WIGGIN KATE SMITH

PENELOPE'S EXPERIENCES IN SCOTLAND

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Содержание

Kate Douglas Smith Wiggin Penelope's Experiences in Scotland / Being Extracts from the Commonplace Book of Penelope Hamilton

Chapter I. A Triangular Alliance

'Edina, Scotia's Darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers!'

Edinburgh, April 189-.
22 Breadalbane Terrace.

We have travelled together before, Salemina, Francesca, and I, and we know the very worst there is to know about one another. After this point has been reached, it is as if a triangular marriage had taken place, and, with the honeymoon comfortably over, we slip along in thoroughly friendly fashion. I use no warmer word than'friendly' because, in the first place, the highest tides of feeling do not visit the coasts of triangular alliances; and because, in the second place, 'friendly' is a word capable of putting to the

blush many a more passionate and endearing one.

Every one knows of our experiences in England, for we wrote volumes of letters concerning them, the which were widely circulated among our friends at the time, and read aloud under the evening lamps in the several cities of our residence.

Since then few striking changes have taken place in our history.

Salemina returned to Boston for the winter, to find, to her amazement, that for forty odd years she had been rather overestimating it.

On arriving in New York, Francesca discovered that the young lawyer whom for six months she had been advising to marry somebody more worthy than herself was at last about to do it. This was somewhat in the nature of a shock, for Francesca had been in the habit, ever since she was seventeen, of giving her lovers similar advice, and up to this time no one of them has ever taken it. She therefore has had the not unnatural hope, I think, of organising at one time or another all these disappointed and faithful swains into a celibate brotherhood; and perhaps of driving by the interesting monastery with her husband and calling his attention modestly to the fact that these poor monks were filling their barren lives with deeds of piety, trying to remember their Creator with such assiduity that they might, in time, forget Her.

Her chagrin was all the keener at losing this last aspirant to her hand in that she had almost persuaded herself that she was as

fond of him as she was likely to be of anybody, and that on the whole she had better marry him and save his life and reason.

Fortunately she had not communicated this gleam of hope by letter, feeling, I suppose, that she would like to see for herself the light of joy breaking over his pale cheek. The scene would have been rather pretty and touching, but meantime the Worm had turned and despatched a letter to the Majestic at the quarantine station, telling her that he had found a less reluctant bride in the person of her intimate friend Miss Rosa Van Brunt; and so Francesca's dream of duty and sacrifice was over.

Salemina says she was somewhat constrained for a week and a trifle cynical for a fortnight, but that afterwards her spirits mounted on ever ascending spirals to impossible heights, where they have since remained. It appears from all this that although she was piqued at being taken at her word, her heart was not in the least damaged. It never was one of those fragile things which have to be wrapped in cotton, and preserved from the slightest blow—Francesca's heart. It is made of excellent stout, durable material, and I often tell her with the care she takes of it, and the moderate strain to which it is subjected, it ought to be as good as new a hundred years hence.

As for me, the scene of my own love-story is laid in America and England, and has nought to do with Edinburgh. It is far from finished; indeed, I hope it will be the longest serial on record, one of those charming tales that grow in interest as chapter after chapter unfolds, until at the end we feel as if we could never part

with the delightful people.

I should be, at this very moment, Mrs. William Beresford, a highly respectable young matron who painted rather good pictures in her spinster days, when she was Penelope Hamilton of the great American working-class, Unlimited; but first Mrs. Beresford's dangerous illness and then her death, have kept my dear boy a willing prisoner in Cannes, his heart sadly torn betwixt his love and duty to his mother and his desire to be with me. The separation is virtually over now, and we two, alas! have ne'er a mother or a father between us, so we shall not wait many months before beginning to comfort each other in good earnest.

Meantime Salemina and Francesca have persuaded me to join their forces, and Mr. Beresford will follow us to Scotland in a few short weeks, when we shall have established ourselves in the country.

We are overjoyed at being together again, we three women folk. As I said before, we know the worst of one another, and the future has no terrors. We have learned, for example, that—

Francesca does not like an early morning start. Salemina refuses to arrive late anywhere. Penelope prefers to stay behind and follow next day.

Francesca scorns to travel third class. So does Salemina, but she will if urged.

Penelope hates a four-wheeler. Salemina is nervous in a hansom. Francesca prefers a barouche or a landau.

Salemina likes a steady fire in the grate. Penelope opens a

window and fans herself.

Salemina inclines to instructive and profitable expeditions. Francesca loves processions and sightseeing. Penelope abhors all of these equally.

