in a sense be termed, from Lord Cockburn’s point of view, “an exotic,” inasmuch as, though a Scotswoman, she was not a native of Edinburgh, was the authoress of *Letters from the Mountains,* a volume which has been well described as “an interesting treasury of god solitary thoughts.”

Mrs. Grant of Laggan was not born to literary greatness; rather, such greatness as she achieved was thrust upon her by the imperious hand of circumstance. She did not write because she had something to say – a message to deliver to the world – and thought herself inspired to express it in cold print. She wrote because she was poor, because her children were crying for food, and because her friends very rightly urged her to make use of those undoubted literary gifts which she possessed to provide for herself and her family. Like Monsieur Jourdain, who took so long to discover that he had been talking prose all his life, Mrs. Grant reached the age of fifty before she realised that for years she had been writing literary essays in the form of letters to her friends, and that a volume of her collected correspondence was worthy of a place, however humble, in the literature of her country. The production was certainly a most flagrant example of “book-making,” but none the less delightful on that account.

Anne Grant was the daughter of Duncan M’Vicar, an officer in the British army, who had married a Miss Stewart of the ancient Argyleshire family of Stewart of Invernahyle. [*“A name which I cannot write without the warmest recollections of gratitude to the friend of my childhood [Alexander*

Stewart of Invernahyle] who first introduced me to the Highlands, their traditions and their manners." – Sir W. Scott in Chronicles of the Canongate, *p. xviii.*] Shortly after his daughter's birth, in 1755, M'Vicar's regiment, the 77th Foot, was ordered off to America, and he himself was forced to accompany it. He accordingly bade a temporary farewell to his wife and child, whom he left behind in a small house at the east end of Glasgow.

Anne was from all accounts a precocious infant, who, though she said very little, seems to have been an attentive listener. For the first two years of her life she remained so ingloriously mute that Mrs. M'Vicar was occasionally alarmed at the child's apparent lack of intelligence. She soon realised, however, that this silence was only a sign of the earnest thoughts that were occupying the baby mind, and that there was little fear of Anne suffering from an inadequate supply of brains. The child had often heard her mother telling the neighbours about her absent soldier father, and had seen them pointing their fingers towards that distant land where M'Vicar's regiment was quartered. One Sunday evening, inspired by a sudden happy idea, she set off, without telling a soul, to find the gallant officer and bring him back to his deserted family. The little mite, who was then only two years old, started out all alone from her mother's house and walked resolutely in a westerly direction for a distance of nearly a mile, expecting at every moment to come across the parent whose absence was such a familiar and depressing topic of domestic conversation. How much farther Anne would have marched one cannot tell, for just as she had begun to realise the difficulties of her quest and the elusiveness of absent parents, a kind old lady, who lived at the west end of the town, happened to catch sight of the lonely but determined little figure, questioned the child as to her intentions, and finally succeeded in persuading her to allow herself to be put to bed. Meanwhile, poor Mrs. M'Vicar had discovered her daughter's absence, and was hastening in despair to inform the local authorities of her loss. The town-crier was at once sent out with his bell to offer a reward for the recovery of little Anne, and on the Monday morning the child was brought home none the worse for her adventure.

In the following spring M'Vicar's family joined him in New York, where they lived happily and contentedly together for ten years. During this period of her early life, Anne's education was undertaken by her mother, with the occasional assistance of an old sergeant belonging to a Scottish garrison regiment. This veteran taught the child to read and write, and even inspired her with a taste for the poems of "Blind Harry" and some of the most uncouth and rugged of the earlier Scottish minstrels. Anne's choice of literature was peculiar in one of her years. At the age of six she had read the whole of the Old Testament, and was already half-way through a copy of *Paradise Lost,* which one of her father's brother officers had given her. She learnt Dutch, too, from a Dutch family, who lived at Claverock, near Albany, and very kindly looked after M'Vicar's household, when he took the field with his regiment at Ticonderoga. In later years in her *Memoirs of an American Lady,* Anne Grant paid a grateful tribute to the memory of her Dutch friends at Albany, chief among whom was the heroine of this volume of reminiscences, a certain Madame Schuyler, of whom the author affectionately wrote that, "whatever culture my mind received, I owe to her." Madame Schuyler was the daughter of a Mr. Cuyler, who in the reign of Queen Anne gained a mild form of fame by bringing four Iroquois chiefs to England. The visit of these "noble Redmen" naturally created a great sensation at the time. It even inspired Addison to write one of his *Spectator* essays. [*April 27, 1711.*] Swift had more than once suggested to him that he should give an imaginary account of the sensations of an Indian visiting England for the first time. The result was this humorous article purporting to be a translation of the journal left behind by one of the Iroquois chieftains. Cuyler was presented to the Queen, but politely declined the knighthood which was offered to him declaring that his democratic principles prevented him from accepting such an honour. During the M'Vicars' stay in America Mrs. Schuyler became deeply attached to Anne, and her personality made such an indelible impression upon the child, that the latter was able to describe it many years after with an accuracy which was all the more wonderful since it depended entirely upon the recollections of a girl of thirteen years of age. [*See* Memoirs of an American Lady, *by Anne Grant. (1808).*]

In 1768, the state of Duncan M'Vicar's health compelled him to return to England, regretfully leaving behind him his small estate in Vermont. Part of it had been granted to him by the Government, and the remainder purchased from brother officers who did not share his original intention of making a permanent home in America. He had no time before he left to make suitable arrangements for the care of this property during his absence, and a few years later, when the American war broke out, his plot of land was seized and confiscated. This loss was a serious one to M'Vicar, who had invested most of his savings in his American farm; but he still possessed a modest private income, and on his return to Scotland was fortunate enough to secure the appointment of

barrack-master at Fort Augustus, whither he at once removed with his family.

Anne had now reached the marriageable age, and when the Rev. James Grant, military chaplain to the garrison of Fort Augustus, fell in love with her at first sight, and found that his sentiments were returned, there was nothing to prevent the marriage, which accordingly took place as soon as the reverend gentleman was appointed minister of the parish of Laggan in 1779.

Mrs. Grant made an ideal minister's wife. She set to work at once to master the intricacies of the Gaelic tongue, in order to study the characteristics of her husband's Highland parishioners. The respect and affection of these folk she soon succeeded in gaining, though at first they had been inclined to look with some suspicion upon this Lowland woman who had intruded herself upon them. At Laggan she lived quietly for many years, and in due course became the mother of twelve children. During this peaceful (if not altogether idle) period of her life, Mrs. Grant made a close study of the manners and feelings of those with whom her lot was cast, and eventually described them in those *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* which were published thirty years later. But her happy life at Laggan was fated to be interrupted by the cruel invasion of that fell disease, consumption. Four of her children died of tuberculosis one after the other, and finally, after a brief illness, her husband succumbed to the same complaint, leaving a homeless and penniless widow with a family of eight to support.

For a time Mrs. Grant tried farming in a small way, at a little cottage lent to her by the Duke of Gordon, but her efforts in this direction met with no success. Then some intelligent friend suggested that she should publish a collection of the verses which she had written from time to time for her own pleasure or for the amusement of her numerous correspondents. [*Perhaps the most famous of her poems is the song beginning, "where and oh where is my Highland laddie gone?"*] This she reluctantly consented to do; the poems were retrieved with some difficulty from the pigeon-holes of her acquaintances, and in 1803 the volume was published by subscription. The *Edinburgh Review,* ever a most captious critic of verse, declared that these poems were "written with great beauty, tenderness and delicacy," and the zeal and importunity of her friends procured for this volume a list of over 3000 subscribers, among whom may be mentioned Jane, Duchess of Gordon, who was consistently kind to the author. "Silver and gold she has not," wrote Mrs. Grant some years later, "but what she has – her interests, her trouble, her exertion – she gives with unequalled perseverance."

By this means her debts were paid, and for a time at least she was able to live in comparative comfort. But fresh financial difficulties lay in wait for her. Her eldest daughter had to be sent into a home for consumptives at Bristol; her son required an outfit for India, where he had with difficulty obtained a civil appointment. Mrs. Grant was soon as badly in need of money as ever, and once more, by the advice of her friends, determined to turn her literary talents to account. She had long been a prolific letter-writer, numbering among her correspondents such well-known people as Joanna Baillie, Mrs. Hemans, Wordsworth, and Southey, and it was rightly thought that a volume of her correspondence might prove popular to the reading public. Accordingly, in 1806, she published *Letters from the Mountains,* which immediately won a well-deserved success, not only by reason of its literary charm, but also because the circumstances in which the author had been placed naturally inspired popular sympathy. Expressions of kindly interest reached her from every quarter. Three wealthy Scottish London merchants, who were quite unknown to her, sent £300 as a token of their regard for the author of the Letters, and some ladies of Boston, U.S.A., published an American edition of the book, and remitted £200 to Mrs. Grant as her share of the profits. Furthermore, a number of friends in Scotland made a collection on her behalf which amounted to over £300, on receipt of which, as we read in one of Lady Louisa Stuart's letters to the Duchess of Buccleuch, she expressed herself as quite overpowered with surprise and joy, never having seen so much money before in the whole course of her life. [Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, *containing some correspondence between Lad Louisa Stuart and her sister, Caroline, Countess of Portarlington, and other friends and relations, Edited by Mrs. Godfrey Clark (D. Douglas, Edinburgh), iii. p.183.*]

Two years later, Mrs. Grant published the *Memoirs of an American Lady* above referred to, which also proved financially successful, and in 1810 she moved from Stirling, where she had been living for some time, to Edinburgh, which now became her permanent home. Of her subsequent publications, the most successful were a poem in two parts entitled *Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen,* and a two-volume book called *Popular Models and Impressive Warnings for the Sons and Daughters*

of Industry, published in London in 1815.