Salemina likes history. Francesca loves fiction. Penelope adores poetry and detests facts.

Penelope likes substantial breakfasts. Francesca dislikes the sight of food in the morning.

In the matter of breakfasts, when we have leisure to assert our individual tastes, Salemina prefers tea, Francesca cocoa, and I, coffee. We can never, therefore, be served with a large comfortable pot of anything, but are confronted instead with a caravan of silver jugs, china jugs, bowls of hard and soft sugar, hot milk, cold milk, hot water, and cream, while each in her secret heart wishes that the other two were less exigeante in the matter of diet and beverages.

This does not sound promising, but it works perfectly well in practice by the exercise of a little flexibility.

As we left dear old Dovermarle Street and Smith's Private Hotel behind, and drove to the station to take the Flying Scotsman, we indulged in floods of reminiscence over the joys of travel we had tasted together in the past, and talked with lively anticipation of the new experiences awaiting us in the land of heather.

While Salemina went to purchase the three first-class tickets, I superintended the porters as they disposed our luggage in the van,

and in so doing my eye lighted upon a third-class carriage which was, for a wonder, clean, comfortable, and vacant. Comparing it hastily with the first-class compartment being held by Francesca, I found that it differed only in having no carpet on the floor, and a smaller number of buttons in the upholstering. This was really heartrending when the difference in fare for three persons would be at least twenty dollars. What a delightful sum to put aside for a rainy day!—that is, be it understood, what a delightful sum to put aside and spend on the first rainy day! for that is the way we always interpret the expression.

When Salemina returned with the tickets, she found me, as usual, bewailing our extravagance.

Francesca descended suddenly from her post, and, wresting the tickets from her duenna, exclaimed, "'I know that I can save the country, and I know no other man can!' as William Pitt said to the Duke of Devonshire. I have had enough of this argument. For six months of last year we discussed travelling third class and continued to travel first. Get into that clean hard-seated, ill-upholstered third-class carriage immediately, both of you; save room enough for a mother with two babies, and man carrying a basket of fish, and an old woman with five pieces of hand-luggage and a dog; meanwhile I will exchange the tickets."

So saying, she disappeared rapidly among the throng of passengers, guards, porters, newspaper boys, golfers with bags of clubs, young ladies with bicycles, and old ladies with tin hat-boxes.

"What decision, what swiftness of judgment, what courage and energy!" murmured Salemina. "Isn't she wonderfully improved since that unexpected turning of the Worm?"

Francesca rejoined us just as the guard was about to lock us in, and flung herself down, quite breathless from her unusual exertion.

"Well, we are travelling third for once, and the money is saved, or at least it is ready to spend again at the first opportunity. The man didn't wish to exchange the tickets at all. He says it is never done. I told him they were bought by a very inexperienced American lady (that is you, Salemina) who knew almost nothing of the distinctions between first and third class, and naturally took the best, believing it to be none too good for a citizen of the greatest republic on the face of the earth. He said the tickets had been stamped on. I said so should I be if I returned without exchanging them. He was a very dense person, and didn't see my joke at all, but then, it is true, there were thirteen men in line behind me, with the train starting in three minutes, and there is nothing so debilitating to a naturally weak sense of humour as selling tickets behind a grating, so I am not really vexed with him. There! we are quite comfortable, pending the arrival of the babies, the dog, and the fish, and certainly no vendor of periodic literature will dare approach us while we keep these books in evidence."

She had Laurence Hutton's Literary Landmarks and Royal Edinburgh, by Mrs. Oliphant; I had Lord Cockburn's Memorials

of his Time; and somebody had given Salemina, at the moment of leaving London, a work on 'Scotias's darling seat,' in three huge volumes. When all this printed matter was heaped on the top of Salemina's hold-all on the platform, the guard had asked, "Do you belong to these books, ma'am?"

"We may consider ourselves injured in going from London to Edinburgh in a third-class carriage in eight or ten hours, but listen to this," said Salemina, who had opened one of her large volumes at random when the train started.

"'The Edinburgh and London Stage-coach begins on Monday, 13th October 1712. All that desire… let them repair to the Coach and Horses at the head of the Canongate every Saturday, or the Black Swan in Holborn every other Monday, at both of which places they may be received in a coach which performs the whole journey in thirteen days without any stoppage (if God permits) having eighty able horses. Each passenger paying 4 pounds, 10 shillings for the whole journey, allowing each 20 lbs. weight and all above to pay 6 pence per lb. The coach sets off at six in the morning' (you could never have caught it, Francesca!), 'and is performed by Henry Harrison.' And here is a 'modern improvement,' forty-two years later. In July 1754, the Edinburgh Courant advertises the stage-coach drawn by six horses, with a postilion on one of the leaders, as a 'new, genteel, two-end glass machine, hung on steel springs, exceedingly light and easy, to go in ten days in summer and twelve in winter. Passengers to pay as usual. Performed (if God permits) by your dutiful servant,

Hosea Eastgate. CARE IS TAKEN OF SMALL PARCELS ACCORDING TO THEIR VALUE.'"