Misfortune, however, still dogged her footsteps. One after another all her children died, with the sole exception of her youngest son, who survived to edit her *Life and Memoirs.* But as her home joys decreased her friends grew more numerous and appreciative. Her finances were by this time in a satisfactory condition, and such literary success as she enjoyed enabled her to entertain in a modest way at the little house in Edinburgh, where a constellation of the literary and social stars of the day frequently assembled at her invitation.

The society of Edinburgh was at that time particularly interesting, [*"L'on voit, par toutes ces institutions, combine les letters, les sciences at les arts sont en recommendation dans cette ville; aussi s'est-elle honorée par les grands hommes qu'elle a produits dans presque tous les genres; aussi la célébrité des professions a-t-elle attire dans ses murs des étrangers de toutes les parties du monde, et a donné à cette ville un lustre at des moyens d'aisance qui la distinguent des autres. Edinburg, par sa position et le calme qui y regne, est un lieu proper aux sciences: elles n'aiment ni le tumulte, ni les discussions parlementaires, ni les mouvemens bruyans du commerce, ni les objets multiplies de distraction et de plaisir de Londres. De tout tems les Muses ont fixé leur sejour sur une colline, au bord d'une fontaine solitaire."* –Voyage en Angleterre, en Écosse et aux îlés Hebrides, *par B. Faujas-Saint-Fond, vol. ii. p.281. (1797.)*] and in the brilliant gatherings of distinguished persons there to be found, women, (as we have seen), figured conspicuously. Captain Topham, the traveller, has described the ladies of the Scottish capital as being both physically and mentally beyond all praise. "Nature has been liberal to them on decorating their external parts, as in ornamenting their minds," he says, "and I believe as few nations excel them in beauty as in advantages derived from disposition and education." "No women understand better the rules of decorum," he continues, "nor are they rivalled by the French in the talent of agreeable conversation; for which they seem to be better calculated, as well from their superior knowledge of the world, as from their more extensive acquaintance with books and literature." [Letters from Edinburgh, written in the years 1774-1775.] In such society as the gallant soldier thus describes Mrs. Grant did not feel out of place. [*"Went to breakfast with Mrs. Grant on Princes Street. She holds a mist respectable rank in the literary society of the place, and is much visited by stranger…She speaks with a strong Scotch accent, as do many of the females with whom I have conversed. The brogue is quite a national trait, and in the middling and lower classes it is no recommendation to be without it…The openness and simplicity of her manners are no less attractive than the graces of her understanding. She has none of the flimsy wisdom about her, which is said to distinguish the* blue stockings *of this city, and which qualifies them to converse with anybody on any subject; but especially with politicians and philosophers. She has a strong and enlightened mind, cultivated by study and observations, and is blessed with an ample share of that, first of national endowments, good sense."* – The Contrast, or Scotland as it was in the Year 1745 and Scotland in the Year 1819. *(1825)*.] Her son tells us, in a preface to his mother's Memoirs, that her chief charm lay, not so much in the extensive range of information that she possessed on every subject as in her uniform cheerfulness and equanimity. Her conversation was so natural and unaffected, and seemed to emanate from her well-stored mind with so little effort, that her liveliest sallies appeared as if they had been struck off at the moment without any previous reflection. [Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, *vol. i. p.26.*] Once, when Walter Scott was leaving a brilliant assembly, where he had been surrounded by the usual crowd of fashionable admirers, "Mr. Scott always seems to be like a glass," said Mrs. Grant, "through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper which lies beside it will presently be in a blaze – and no wonder." [*Lockhart's* Life of Walter Scott, *p.206.*]

When among intimates she frequently claimed the privilege of age to speak with perfect candour, but her home-truths were free from any suspicion of malice, and never gave the least offence. We have already heard of her meeting Walter Scott at the Duchess of Gordon's house in 1809. "I think Mr. Scott's appearance very unpromising and commonplace indeed," she says, "yet tho' no gleam of genius animates his countenance, much of it appears in his conversation, which is rich, various, easy, and animated." [Memoirs and Correspondence, *vol. i. p.199.*]

Mindful of the kindnesses she had received in early life from her friends in New York, she always kept open house to any Americans who happened to visit Edinburgh. One of these, George Ticknor, the author, has described his hostess as "an old lady of such great good nature and such strong good sense, mingled with a natural talent, plain knowledge, and good taste, derived from

English reading alone, that when she chooses to be pleasant she can be so to a high degree," [Life and Letters of George Ticknor, *vol. i. p.278. (Sampson Low, Searle & Rivington, 1876.)*] – and Mrs. Grant generally "chose to be pleasant."

She was one of the numerous literary persons who were at one time or another suspected of having written *Waverley.* In a letter to an American friend, disclaiming any share in the composition of this masterpiece, she spoke with such assurance of Scott's authorship that her correspondent concluded that Mrs. Grant had been Sir Walter's confidante. A report of this reached the novelist, and made him very angry. "As for honest Mrs. Grant," he wrote to Miss Edgeworth, [*Feb 3, 1824 (Lockhart's* Life of Scott, *p.517.)*] "I cannot conceive why the deuce I should have selected her for a mother-confessor; if it had been yourself, or Joanna [Baillie], there might have been some probability in the report; but good Mrs. Grant is so very cerulean, and surrounded by so many fetch-and-carry mistresses and misses, [*Young ladies of good family were sent to her to be instructed in deportment, and she acted as their chaperone or companion at concerts and assemblies.*] and the maintainer of such an unmerciful correspondence, that though I would do her any kindness in my power, yet I should be afraid to be very intimate with a woman whose tongue and pen are rather overpowering. She is an excellent person notwithstanding." The author of *Letters from the Mountains* was certainly a trifle "cerulean," but she always had the good taste not to sacrifice the feminine to the literary character, and Lord Jeffrey may have had her in his mind when he said that there was no objection to a blue-stocking so long as the petticoat came low enough down to hide it.

In 1825 it was thought advisable by many of Mrs. Grant's friends that her affairs should be placed upon a sound financial basis, and her old age secured from the worries of discomfort and debt. A petition was accordingly drawn up by a number of eminent persons, begging the Government to grant the old lady a suitable pension. Sir Walter Scott, by way of showing that he would "do her any kindness in his power," joined in subscribing to this memorial, thinking that Mrs. Grant certainly merited a pension, even more by the "firmness and elasticity of men with which she had borne a succession of great domestic calamities" than by her works as an authoress. [The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.28. (D. Douglas, 1890.)*] Many famous men appended their names to this application, among other Mackenzie, the "Man of Feeling," and Lord Jeffrey. Unfortunately, there was only a sum of £100 available upon the pension list, and Lord Melville, the minister in charge of such matter, decided to divide this sum between Mrs. Grant and a distressed lady, the granddaughter of a forfeited Scottish nobleman. Thereupon Mrs. Grant, "proud as a Highlandwoman," as Scott tells us, "vain as a poetess, and absurd as a blue-stocking," [Ibid.] resented this partition, and demanded that her claims should be submitted to the King. Lord Melville was much annoyed by the tone of the old lady's correspondence, and sent it to Sir Walter Scott, asking rather peremptorily to be informed whether Mrs. Grant would or would not accept her £50. Scott handed the matter over to Henry Mackenzie, and did his best to pacify the indignant minister. That Mrs. Grant would consent to take the pension offered was a foregone conclusion. "Your scornful dog will always eat your dirty pudding," wrote Sir Walter in his Journal, and, sure enough, Mrs. Grant eventually intimated her willingness to accept the proffered £50, and expressed contrition for her earlier refusal. She need not have been so proud, for she suffered in good company. The poet Hood only received £100 a year from the Civil List in his old age, and Campbell's pension barely amounted to double that sum. Southey and Wordsworth were allowed but little more when their failing faculties rendered them dependent upon the nation for support. In our own time "Ouida's" services to literature were recognised by the grant of a modest annuity of £150, and the granddaughters of Robert Burns must be satisfied with even less. Mrs. Grant did not realise how difficult it is to secure any official recognition of deserving literary merit, or perhaps she would have been less difficult to please. To obtain a pension is, as Sir Walter Scott declared, like hunting a pig with a soaped tail, which is "monstrous apt to slip through your fingers."

In her youth Mrs. Grant was tall and slender, but in late life she fell downstairs, injuring her leg so severely that she was kept a prisoner in her house till the end of her days, and became in consequence somewhat stout. Lord Cockburn tells us that she was always under the influence of an affectionate and delightful enthusiasm which, "unquenched by time or sorrow, survived the wreck of many domestic attachments, and shed a glow over the close of a very protracted life." [Memorials of His Time, *p.269.*] She was a hater of Whigs as well as a lover of kings, and Mrs. Fletcher, in her well-known autobiography, describes how, on the occasion of George IV.'s visit to Edinburgh in 1842, Mrs. Grant replaced her habitual black dress by a robe of salmon-coloured satin, took her seat at a shop window in Princes Street, and waved her handkerchief wildly when the royal procession passed by. [Autobiography of Mrs, Fletcher, *p.151. (Edmonton & Douglas: Edinburgh, 1875.)*] Her kindness of

heart was proverbial. De Quincey was particularly touched by her flattering attentions to himself, and retained a lasting impression of the “benignity that she – an established wit and just then receiving incense from all quarters” – showed in her manner to the young author, at that time wholly unknown. [*De Quincey's* Literary Reminiscences, *vol. i. p.55. (Boston, 1859)*] She also befriended John Wilson (“Christopher North”), and when that eccentric young poet and his wife set out on a walking tour through the Western Highlands, gave him letter of introduction to her various acquaintances at Inverness and elsewhere. [A Memoir of John Wilson, *by Mrs. Gordon, p.193. (1862.)*] Later on, in 1820, when Wilson sought to obtain the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, he successfully applied to her for a testimonial.

Mrs. Grant was an extremely religious woman, and made a habit of reading a chapter of the Bible to her guests every morning after breakfast. Once, when the poet John Pinkerton sneered at sacred things in her presence, she was so indignant that a scene was only averted by the tact of their mutual hostess. [Memoirs of a Literary Veteran, *by R.P. Gillies, vol. i. p.132.*]

As a story-teller she was unrivalled. She had a rich fund of anecdote at her command: her mind was a crowded storehouse of fable and legend. One of her favourite stories was that of the haunted glen of Laggan. A man of low degree had won the heart of a chieftain's daughter, whose family discovered the intrigue, and had the unfortunate lover seized and bound naked on one of the large ants' nests common to Highland forests. The victim of this cruel punishment died in agony, while his mistress became demented and roamed wildly about the glen until her death, when her ghost, unable to rest, haunted the scene of her lover's torture with such persistence that the natives of Laggan shunned the road by day as well as by night. Mrs. Grant always asserted that her late husband had exorcised the “Red Woman” – as the phantom was called – by holding a religious service in the glen. But Dr. Macintosh Mackay, [*The famous Gaelic scholar, and editor of Rob Donn's poems.*] who succeeded the Rev. James Grant as minister of Laggan, declared to Walter Scott that the ghost was banished more effectually by the construction of a branch of the parliamentary road running through the glen than by the prayers of his predecessor. [Journal of Sir Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.407.*]

No one has time, nowadays, one may suppose, to read such an old-fashioned book as *Letters from the Mountains.* But whoever takes the trouble to do so will find it a work of great charm, written by one who was a lover of nature as well as a keen student of humanity, with a rare gift for portraying Scottish peasant life. Composed amidst scenes of misfortune and privation, Mrs. Grant's work is written at once with simplicity and force. It bears the stamp of a pure and healthy mind, and is coloured with that patience and fortitude which the author practised continuously, and which she recommends so earnestly to her readers. Her writings have always been deservedly popular in her own country, where they are still remembered, while those of Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Brunton, and Lady Anne Halket are forgotten. “Addressing themselves to the national pride of the Scottish people” – to quote from the petition drawn up by Mrs. Grant's friends at the time when she was applying for a pension – “they breathe at once a spirit of patriotism and of that candour which renders patriotism unselfish and liberal.” As the outpourings of a simple and vigorous mind, they can safely be relied upon to stand the test of time, and prove a worthy memorial of a delightful type of old Scottish lady which is by no means extinct to-day.

Anne Grant lived to the age of eighty-four. She died on November 7, 1838, and was buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, Edinburgh.

Lady Louisa Stuart (1757 - 1851)

“Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,
And praise, the poet's best reward!” –

These were the gifts bestowed by the lovely Matilda upon her faithful Wilfred in Sir Walter Scott's poem of *Rokeby.* The author himself had probably a wider experience of popular applause and appreciation than the majority of mankind. In nothing surely was he more blessed than in those friendships which played so agreeable a part in his life. From early days, when he was rapidly winning his laurels in the field of letters, to later years when he struggled so gallantly with an overwhelming burden of debt and misfortune, Scott could always find courage and comfort in the unswerving loyalty

of a large circle of devoted friends. Of Sir Walter's literary friendships none is perhaps of greater interest than the intimacy which the novelist had formed with Lady Louisa Stuart before he reached the age of five-and-twenty, and which was only terminated by his death in 1832.

Scott was well accustomed to the adulation of his women friends; indeed, he may at times have found it somewhat tedious. But an appreciation of his talents founded upon a knowledge of literature so intimate and extensive as that of Lady Louisa could not fail to prove agreeable to him. That he set high store by it is clear from the fact that he made a practice of submitting much of his work to the discriminating eye of one whom he described as the "best critic" of his acquaintance.

Lady Louisa Stuart was born on August 12, 1757. She was one of a large family of five boys and six girls, the children of John, Earl of Bute, Prime Minister to George III. Lord Bute was a statesman whose unpopularity with the English public is notorious. It arose from a number of causes. In the first place he had been the constant and almost the sole companion of King George before that monarch ascended the throne; and the lot of a court favourite in those days might occasionally be a pleasant but was never a popular one. To Lord Bute the Heir-Apparent made a practice of unbosoming his inmost thoughts in the course of those long walks which they were in the habit of taking together. The two friends would ride daily side by side in the Park. They spent much time in an intimate companionship which could hardly fail to arouse the jealousy of those who were favoured with somewhat less of the royal society. Then, too, the fact of his being a Scotsman exposed Lord Bute to the hatred of the majority of the English people, at a time when the rebellion of 1745 was still fresh in the popular memory. He was the possessor of a very handsome person, of which advantage, we are told, he was not insensible. His enemies even went so far as to assert that he spent many hours every day in contemplating the symmetry of his own legs in the looking-glass. He might no doubt have employed his time more profitably, but the study of one's figure – especially if it be a fine and shapely one – is a failing hardly sufficient in itself to deserve the odium of the populace. But the Prime Minister indulged in other habits which were more calculated to evoke the harsh criticism of the world. He enjoyed a higher place in the affection of the Princess-Dowager of Wales then a purely Platonic friendship commanded or strict propriety permitted. His clandestine nocturnal visits to Carlton House were the subject of general comment, and provoked the famous *mot* of the future Duchess of Kingston, at that time Maid of Honour to the princess, who replied, when reproached for some irregularity of conduct, "Votre Altesse Royale sait que chaqu'un a son *But*!" [Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, *p.321*.]

Lord Bute, indeed, provided endless material for the gossips and scandal-mongers of society. The authors of political squibs and satires lampooned him freely; the caricaturists of the period found him an inspiring subject for their scurrilous pencils. [*All who were in any way connected with him were mercilessly attacked. When the Adelphi was built upon the Thames Embankment, the brothers Adam, who had by Lord Bute's influence been appointed architects of the new buildings, did not escape the satire, and were thus ridiculed in the* Foundling Hospital for Wit, *(vol. iv.):-*

"Four Scotchmen by the name of Adam,

Who kept their coaches and their Madam,"

Quoth John, in sulky mood to Thomas,

"Have stole the very river from us!"] On the occasion of his first levee, some member of the huge crowd that blocked the street inquired what was the matter, and George Brudenel, a well-known wag, at once answered, "Matter enough! There's a Scotchman got into the Treasury and they can't get him out!" [A Century of Anecdote, *by J. Timbs.*] But if Lord Bute was a never-ending delight to the satirist and a bugbear to the public, in the circle of his own home he seems to have inspired respect and affection, though periodic bouts of ill-temper made him at times inaccessible even to his own children.

Lady Louisa's mother was the daughter of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose letters are as well known as her famous quarrel with Pope, and for whose epistolary style a modern critic has claimed a higher order of literary excellence than that attained by either Lord Chesterfield of Horace

Walpole. [Men and Letters, *By Herbert Paul, p.184.*] From her grandmother Lady Louisa undoubtedly inherited the gift of expressing herself on paper with a vivacity and humour which made her correspondence most welcome to her contemporaries, and still enable it to retain a perennial interest for the readers of to-day. In some introductory remarks which Lady Louisa wrote in 1837 for an edition of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's works, she says of her grandmother's style that, "though correct and perspicuous, it was unstudied, natural, flowing, spirited; she never used an unnecessary word, nor a phrase savouring of affectation; but still she meant to write well, and was conscious of having succeeded." [Introductory Anecdotes to the Works and Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.] Much the same criticism might be written on the subject of Lady Louisa's letters. But she was clearly not conscious of the success she achieved, and the masculine note, which sounds so clear throughout the grandmother's correspondence, is replaced by a far tenderer tone in that of the granddaughter.

In her nursery days she devoted much of her leisure to attempts at jotting down her thoughts and opinions. Lady Mary Coke, the youngest daughter of John, Duke of Argyle, in her Memoirs, recalls her first meeting with Lady Louisa, "a very extraordinary Girl, who has certainly a great genius," when the latter was only ten years old. "I stayed with Lady Bute until two o'clock," wrote Lady Mary in 1767, "and was much impressed with her youngest daughter, who showed us the beginning of a French novel written by herself, and informed us She was going to write a play, that the plan was fixt, and was to be taken from a Roman Story." [The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke, *edited by the Hon. J.A. Home, vol. i. p.174. (David Douglas: Edinburgh, 1889.) "Jugurtha" was the hero of this play, which does not appear to have been completed.*

Lord Bute retired from public life in 1763, when Lady Louisa was five years old, and devoted himself to horticulture and other rural pursuits, perhaps more suited to his talents – certainly more agreeable to his tastes. Science and botany were his particular hobbies, and he published at his own expense an illustrated work in nine volumes on the subject of British plants, only twelve copies of which were printed, at a cost which is said to have reached £10,000.