"It would have been a long, wearisome journey," said I contemplatively; "but, nevertheless, I wish we were making it in 1712 instead of a century and three-quarters later."

"What would have been happening, Salemina?" asked Francesca politely, but with no real desire to know.

"The Union had been already established five years," began Salemina intelligently.

"Which Union?"

"Whose Union?"

Salemina is used to these interruptions and eruptions of illiteracy on our part. I think she rather enjoys them, as in the presence of such complete ignorance as ours her lamp of knowledge burns all the brighter.

"Anne was on the throne," she went on, with serene dignity.

"What Anne?"

"I know all about Anne!" exclaimed Francesca. "She came from the Midnight Sun country, or up that way. She was very extravagant, and had something to do with Jingling Geordie in The Fortunes of Nigel. It is marvellous how one's history comes back to one!"

"Quite marvellous," said Salemina dryly; "or at least the state in which it comes back is marvellous. I am not a stickler for dates, as you know, but if you could only contrive to fix a few periods in your minds, girls, just in a general way, you would not

be so shamefully befogged. Your Anne of Denmark, Francesca, was the wife of James VI. of Scotland, who was James I. of England, and she died a hundred years before the Anne I mean, —the last of the Stuarts, you know. My Anne came after William and Mary, and before the Georges."

"Which William and Mary?"

"What Georges?"

But this was too much even for Salemina's equanimity, and she retired behind her book in dignified displeasure, while Francesca and I meekly looked up the Annes in a genealogical table, and tried to decide whether 'b.1665' meant born or beheaded.

Chapter II. Edina, Scotia's Darling Seat

The weather that greeted us on our unheralded arrival in Scotland was of the precise sort offered by Edinburgh to her unfortunate queen, when,

> 'After a youth by woes o'ercast,
> After a thousand sorrows past,
> The lovely Mary once again
> Set foot upon her native plain.'

John Knox records of those memorable days: 'The very face of heaven did manifestlie speak what comfort was brought to this country with hir—to wit, sorrow, dolour, darkness and all impiety—for in the memorie of man never was seen a more dolorous face of the heavens than was seen at her arryvall… the myst was so thick that skairse micht onie man espy another; and the sun was not seyn to shyne two days befoir nor two days after.'

We could not see Edina's famous palaces and towers because of the haar, that damp, chilling, drizzling, dripping fog or mist which the east wind summons from the sea; but we knew that they were there, shrouded in the heart of that opaque, mysterious greyness, and that before many hours our eyes would feast upon their beauty.

Perhaps it was the weather, but I could think of nothing but poor Queen Mary! She had drifted into my imagination with the haar, so that I could fancy her homesick gaze across the water as she murmured, 'Adieu, ma chere France! Je ne vous verray jamais plus!'—could fancy her saying as in Allan Cunningham's verse:—

'The sun rises bright in France,
And fair sets he;
But he hath tint the blithe blink he had
In my ain countree.'

And then I recalled Mary's first good-night in Edinburgh: that 'serenade of 500 rascals with vile fiddles and rebecks'; that singing, 'in bad accord,' of Protestant psalms by the wet crowd beneath the palace windows, while the fires on Arthur's Seat shot flickering gleams of welcome through the dreary fog. What a lullaby for poor Mary, half Frenchwoman and all Papist!

It is but just to remember the 'indefatigable and undissuadable' John Knox's statement, 'the melody lyked her weill, and she willed the same to be continewed some nightis after.' For my part, however, I distrust John Knox's musical feeling, and incline sympathetically to the Sieur de Brantome's account, with its 'vile fiddles' and 'discordant psalms,' although his judgment was doubtless a good deal depressed by what he called the si grand brouillard that so dampened the spirits of Mary's French retinue.

Ah well, I was obliged to remember, in order to be reasonably

happy myself, that Mary had a gay heart, after all; that she was but nineteen; that, though already a widow, she did not mourn her young husband as one who could not be comforted; and that she must soon have been furnished with merrier music than the psalms, for another of the sour comments of the time is, 'Our Queen weareth the dule [weeds], but she can dance daily, dule and all!'

These were my thoughts as we drove through invisible streets in the Edinburgh haar, turned into what proved next day to be a Crescent, and drew up to an invisible house with a visible number 22 gleaming over a door which gaslight transformed into a probability. We alighted, and though we could scarcely see the driver's outstretched hand, he was quite able to discern a half-crown, and demanded three shillings.

The noise of our cab had brought Mrs. M'Collop to the door,—good (or at least pretty good) Mrs. M'Collop, to whose apartments we had been commended by English friends who had never occupied them.

Dreary as it was without, all was comfortable within-doors, and a cheery (one-and-sixpenny) fire crackled in the grate. Our private drawing-room was charmingly furnished, and so large that, notwithstanding the presence of a piano, two sofas, five small tables, cabinets, desks, and chairs,—not forgetting a dainty five-o'clock tea equipage,—we might have given a party in the remaining space.

"If this is a typical Scotch lodging, I like it; and if it is Scotch

hospitality to lay the cloth and make the fire before it is asked for, then I call it simply Arabian in character!" and Salemina drew off her damp gloves, and extended her hands to the blaze.

"And isn't it delightful that the bill doesn't come in for a whole week?" asked Francesca. "We have only our English experiences on which to found our knowledge, and all is delicious mystery. The tea may be a present from Mrs. M'Collop, and the sugar may not be an extra; the fire may be included in the rent of the apartment, and the piano may not be taken away to-morrow to enhance the attractions of the dining-room floor." (It was Francesca, you remember, who had 'warstled' with the itemised accounts at Smith's Private Hotel in London, and she who was always obliged to turn pounds, shillings, and pence into dollars and cents before she could add or subtract.)

"Come and look at the flowers in my bedroom," I called, "four great boxes full! Mr. Beresford must have ordered the carnations, because he always does; but where did the roses come from, I wonder?"

I rang the bell, and a neat white-aproned maid appeared.

"Who brought these flowers, please?"

"I cudna say, mam."

"Thank you; will you be good enough to ask Mrs. M'Collop?"

In a moment she returned with the message, "There will be a letter in the box, mam."

"It seems to me the letter should be in the box now, if it is ever to be," I thought, and I presently drew this card from among

the fragrant buds:—

'Lady Baird sends these Scotch roses as a small return for the pleasure she has received from Miss Hamilton's pictures. Lady Baird will give herself the pleasure of calling to-morrow; meantime she hopes that Miss Hamilton and her party will dine with her some evening this week.'

"How nice!" exclaimed Salemina.

"The celebrated Miss Hamilton's undistinguished party presents its humble compliments to Lady Baird," chanted Francesca, "and having no engagements whatever, and small hope of any, will dine with her on any and every evening she may name. Miss Hamilton's party will wear its best clothes, polish its mental jewels, and endeavour in every possible way not to injure the gifted Miss Hamilton's reputation among the Scottish nobility."

I wrote a hasty note of thanks to Lady Baird, and rang the bell.

"Can I send a message, please?" I asked the maid.

"I cudna say, mam."

"Will you be good enough to ask Mrs. M'Collop, please?"

Interval; then:—

"The Boots will tak' it at seeven o'clock, mam."

"Thank you; is Fotheringay Crescent near here?"

"I cudna say, mam."

"Thank you; what is your name, please?"

I waited in well-grounded anxiety, for I had no idea that she knew her name, or that if she had ever heard it, she could say it;

but, to my surprise, she answered almost immediately, “Susanna Crum, mam!”

What a joy it is in a vexatious world, where things ‘gang aft agley,’ to find something absolutely right.

If I had devoted years to the subject, having the body of Susanna Crum before my eyes every minute of the time for inspiration, Susanna Crum is what I should have named that maid. Not a vowel could be added, not a consonant omitted. I said so when first I saw her, and weeks of intimate acquaintance only deepened my reverence for the parental genius that had so described her to the world.

Chapter III. A vision in Princes Street

When we awoke next morning the sun had forgotten itself and was shining in at Mrs. M'Collop's back windows.

We should have arisen at once to burn sacrifices and offer oblations, but we had seen the sun frequently in America, and had no idea (poor fools!) that it was anything to be grateful for, so we accepted it, almost without comment, as one of the perennial providences of life.