In due course Lady Louisa was introduced by her devoted mother to the *beau monde.* Lady Bute was a welcome figure in the social world of London. Beneath an exterior which Fanny Burney describes as being forbidding to strangers, she possessed "powers of conversation the most entertaining and lively," when among intimates. Under her chaperonage Lady Louisa attended the soirées, routs, and other social functions to which a girl of her rank was sure of an invitation. These she enjoyed with all the healthy delight which such entertainments inspire in the heart of any normal debutante of high spirits. But she was far too broad-minded to be content with the trivial round of social gaieties which satisfied so many of her young companions. In the privacy of her own room in her father's magnificent house in Berkeley Square she found time to keep herself in touch with the literary interests of the day, as well as for a voluminous correspondence with her friends. As a girl, her powers of observation were extraordinary, and in a manuscript notebook she has described with much humour that select circle of which she was so brilliant a member. Among the sketches of London society which she then made is an amusing account of a party given in the salon of Mrs. Montagu, the leader of the famous Blue-Stocking Society. Mrs. Montagu – the "Noble Lady" so perfectly described in her old age by Mrs. Carlyle, herself perhaps the best letter-writer in our language – was distinguished for her benevolence to poor chimney-sweepers for whom she provided annual banquets, and who were certainly not among the least deserving objects of her wide philanthropy. She had a large fortune, a fine house, and a good cook. Besides this she was a very clever woman. It was natural, therefore, that she should shine as a hostess. Acquainted with almost everybody of distinction, she made a point of entertaining all authors, critics, artists, and musicians of note, as well as eminent lawyers and a sprinkling of the clergy. She was gracious enough to extend her hospitality to the minor lights of the literary profession, who were much honoured by her patronage. Distinguished foreigners were sure of a warm welcome in her house, and it was impossible to attend one of her parties without having the pleasure of staring at a celebrity of some kind or another. But there was in her system of inviting guests a deplorable lack of one requisite, namely, of that art of kneading the mass well together, and art which is possessed by women far the intellectual inferiors of Mrs. Montagu. "As her company came in, a heterogeneous medley," says Lady Louisa, "so they went out, each individual feeling himself single, and (to borrow a French phrase) embarrassed with his own person; which might be partly owing to the awkward position of the furniture, the mal-arrangement of tables and chairs. Everything in that house, as if under a spell, was sure to form itself into a circle or semi-circle." Lady Louisa thus describes a typical party at which she

was a guest. “Mrs. Montagu having invited us to a very early party, we went at the hour appointed and took our stations in a vast half-moon, consisting of about twenty or twenty-five women, where, placed between two grave faces unknown to me, I sate, hiding yawns with my fan, and wondering at the unwonted seclusion of the superior sex. At length a door opened behind us, and a body of eminent personages – the Chancellor, I think, and a bishop or two among them – filed in from the dining-room. They looked wistfully over our shoulders at a good fire, which the barrier we presented left them no means of approaching; then drawing chairs from the wall, seated themselves around us in an outer crescent, silent and solemn as our own. Nobody could be more displeased at this than the mistress of the house, who wanted to confer with them face to face, and not in whispers. But there was no remedy; we must all have died at our posts, if one lady had not luckily been called away, whose exit made a gap for the wise men to enter and take possession of the fireplace.” [Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, *vol. iii. p.61*.]

There is, as lady Louisa suggests, nothing in the world so depressing as a social gathering of which the elements are inharmonious or unsympathetic. Nor is anything so fatal as an attempt to give an entertainment of what is called a “mixed” description. The lions of the day are furious at being asked to meet one another. They sit and glare at the floor in sullen silence. Like the animals in *Bombastes Furioso,* “the last lion thinks the first a bore,” and not all the blandishments of a seductive hostess can induce them to roar in unison. The artistic world has no wish to meet the society world; the society world finds nothing to say to the artistic world. The effect of combining the two results in a gloomy form of conversazione from which everybody hastens away with a sigh of relief.

Lady Louisa was fortunate in possessing a keen sense of humour, that saving quality which makes so many tedious situations tolerable. She did not make fun of her friends, but found much harmless amusement in the many idiosyncrasies of those whom she met in London society. There was a number of extremely peculiar people about in those days, especially in the ranks of the old ladies. Among these whose eccentricities particularly appealed to Lady Louisa was Lady Margaret Compton, whom she described as “an old maiden lady with a formidable wig, one of the regular quadrille party,” who was noted for shedding tears when she lost at cards, “not for the loss itself,” as she declared, “but for the unkindness of the cards.” [Journal of Lady Mary Coke, *vol. iii. p.136, note. This old lady was the cause of one of the most brilliant of Walpole’s many* bon-mots. *She had been bemoaning the fact that she was “as poor as Job.” “I wonder why people always say ‘As poor as Job,’ and never ‘As rich,’” asked her friend Lady Barrymore; “for at one time in his life he had great riches.” “Yes,” said Walpole, “but then they pronounced the name differently and call him* Jobb!” *(See* A Century of Anecdote, *p.40.)*]

Lady Louisa was an earnest and kindly student of human nature. She cherished a profound devotion for the world at large. She might truly have said of herself, as did Abou Ben Adhem, “Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.” Consequently she was never bored; she could obtain pleasure from the most incongruous society; her soul was filled with a universal tolerance which ensured for her a well-deserved popularity and a warm welcome wherever she went.

At a comparatively early age Lady Louisa conceived a romantic affection for her second cousin, Colonel William Medows, who was the son of Philip Medows of Thoresbury, Notts, and of Lady Frances Pierrepoint (sister of the 1st Duke of Kingston). But the course of a first love seldom runs smoothly, and that of Lady Louisa was no exception to the rule. Lord Bute considered the young man so ineligible that, in accordance with the immemorial custom of stern fathers, he put a speedy stop to the affair, and the youthful couple were forced to part in tears. Colonel Medows appears to have been the only man who ever kindled the spark of love in Lady Louisa’s breast, and his enforced dismissal was a source of very deep disappointment to her. “He seems to have that independent spirit which fortune cannot depress or exalt,” she wrote in 1784. “He is really a character unlike anything but himself, *au reste,* the most agreeable man I ever met with, and one of the most humorous.” [Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, *vol. i. p.301*.] It would no doubt be pleasant to be able to add that the gallant colonel pined away from grief and disappointment, entered a monastery, and registered a vow of perpetual celibacy. Truth, however, compels the admission that he did nothing of the sort. He did not die of a broken heart, as would have been a very right and proper thing to do, but shortly afterwards consoled himself by marrying another lady. [*He was eventually appointed Governor of Madras, where he greatly distinguished himself, was made a General and K.C.B., and died in*

1813.]

Lady Louisa's first love affair proved also to be her last, but, although she does not seem to have contemplated matrimony very seriously in later years, it was not the lack of admirers that impelled her to remain single. She was never, it is said, a beautiful woman, but possessed to an unusual extent that elusive quality called "charm," which as a rule proves fully as attractive as the more easily defined gift of physical beauty. Fanny Burney has drawn a miniature pen-portrait of her which helps to explain her popularity. "Lady Louisa Stuart," she says (writing in 1786), "has parts equal to those of her mother, with a deportment and appearance infinitely more pleasing: yet she is far from handsome, but proves how well beauty may be occasionally missed when understanding and vivacity unite to fill up her place." [The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, *edited by Charlotte Barrett, vol. iii. p.237. (1842).*] It is not therefore difficult to understand that several of the foremost men of her time should have laid siege to the heart of so charming a woman, though it may be less easy to appreciate Lady Louisa's decision to remain a life-long spinster. Like many other women of wit, she was hard to please, and might have explained her reasons for remaining unmarried in the words of Becky Monteith, a celebrated beauty, who, on being asked why she had remained single so long, replied: "Ye see, I wadna hae the walkers, and the riders gaed by!" A woman's taste becomes more fastidious as she grows older, and by the time she has reached an age at which, in the opinion of her friends, she should be content with any marriage, before it be too late to marry at all, she has grown so particular as to the necessary qualifications of a suitable husband that her requirements are hardly likely to be satisfied. This seems an unfortunate provision of Nature, usually so tactful in controlling the laws of supply and demand, and is the reason why many of the most delightful women remain single until all their admirers have grown tired of waiting and are married to less fastidious wives.

Lady Louisa waited on and on, in the hope that a second Colonel Medows would appear upon the scene. Failing, however, to find a love worthy to take the place of her first, she could not bring herself to be content with the second-best suitors who in turn presented themselves to her notice, but whom she smilingly dismissed one after another. Her first admirer was Henry Dundas, then member of Parliament for Midlothian, who was already a married man, but had been legally separated from his wife. His attachment to Lady Louisa caused her family a good deal of needless anxiety. Dundas was too gallant and handsome a man to be altogether ignored, but fortunately his devotion did not last very long, nor does it ever appear to have prompted Lady Louisa to any feeling deeper than that of quiet amusement. Another suitor who, for a time at least, proved very attentive, was John Charles Villiers, second son of the 1st Earl of Clarendon. This ubiquitous admirer hovered round Lady Louisa persistently, and dogged her footsteps on every possible occasion. At each rout which she attended he would place himself ostentatiously at her side. He was ever the first to open the door of her coach, or to assist her in alighting from her chair. In fact, he overwhelmed her with homage and admiration. She would not have been human had she failed to appreciate his exquisite manners, or to be flattered by his importunity. Lady Bute, too, encouraged her daughter to consider this match more seriously, and Lady Louisa herself gave the matter much careful thought. The advantages of so suitable a marriage were many and obvious, and it says a great deal for her strength of mind that she was able to forego the privileges and comfort it would secure. But she finally decided that a "love match without any love," as she termed it, was "but a bad business," and determined to remain single all her life sooner than make a match upon such conditions. Vainly did her best friends assure her that a spinster is forgotten and starves in a garret, while "two people of fashion never starve together"; vainly did her relatives speak of the ravages of time and the proverbial miseries of a solitary second childhood. Lady Louisa's independent spirit revolted against the idea of a loveless marriage, the danger of solitary starvation was not one that she had any reason to anticipate, and a spinster she remained to the end of her days; nor does she ever seem to have had reason to regret her persistent decision to renounce matrimony for good and all. [*The following extract from one of Lady Louisa's letters expresses her views upon the subject very clearly: "I desired her [Miss Herbert, sister of Henry Herbert, afterwards Earl of Carnarvon] to pluck up a spirit and say, as I was determined to do for the future, instead of I* can't *and I* shan't, *I* won't *marry. She told me a story I thought good enough. Lady Caroline Montagu, afterwards Lady Queensberry, was persuading an old friend that had been her sister virgin to marry somebody who, she owned, would not have done for her formerly, but whom she ought to think now a very good match. 'What!' said the other, 'and do you think I have waited so long to take up with* him *at last?' I like this way of thinking mightily. To be sure, waiting long in all other cases gives one a right to a better thing than one expected at the beginning, but I doubt one should not get anybody to allow such a claim as this." (*Gleanings from an

Old Portfolio, *vol. i. p.293).*]

There was yet a third man of fashion with whom the name of Lady Louisa was for a time connected. On the death of Anne, Lady Strafford (daughter of John, Duke of Argyll), the gossips of society at once arranged a match between Lady Louisa Stuart and the newly-bereaved widower. The approaching marriage of this ill-assorted pair was announced in every paper, and provided the busybodies with as fertile a topic of conversation as do the annual engagements of peers and actresses, which help to stimulate the small talk of a modern dinner-table. One-half of London society smiled knowingly at the other, and declared that it had long suspected something of the sort. The other half retorted by exclaiming, "What did I tell you?" and wisely shook its head. Both were equally delighted at having found a fresh source of gossip. Such a match was not very generally approved, however. "So Lady Louisa Stuart is going to marry her great-grandfather, is she?" said Lady Di Beauclerk to a friend. "If she can hold her nose and swallow the dose at once, it may do well. But most people would be apt to take a little sweetness in their mouths afterwards." [Memoirs of the Argylls. (*Included in the* Journal of Lady Mary Coke,) *vol. i. p.xlix.*] Lady Louisa was, indeed, quite unwilling to swallow the dose, which was equally averse to being swallowed. She had always looked upon Lord Strafford in the light of a kind but elderly uncle, rather than a possible suitor. He, too, was thoroughly opposed to the alliance, and the whole affair ended as speedily as it had begun, without occasioning anything more serious than a certain measure of natural annoyance on the part of the two principals. After the usual nine days of wonder, the matter was allowed to recede into the nebulous background whence it had originally sprung, and fashionable society turned its attention to some more amusing, but doubtless equally unreliable, scrap of misinformation.

For nearly twenty years, from her first appearance in London society to her father's death in 1792, Lady Louisa met and enjoyed the acquaintance of most of the interesting characters of her time. She was always her mother's constant and devoted companion. The two were everywhere acclaimed with the enthusiastic welcome to which their mental qualities and brilliant conversational powers entitled them. "Nobody is more agreeable than Lady Bute," says Mrs. Delany in one of her letters. "Her natural and improved good sense and knowledge of the world is a never-failing fund when she has spirits to exert her talents," [*"…You know* so much *of Lady Bute," she wrote in 1774 to Bernard Granville, "that I need say nothing of her agreeableness, her good sense, and good principles, which with great civility must be always pleasing."* – Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, *vol. v. p.36. (1861.)*] which, however, was not always the case. Fanny Burney used to meet Lady Bute and her daughter frequently in the house of her friends, "both," as she says, "in such high spirits themselves that they kept up all the conversation between them, with a vivacity, an acuteness, an archness, and an observation on men and manners so clear and sagacious" as to add very considerably to the evening's entertainment. She describes a typical occasion when she found them at the house of Mrs. Delany (in 1786) on their return form Bath, "full fraught with anecdote and character, which they dealt out to their hearers with so much point and humour (she says) that we attended to them like a gratified audience of a public place." [Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, *vol. iii. p.463.*]

The death of Lady Bute, who only survived her husband for two years, was a sad blow, not only to her favourite daughter, but also to a large number of friends. "Lady But is a great loss to me," says Horace Walpole in one of his letters; "she was the only remaining one of my contemporaries who had submitted to grow old and to stay at home in an evening." [Letters of Horace Walpole, *vol. ix. p.450.*]

At her mother's decease Lady Louisa settled in a house in London, No. 108 Gloucester Place. Here she resided until the day of her death, the centre of a circle of intimate and devoted friends. During her father's lifetime she had made the acquaintance of many interesting personages in the world of art and letters. Of these, their talents or peculiarities, she was never tired of speaking. One of the most curious was John Hoole, the poet and translator of Tasso and Ariosto, "and in that capacity," as Sir Walter Scott remarked, "a noble transmuter of gold into lead." [The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.204.*] Him she had met in early life when, as a clerk in the India House, with a snuff-coloured suit of clothes and long ruffles, he paid occasional visits to Lord Bute. Hoole made it a custom to complete so many couplets every day, habit making it light to him, "however heavy it might seem to the reader," [*Lockhart's* Life of Scott, *p.341.*] and his quaint appearance was one of Lady

Louisa's earliest recollections.

Her acquaintance with Walter Scott, of which the seeds were sown at Dalkeith Palace, the seat of the Duke of Buccleuch, ripened into friendship at Bothwell Castle, where in 1799 the novelist was staying with Lord Douglas and his wife, formerly Lady Frances Scott, with whom he had long been on terms of the warmest affection. Ten years later we hear of the poet reading his *Stag Chase* to Lady Louisa when they were staying together with the Duke of Montrose at Buchanan House. As the years went by, this friendship between Scott and Lady Louisa deepened and strengthened, and these kindred spirits forged a bond of mutual sympathy and common tastes that linked them together in an intimacy which was to prove a source of lifelong satisfaction to both. The two friends corresponded frequently and freely. "I would hardly write this sort of egotistical trash to any one but yourself," says Sir Walter in 1817. His correspondence with his other acquaintances contained many references to Lady Louisa. She "unites what are rarely found together," he writes in a letter to Mrs. Hugh Scott of Harden, "a perfect tact, such as few even in the higher classes attain, with an uncommon portion of that rare quality which is called genius." [Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, *vol. iii. p.195.*] She possessed, as he declared, the art of communicating criticism without giving pain, an art by no means easy to acquire, and as rare to-day as it was a century ago. No doubt Sir Walter often acted upon her advice, knowing it to be that of a friend whose judgement could be relied on as impartial and unprejudiced, who was not to be ranked among those "good critics," who, as Robert Browning says, "stamp out a poet's hope." Scott was certainly most appreciative of Lady Louisa's approval of his own works. On the back of one of her letters to him, in which she praised his poem, *the field of Waterloo,* he wrote, "This applause is worth having!" But Lady Louisa's criticism was too genuine to partake of the nature of flattery. She did not agree with Goldsmith that "who peppers highest is sure to please," and gave Sir Walter credit for too much taste and discernment to relish what she called "all sugar and treacle." This is clear from a number of her letters to the novelist, in which she lays her finger tactfully but none the less forcibly upon the weak spots of his literary fabric. Writing on the subject of *Rob Roy* in 1818, "The beginning and end," she says, "I am afraid I quarrel with; the mercantile part is heavy, but some part always must be so to give what painters call relief, and beginnings signify little. Ends signify more. Now, I fear the end of this is huddled, as if the author were tired, and wanted to get rid of his personages as fast as he could, knocking them on the head without mercy." [Familiar Letters of Walter Scott, *vol. ii. p.11*] All of this Sir Walter took in good part, and was duly grateful.

He also for his part evinced a profound interest in Lady Louisa's literary work. In 1802 he tells Miss Seward (perhaps the most tiresome and verbose of his friends as well as the most prolific of his correspondents) the well-known story of "muckle-mouthed Meg," which he proposed to versify in the form of a Border ballad, "in the comic manner." Upon this very theme Lady Louisa had based a poem entitled "Ugly Meg," which Scott delighted in:-

"Peace to those worthy days of old

Cast in our modern teeth so oft,

When man was, as befits him, bold,

And woman, as she should be, - soft.

When worth was all that parents weighed,

And damsels listened not to lies,

And suitors wished a lovely maid

To bring no dowry but her eyes.”

The fabulous tradition round which these verses were written was that of an ancestor of Sir Walter, a certain Sir William Scott of Harden, who, after plundering the estate of Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, was captured and brought in chains to the castle of his victorious enemy. Sir Gideon resolved to hang the young Knight of Harden (as Sir William was called), but at the thoughtful and typically maternal suggestion of his wife, gave the prisoner a choice between death and marriage with Meg, the ugliest of Lady Murray’s three unmarried and singularly unprepossessing daughter.

“Hang Harden’s Chief! A precious jest!

A batch’lor, youthful, comely, rich!

You with three maiden daughters blest,

Ill-favoured as a nightmare each.

“Unbind his hands and fetch a friar;

I sleep not till the thing be done.

He takes his choice, and I acquire

The Knight of Harden for my son.”

Meg was so exceptionally unalluring, however, that the young knight positively declined the honour of her hand.

“Stay! Leave me thus for ever bound!”

The captive in a panic cried,

Or make me turn a millwheel round,

Ere yon hobgoblin be my bride”;

and it was not until the rope was about his neck that he reluctantly consented to change his mind, preferring life in the noose of matrimony to death in a more material halter. So the knight of Harden and “meikle-mouthed Meg” were duly wedded, and, no doubt, “lived happily ever after.” [*As James Hogg says, in another metrical account of this story, given in his* Mountain Bard:-

“So Willie took Meg to the forest sae fair,

An’ they lived a most happy and social life;

The longer he ken’d her, he lo’ed her the mair,

For a prudent, a virtuous and honourable wife.

An’ muckle gude blude frae that union has flow’d,

An’ mony a brave fellow, an’ mony a brave feat;

I darena just say they are a' mucklemou'ed,

But they rather have still a gude luck for their meat."

Lady Louisa treated this story so felicitously that Scott was wont to declaim her verses to his friends, and declared in a letter to Southey that "half his fame as a minstrel-reciter" depended on this "very clever ballad."

They were living, however, in an age when it would not have been considered dignified or decorous for an earl's daughter to dabble in literature, far less to publish her writings. And in one of Lady Louisa's letters to Sir Walter she expresses indignation at an unfounded report which was being circulated to the effect that she was bringing out a book of verse. "It is really too hard upon a poor snail," she says, "to be dragged by the horns into the high road, when it is eating nobody's cabbages, and only desires to live at peace in its own shell." [Familiar Letters of Walter Scott, *vol. i. p.108.*] Scott had stolen a copy of "Ugly Meg" from Lady Louisa, who implored him to put it in the fire and thus avoid any danger of its publication. Sir Walter, however, declined to destroy the poem, strongly protesting his innocence of having started the rumour which had annoyed Lady Louisa so much. "I regret," he wrote, "I am not the Knight for whom it is reserved to break the charm which has converted a high-born and distressed lady into a professed authoress. I have no doubt it will soon dissolve itself,

'For never spell by fairy laid,

With strong enchantment bound a glade

Beyond the bounds of night.'" [Ibid., *p.112.*]

Most of Lady Louisa's literary work is unfortunately hidden away in volumes privately compiled for the eyes of relatives or descendants. Mention has already been made of her "Introductory Anecdotes" to Lord Wharncliffe's edition of the *Letters and Works of Lady Mary Montagu,* which she illumined with the same facile and delightful style already displayed in the Memoir entitled "Some account of John, Duke of Argyll, and his family," which she had written ten years earlier. How brilliantly and charmingly she could write may be gathered from her correspondence, much of which has fortunately been preserved for posterity. In this age of sixpenny telegrams and halfpenny cards, letter-writing is practically a lost art. We no longer sit down and compose lengthy essays upon topical subjects for the edification of absent friends. We are content to scrawl a few hasty words on a half-sheet of notepaper instead. In return we receive a picture-postcard adorned with a view of some foreign cathedral in which we do not take the slightest interest, and inscribed with a few slipshod and meaningless sentences scrawled in evident haste in an almost illegible handwriting. But if we have little time or inclination to emulate the more laborious methods of our ancestors, we can still appreciate the skill, the wit, and observation which combined to make the labours of such perfect correspondents as Byron, Edward Fitzgerald, or Madame de Sévigné a source of endless delight to successive generations. Private letters are a sure gauge to character, and from those of Lady Louisa we can form a fairly just opinion of the personality of this charming woman. She was, I cannot help thinking, one of those women whom nature has designed to be an aunt. Not, be it said at once, that narrow, bigoted type of maiden aunt, dear to the heart of the humorist and no one else, who lives in a suburban villa surrounded by a menagerie of exceptionally overfed and underbred pets; but the kindly tolerant aunt whom schoolboys adore, who does not confine her generosity to the giving of good advice, not take every occasion of remarking that "it was not so in *her* young days." Celibacy did not have the effect of narrowing Lady Louisa's horizon, for no one ever had a broader outlook upon life than she. Her sisters sought her counsel in times of trouble; her friends ever found comfort in her ready sympathy. In he nephews and nieces, and grand-nephews and grand-nieces, she took the deepest interest; it was for their edification, indeed, that she undertook that history of the Argylls, which she regarded as a true labour of love. She was universally adored by the younger generation. Her youthful relatives could always be sure of her interest and appreciation, and she was ever a patient listener. Mothers must occasionally disapprove; but aunts do not labour under the same burden of responsibility. They can be sympathetic when perhaps they should be severe. Into her kindly ear the "heirs of all the ages" poured the tale of their ambitions, their loves, their troubles, and she helped them or comforted them, and sent them away happier for her advice. Her own life was not altogether a happy one. "She has, God knows, been tried with affliction,"

said Sir Walter Scott, “and is well acquainted with the sources from which comfort can be drawn.” Her only serious love affair brought her nothing but misery and disappointment. “Fye upon Cupid,” she once wrote, “the nasty little devil has used me always ill.” [Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, *vol. ii. p.27.*] She would not have been human and a woman had she never suffered from that instinctive consciousness of failure which assails the heart of every woman who resigns herself to perpetual spinsterhood.

She lived to an extreme age which cannot be reached without suffering the loss of many dear friends. Her sisters, to whom she was devoted – Lady Jane Macartney, and Caroline, Lady Pontarlington, to whom she addressed most of her correspondence, being her especial favourites – predeceased her. Her greatest friend, Lady Ailesbury, [*Lady Anne Rawdon, daughter of the 1st Earl of Moira.*] who humorously styled herself “Crazy Jane,” and of whom Lady Louisa wrote that “without positive beauty, she had the charm of countenance, grace, figure, and altogether something more captivating than beauty itself,” died in 1813, after being one of the chief objects of her life for many years. She survived Walter Scott by a quarter of a century.

It may truly be said that she was never called upon to perform any acts of heroism; but has not a great philosopher declared that to live decently at all requires heroic thoughts? And Lady Louisa’s life was indeed worthy of the famous name she bore. By the example of her cultivated mind she affected her own generation profoundly. The memory of her unselfishness and the sweetness of her disposition is still a heritage precious to her descendants. She was of those who at heart are eternally young, an “old maid” in name alone, with none of the asperity and intolerance usually (and wrongly) attributed to old maids. Her outlook upon life was broad and kindly; there was about her a human and personal touch that had in it something of the maternal. “Blest to the closing years of that long life with the full and unclouded use of extraordinary faculties, admired by the most eminent of her time for her lively genius and extensive literature, she was beloved and venerated, by such as had the privilege of approaching her nearly, for the tenderness of her heart and the purity, piety, and humility of her powerful mind.” *From her Epitaph.*]

When Lady Louisa died in 1851, at the age of ninety-four, having long outlived her own generation, there passed away a familiar and interesting figure, truly representative of all that was best in the social life of a bygone age, a type of that “perfect gentlewoman” for whom, to use her own expression, she always had an “old-fashioned partiality.”

Miss Clementina Stirling Graham (1782 - 1877)

In olden days the practice of “masquerading” was universally popular. During the reign of Charles II. it was carried on to an extent which evoked the just censure of contemporary historians. Bishop Burnet describes how “that both the king and queen and all the court went about masked, and came into houses unknown, and danced there, with a great deal of wild frolic.” [History of His Own Times, *vol. i. p.368.*] And later on we hear of the Queen, the Duchess of Richmond, and the Duchess of Buckingham dressing themselves as rustics and attending a country fair in the neighbourhood of Audley End. On this occasion the disguises were so overdone that the appearance of the royal party excited general notice. A huge crowd collected, and followed the masqueraders about, until the Queen and her friends were glad to mount their horses and beat a hasty and rather undignified retreat.

The witty but unprincipled Earl of Rochester used often to disguise himself as a beggar or a porter, either for his own amusement of for the purpose of prosecuting his illicit amours. He once set up for some time as an “Italian Mountebank” or Astrologer in Tower Street, London, where he was consulted by many ladies of the court. [*Burnet’s* Life of Rochester, *p.14 (1774.)*] The latter would themselves masquerade as orange-girls in order to pay a clandestine visit to the soothsayer, thereby inviting insults from the men of fashion whom they met upon their way and who naturally concluded from their appearance that the ladies were no better than they should be. [Memoirs of Count Grammont, *p.283.*]

In the eighteenth century we find further examples of this craze for “dressing up.” Anne Mackenzie, who afterwards married Sir William Dick of Prestonfield, and was the daughter of Lord Royston and granddaughter of the famous Earl of Cromarty, used to array herself and her maid in male attire and sally forth into the streets of Edinburgh in search of adventure. [*Wilson’s* Memorials of

Edinburgh, *p.169.*] This the pair of masqueraders generally managed to find, and would not infrequently end the night in the company of a number of intoxicated noblemen in the old Guard House in the High Street.

The Lady Euphemia Montgomerie, daughter of the 9th Earl of Eglinton by his first countess, provides another instance of an inveterate woman masquerader. She married the celebrated "Union" Lockhart, whose notorious intrigues on behalf of the exiled Stuarts were no doubt furthered by his wife's clever disguises. Dressed as a man, she frequented the taverns and coffee-houses of Edinburgh, and thus often obtained political information of the greatest value to her husband. On one occasion a budget of important paper destined for the Government was in the hands of a Whig named Forbes. "Lady Effie" determined to dispossess him of these dispatches. She accordingly disguised her two sons as women, and bade them waylay the guileless messenger and induce him to accompany them to a neighbouring alehouse. Here they speedily drank Mr. Forbes under the table, after which they relieved him of his precious papers at their leisure. [Ibid., *p.241.*]

Regular "masquerades," at which all the guests arrayed themselves in fancy dress, were of course one of the chief amusements of that day in London. During the food riots in 1772 an entertainment of this kind was given at the Pantheon in Oxford Street, and 10,000 guineas were spent by the revellers in dress and other luxuries, much to the indignation of the starving populace. [*Oliver Goldsmith appeared on this occasion in "an old English costume." (See Timbs's* Curiosities of London.*)*]

With the commencement of the nineteenth century, however, extravagance of this kind was no longer countenanced. Such masquerading as went on was of a most inexpensive nature and was designed in less elaborate fashion. Our great-grandparents were certainly more easily amused than are their descendants today. To dress up and impersonate various characters for the entertainment of delighted friends was apparently one of the favourite pastimes of fashionable society. George Cruikshank is said to have been very skilful at impersonation, and would sing "Willie brewed a peck o' maut" in the guise of an intoxicated rustic, until tears of laughter coursed down the cheeks of his audience. The Marquis of Huntly, afterwards 5th Duke of Gordon, was another incorrigible masquerader. On one occasion he disguised himself as a beggar and proceeded to solicit alms at the house of a neighbouring landowner who was taking a stroll in his park. The latter very kindly bade the poor man step into the servants' hall and see what he could get there. When the pseudo-tramp had been bounteously regaled and was about to leave, he met his host returning from his walk. "How have you fared?" inquired this philanthropist; "Puirly," replied the marquis; "naething but stinkin' meat, soor bread, and stale beer!" The squire was so enraged at this display of ingratitude that he began to belabour the wretched gaberlunzie with his stick, only desisting when Lord Huntly hurriedly threw off his rags and disclosed his identity. [Social Life in Scotland, *by the Rev. C. Rogers.*]

Perhaps one of the most famous "impersonators" of that day was a simple, strong-minded, plain-spoken Scottish lady of the type which Lord Cockburn has described so graphically in his Memoirs, who was for long an honoured member of the famous circle of Edinburgh Whigs of whom Lord Cockburn himself was the leader. Writing of that "singular race of excellent Scotch of ladies" for which Edinburgh was long celebrated: "They were a delightful set," her says; "strong-headed, warm-hearted, and high-spirited; the fire of their tempers not always latent; merry, even in solitude; very resolute; indifferent about the modes and habits of the modern world; and adhering to their own ways, so as to stand out, like primitive rocks, above ordinary society. Their prominent qualities of sense, humour, affection and spirit, were embodied in curious outsides; for they all dressed, and spoke, and did, exactly as they chose; their language, like their habits, entirely Scotch, but without any other vulgarity than what perfect naturalness is sometimes mistaken for." [Memorials of His Own Time, *p.57.*]

Miss Clementina Stirling Graham, an excellent example of the delightful old lady of Lord Cockburn's description, was the daughter of Patrick Stirling of Pittendreich and Amelia Graham of Duntrune, Forfar, and was born in Dundee in 1782. [*Patrick Stirling assumed the name of Graham when his wife succeeded to the Duntrune estate.*]

Dr. John Brown, of "Rab" fame, who edited the one book which came from Clementina's pen, has left a vivid account of this excellent lady. [Horae Subsecivae, *3rd series, p.169.*] From this we may

glean some idea of those qualities which endeared her to all with whom she came into contact, and gained for her the friendship of such men as Lord Jeffrey and Sir Walter Scott. When Sydney Smith gave vent to the fallacious and oft-misquoted remark to the effect that it required “a surgical operation to get a joke well into a Scotch understanding,” one may be sure that he made a mental reservation in favour of Miss Graham. Her sense of humour he fully recognised. It was to her that he made his famous joke about the day being so hot that he wished he could “put off his flesh and sit in his bones, and let the wind whistle through them.” Sydney Smith was, as a matter of fact, in spite of his one malicious epigram, a great admirer of the Scottish nation. Of their women he says, in one of his letters, that they are, in his opinion, handsomer than their English sisters. In his gloomy London home he often longs for a sight of Scotland. “Never shall I forget the happy days passed there,” writes the humorist, recalling his visit to Edinburgh in 1797, “amidst odious smells, barbarous sounds, bad suppers, excellent hearts, and most enlightened and cultivated understandings.” [Memoir of Sydney Smith, *by Lady Holland, p.12.*] And among the excellent hearts and cultivated understandings of his Scottish friends, there is no doubt that Sydney Smith assigned a high place to those of Miss Clementina.

Sir Walter Scott was another of Miss Graham’s acquaintances, though, as Dr. Brown tells us, her strong Liberal proclivities induced her to cultivate rather the society of the men of the *Edinburgh Review,* Gillies, Murray, Cockburn, Rutherfurd, Jeffrey, and the like. And Sir Walter, though finding her agreeable enough, was not actually carried off his feet by her charms. “She looks like thirty years old,” he writes in his Journal in March, 1828, after meeting her in the house of a friend, “and has a face of the Scottish cast, with a good expression in point of good sense and good humour. Her conversation, so far as I have had the advantage of hearing it, is shrewd and sensible, but no ways brilliant.” [Journal of Sir Walter Scott, *vol. ii. p.139.*]

The really brilliant thing about Miss Graham was her wonderful talent for imitation. She would dress up in old-fashioned clothes suitable to the character she intended to portray, usually that of an elderly and eccentric Scottish lady, and would then proceed to “mystify” all those of her friends who were not in the secret. Count Flahault, Sir Daniel Sandford, Admiral Fleming, even Sir Walter Scott himself, were at one time or another victims of her “impersonations.” The author of *Waverley* describes how he met her dining at the house of a friend. After dinner she went off as though going to a play, and presently returned in the character of an old Scottish lady. “Her dress and behaviour were admirable,” says Sir Walter, “and the conversation unique. I was in the secret, of course,” he adds, “and did my best to keep up the ball, but she cut me out of all feather. The prosing account she gave of her son, the antiquary, who found an auld wig in a slate quarry, was extremely ludicrous, and she puzzled the Professor of Agriculture with a merciless account of the succession of crops in the parks around her old mansion-house.” [Ibid.] None of the company to whom the secret had not been entrusted had the least notion that the old lady was an impostor. But one shrewd young woman observed Miss Graham’s hand, thought it plumper than seemed usual for a lady of such mature age as their visitor, and grew suspicious.

Her representations of quaint old Scottish ladies soon became famous in Edinburgh society, and she was frequently prevailed upon to exhibit her powers of satire and mimicry to large numbers of delighted friends. Of this entertainment neither she nor they ever seem to have wearied. “I often felt so identified with the character,” she wrote, in an account of her impersonations which, at the urgent request of her friends, was published privately in 1859, “so charmed with the pleasure manifested by my audience, that it became painful to lay aside the veil, and descend again into the humdrum realities of my own self,” [Mystifications, *by Miss C.S. Graham. (Printed privately. 1859.)*] In this pleasant manner Miss Graham deceived a quantity of people, but her satire was so free from malice that she never gave offence to her victims, and those who were taken in were the first to admit the humour of her marvellous imitations. Lord Jeffrey – the first editor of the famous *Edinburgh Review* – was one of the many persons upon whom Miss Graham practised her tricks. The following account she wrote of an interview she had wit his in the character of the imaginary “Lady Pitlyal,” one of her favourite characters, is sufficiently amusing to quote at length.

VISIT TO MR. JEFFREY [Ibid.]

At the theatre one Saturday evening in the year 1821, Mr. Jeffrey – afterwards Lord Jeffrey – requested me to let him see my *old lady,* and on condition that we should have some one to *take in,* I promised to introduce her to him very soon. Accordingly, on the Monday having ascertained that he was to dine at home, I set out from Lord Gillies's in a coach, accompanied by Miss Helen Carnegy of Craigo, as my daughter, and we stopped at Mr. Jeffrey's door in George Street between five and six o'clock. It was a winter evening; and on the question "Is Mr. Jeffrey at home?" being answered in the affirmative, the two ladies stepped out, and were ushered into the little parlour, where he received his visitors.

There was a blazing fire, and wax-lights on the table; he had laid down his book, and seemed to be in the act of joining the ladies in the drawing-room before dinner.

The Lady Pitlyal was announced and he stepped forward a few paces to receive her.

She was a sedate-looking little woman, of an inquisitive law-loving countenance; a mouth in which not a vestige of a tooth was to be seen, and a pair of old-fashioned spectacles on her nose, that rather obscured a pair of eyes that had not altogether lost their lustre, and that gave to the voice as much of the nasal sound as indicated the age of its possessor to be some years between her grand climacteric and fourscore. She was dressed in an Irish poplin of silver grey, a white Cashmere shawl, a mob cap with a band of thin muslin that fastened it below the chin, and a small black silk bonnet that shaded her eyes from any glare of light.

Her right hand was supported by an antique gold-headed cane and she leant with the other on the arm of her daughter.

Miss Ogilvy might be somewhere on the wrong side of twenty; how many months or years is of no particular importance. Her figure, of the middle size, was robed in a dress of pale blue, and short enough in the skirt to display a very handsome pair of feet and ankles. On her head she wore a white capote, and behind a transparent curtain of pure white blond glance two eyes of darkest hazel, while ringlets of bright auburn harmonised with the bloom of the rose that glowed upon her cheeks. Her appearance was recherché, and would have been perfectly *lady-like,* but for an attempt at style, a mistake which young ladies from the country are very apt to fall into on their first arrival in the metropolis. Mr. Jeffrey bowed and handed the old lady to a comfortable *chaise longue* on one side of the fire, and sat himself down opposite to her on the other. But in his desire to accommodate the old lady, and in his anxiety to be informed of the purport of the visit, he forgot what was due to the young one, and the heiress of the ancient House of Pitlyal was left standing in the middle of the floor.

She helped herself to a chair, however, and sat down beside her mother. She had been educated in somewhat of the severity of the old school, and during the whole of the consultation she neither spoke nor moved a single muscle of her countenance.

"Well," said Mr. Jeffrey, as he looked at the old lady, in expectation that she would open the subject that had procured him the honour of the visit.

"Weel," replied her ladyship, "I am come to tak' a word o' the law frae you.

"My husband, the late Ogilvy of Pitlyal, among other property which he left to me, was a house and a yard at the town-end of Kerrimuir, also a kiln and a malt-barn.

"The kiln and the barn were rented by a man they ca'ed John Playfair, and John Playfair subset them to anither man they ca'd Willy Cruickshank, and Willy Cruickshank purchased a cargo of damaged lint, and ye widna hinder Willy to dry the lint upon the kiln, and the lint took low and kindled the cupples, and the slates flew aff, and a' the flooring was burnt to the ground, and naething left standin' but the bare wa's.

"Now it was na' insured, and I want to ken wha's to pay the damage, for John Playfair says he has naething *ado wi' it,* and Willy Cruickshank says he has naething *to do it wi',* and I am

determined no to take it off their hand the way it is."

"Has it been in any of the courts?"

"Ou aye, it has been in the Shirra Court of Forfar, and Shirra Duff was a gude man, and he kent me, and would ha' gien't in my favour, but that clattering creature Jamie L'Amy cam' in, and he gave it against me."

"I have no doubt Mr. L'Amy would give a very fair decision."

"It wasna a fair decision when he gae it against me."

"That is what many people think in your circumstances."

"The minister of Blairgowrie is but a fule body, and advised me no to gae to the law."

"I think he gave you a very sensible advice."

"It was onything but that; and mind, if you dinna giet in my favour, I'll no be sair pleased."

Mr. Jeffrey smiled, and said he would not promise to do that, and then inquired if she had any papers.

"Ou aye, I have a great bundle of papers, and I'll come back at any hour you please to appoint, and bring them wi' me."

"It will not be necessary for you to return yourself – you can send them to me."

"And wha would you recommend to me for an agent in the business?"

"That I cannot tell; it is not my province to recommend an agent."

"Then how will Robert Smith of Balharry do?"

"Very well – very good man indeed; and you may bid him send me the papers."

Meantime her ladyship drew from her pocket a large old-fashioned leather pocket-book with silver clasps, out of which she presented him a letter directed to himself. He did not look into it, but threw it carelessly on the table. She now offered him a pinch of snuff from a massive gold box, and then selected another folded paper from the pocket-book, which she presented to him, saying, "Here is a prophecy that I would like you to look at and explain to me."

He begged to be excused, saying, "I believe your ladyship will find me more skilled in the *law* than the *prophets.*"

She entreated him to look at it; and on glancing his eyes over it, he remarked, "that from the words *Tory* and *Whig,* it did not seem to be a very ancient prophecy."

"May be," replied her ladyship, "but it has been long in our family. I copied these lines out of a muckle book, entitled the 'Prophecie of Pitlyal,' just before I came to you, in order to have your opinion on some of the obscure passages of it. And you will do me a great favour if you will read it out loud, and I will tell you what I think of it as you go on."

Here, then, with a smile at the oddity of the request, and a mixture of impatience in his manner, he read the following lines, while she interrupted him occasionally to remark upon their

meaning.

“EXTRACT FROM THE PROPHECIE OF PITLYAL

“When the crown and the head shell disgrace ane anither,

And the Bishops on the Bench shall go a’ wrang thegither,

When Tory or Whig,

Fills the judge’s wig;

When the Lint o’ the Miln

Shall reek on the kiln;

O’er the Light of the North,

When the Glamour breaks forth,

And its wildfire so red,

With the daylight is spread;

When woman shrinks not from the ordeal of tryal,

There is triumph and fame to the house of Pitlyal.”

(The Light of the North was Mr. Jeffrey, - the Glamour was herself; but we must give the Lady Pitlyal’s own interpretation, as she appeared unconscious of the true meaning.)

“We hae seen the crown and the head, she said, “disgrace ane anither no very lang syne, and ye may judge whether the Bishops gaed right or wrang on that occasion; and the *Tory* and *Whig* may no be very ancient, and yet never be the less true. Then there is the Lint o’ the Miln, - we have witnessed that come to pass; but what the ‘*Light of the North’* can mean, and the *Glamour,* I canna mak out. The twa hindmost lines seem to me to point at Queen Caroline; and if it had pleased God to spare my son, I might have guessed he would have made a figure on her trial, and have brought “Triumph and fame to the house of Pitlyal.” I begin, however, to think that the prophecie may be fulfilled in the person of my daughter, for which reason I have brought her to Edinburgh to see and get a gude match for her.”

Here Mr. Jeffrey put on a smile, half-serious, half-quizzical, and said –

“I suppose it would not be necessary for the gentleman to change his name?”

“It would be weel worth his while, sir; she ahs a very gude estate, and she’s a very bonny lassie, and she’s equally related baith to Airlie and Strathmore; and a’ body in our part of the warld ca’s her the ‘Rosebud of Pitlyal.’”

Mr. Jeffrey smiled as his eyes met the glance of the beautiful flower that was so happily placed before him; but the Rosebud herself returned no sign of intelligence.

A pause in the conversation now ensued, which was interrupted by her ladyship asking Mr. Jeffrey to tell her where she could procure a set of *fause teeth.*

“What?” said he, with an expression of astonishment, while the whole frame of the young lady

shook with some internal emotion.

“A set of fause teeth,” she repeated, and was again echoed by the interrogation, “What?”

A third time she asked the question, and in a more audible key; when he replied with a kind of suppressed laugh, “There is Mr. Nasmyth, north corner of St. Andrew Square, a very good dentist, and there is Mr Hutchins, corner of Hanover and George Street.”

She requested he would give her their name on a slip of paper. He rose and walked to the table, wrote down both the directions, which he folded and presented to her.

She now rose to take leave. The bell was rung, and when the servant entered, his master desired him to see if the Lady Pitlyal’s carriage was at the door.

He returned to tell there was no carriage waiting, on which her ladyship remarked. “This comes of *fore-hand payments* – they make *hint-hand work.* I gae a hackney coachman twa shillings to bring me here, and he’s awa’ without me.”

There was not a coach within sight, and another had to be sent for from a distant stand of coaches. It was by this time past the hour of dinner, and there seemed no hope of being rid of his visitors.

Her ladyship said she was in no hurry, as they had had tea, and were going to the play, and hoped he would accompany them. He said he had not yet had his dinner.

“What is the play to-night?” said she.

“It is the ‘Heart of Mid-Lothian,’ again, I believe.”

They then talked of the merits of the actors, and she took occasion to tell him that she patronised the *Edinburgh Review.*

“We read your buke, sir!”

“I am certainly very much obliged to you.”

Still no carriage was heard. Another silence ensued, until it bethought her ladyship to amuse him with the politics of the country.

“We burnt the King’s effigy at Blairgowrie.”

“That was bold,” he replied.

“And a pair of dainty muckle horns we gae him.”

“Not very complimentary to the Queen, I should think.”

Here the coach was announced, and by the help of her daughter’s arm and her gold-headed cane, she began to move, complaining loudly of a *corny tae.* She was with difficulty got into the coach. The Rosebud stepped lightly after her.

The door was closed, and the order given to drive to Gibb’s Hotel, whence they hastened with all speed to Lord Gillies’s where the party waited dinner for them, and hailed the fulfilment of the “Prophecie of Pitlyal.”

Me. Jeffrey, in the meantime, impatient for his dinner, joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

"What in the world has detained you?" said Mrs. Jeffrey.

"One of the most tiresome and oddest old women I ever met with. I thought never to have got rid of her;" and beginning to relate some of the conversation that had taken place, it flashed upon him at once that he had been *taken in.*

He ran downstairs for the letter, hoping it would throw some light upon the subject, but it was only a blank sheet of paper, containing a fee of three guineas.

They amused themselves with the relation; but it was not until the day after that he found out from his valued friend Mrs. George Russell who the ladies really were. He laughed heartily, and promised to aid them in any other scene they liked to devise, and her returned the fee with the following letter:-

Letter from Mr. Jeffrey to the Lady Pitlyal, returning the fee of three guineas.

DEAR MADAM, - As I understand that the lawsuit about the Malt Kiln is likely to be settled out of Court, I must be permitted to return the fee by which you were pleased to engage my services for that interesting discussion; and hope I shall not be quoted along with the hackney coachman in proof of the danger of *fore-hand payments.* I hope that Miss Ogilvy is likely to fulfil the prophecy, and bring glory and fame to the house of Pitlyal; though I am not a little mortified at having been allowed to see so little of that amiable young lady.

With best wishes for the speedy cure of your corns, I have the honour to be, dear madam, your very faithful and obedient servant, F. JEFFREY.

92 GEORGE STREET, *21st April,* 1821."

At her house in Forth Street, Edinburgh, where she always spent the winter, Miss Graham held a kind of intellectual salon of all the brightest minds of her day. She was not a "professed literary woman" like Mrs. Hamilton or Mrs. Grant, although her *Mystifications* is written in a clear and humorous style. She made a further contribution to de Gelieu, which, under the title of *The Bee Preserver: or Practical Directions for the Management and Preservation of Hives,* Sir Walter Scott presented in 1829 to the Highland Society, by whom it was well received.

Her benevolence and philanthropy caused her to be universally beloved in the neighbourhood of Duntrune. Here, after the discovery of Dr. Jenner's system of vaccination, she might often have been seen riding about the countryside with a needle in her pocket, prepared to inoculate all the local children who could not elude her kindly grasp. As the years advanced, her popularity and the circle of her friends increased, while to the end of her life her unselfishness and loving thought of others knew no abatement. One day, when she was over ninety, and thought that too much of the time and attention of her guests was being occupied in making her comfortable, "I am like the bride in the old song," she said,

"Twa were blawin at her nose,

And three were bucklin at her shoon!"

To the very last, as Dr. Brown tells us, she retained her memory, her interest in life, her strong sense of humour. Friends and dependants alike adored her, and sad indeed were many hearts when this "perfect type of Scottish gentlewoman" died, in 1877, in her ninety-fifth year.

Clementina Stirling Graham was buried in the Old Churchyard of Mains, about two miles from Dundee. Like Allan Cunningham she had always wished her last resting-place to be a spot where daisies could grow about her feet, and the winds of heaven blow over her head, and the site of her

tomb was specially chosen for its romantic seclusion. Her grave overlooks the crumbling ruins of the Castle of Graham of Claverhouse, whose kinswoman she was, and whose patent of nobility she had long possessed and cherished.