When I speak of Edinburgh sunshine I do not mean, of course, any such burning, whole-souled, ardent warmth of beam as one finds in countries where they make a specialty of climate. It is, generally speaking, a half-hearted, uncertain ray, as pale and transitory as a martyr's smile; but its faintest gleam, or its most puerile attempt to gleam, is admired and recorded by its well-disciplined constituency. Not only that, but at the first timid blink of the sun the true Scotsman remarks smilingly, 'I think now we shall be having settled weather!' It is a pathetic optimism, beautiful but quite groundless, and leads one to believe in the story that when Father Noah refused to take Sandy into the ark, he sat down philosophically outside, saying, with a glance at the clouds, 'Aweel! the day's just aboot the ord'nar', an' I wouldna won'er if we saw the sun afore nicht!'

But what loyal son of Edina cares for these transatlantic gibes, and where is the dweller within her royal gates who fails to

succumb to the sombre beauty of that old grey town of the North? 'Grey! why, it is grey or grey and gold, or grey and gold and blue, or grey and gold and blue and green, or grey and gold and blue and green and purple, according as the heaven pleases and you choose your ground! But take it when it is most sombrely grey, where is another such grey city?'

So says one of her lovers, and so the great army of lovers would say, had they the same gift of language; for

> 'Even thus, methinks, a city reared should be,…
> Yea, an imperial city that might hold
> Five time a hundred noble towns in fee....
> Thus should her towers be raised; with vicinage
> Of clear bold hills, that curve her very streets,
> As if to indicate, 'mid choicest seats
> Of Art, abiding Nature's majesty.'

We ate a hasty breakfast that first morning, and prepared to go out for a walk into the great unknown, perhaps the most pleasurable sensation in the world. Francesca was ready first, and, having mentioned the fact several times ostentatiously, she went into the drawing-room to wait and read the Scotsman. When we went thither a few minutes later we found that she had disappeared.

"She is below, of course," said Salemina. "She fancies that we shall feel more ashamed at our tardiness if we find her sitting on the hall bench in silent martyrdom."

There was no one in the hall, however, save Susanna, who inquired if we would see the cook before going out.

"We have no time now, Susanna," I remarked. "We are anxious to have a walk before the weather changes, if possible, but we shall be out for luncheon and in for dinner, and Mrs. M'Collop may give us anything she pleases. Do you know where Miss Francesca is?"

"I cudna s–"

"Certainly, of course you couldn't; but I wonder if Mrs. M'Collop saw her?"

Mrs. M'Collop appeared from the basement, and vouchsafed the information that she had seen 'the young leddy rinnin' after the regiment.'

"Running after the regiment!" repeated Salemina automatically. "What a reversal of the laws of nature? Why, in Berlin, it was always the regiment that used to run after her!"

We learned in what direction the soldiers had gone, and pursuing the same path found the young lady on the corner of a street near by. She was quite unabashed. "You don't know what you have missed!" she said excitedly. "Let us get into this tram, and possibly we can head them off somewhere. They may be going into battle, and if so, my heart's blood is at their service. It is one of those experiences that come only once in a lifetime. There were pipes and there were kilts! (I didn't suppose they ever really wore them outside of the theatre!) When you have seen the kilts swinging, Salemina, you will never be the same

woman afterwards! You never expected to see the Olympian gods walking, did you? Perhaps you thought they always sat on practicable rocks and made stiff gestures, from the elbow, as they do in the Wagner operas? Well, these gods walked, if you can call the inspired gait a walk! If there is a single spinster left in Scotland, it is because none of these ever asked her to marry him. Ah, how grateful I ought to be that I am free to say 'yes', if a kilt ever asks me to be his! Poor Penelope, yoked to your commonplace trousered Beresford! (I wish the tram would go faster!) You must capture one of them, by fair means or foul, Penelope, and Salemina and I will hold him down while you paint him,—there they are, they are there somewhere, don't you hear them?"

There they were indeed, filing down the grassy slopes of the Gardens, swinging across one of the stone bridges, and winding up the Castlehill to the Esplanade like a long glittering snake; the streamers of their Highland bonnets waving, their arms glistening in the sun, and the bagpipes playing 'The March of the Cameron Men.' The pipers themselves were mercifully hidden from us on that first occasion, and it was well, for we could never have borne another feather's weight of ecstasy.

It was in Princes Street that we had alighted,—named thus for the prince who afterwards became George IV.—and I hope he was, and is, properly grateful. It ought never to be called a street, this most magnificent of terraces, and the world has cause to bless that interdict of the Court of Session in 1774 which

prevented the Gradgrinds of the day from erecting buildings along its south side,—a sordid scheme that would have been the very superfluity of naughtiness.

It was an envious Glasgow body who said grudgingly, as he came out of Waverley Station, and gazed along its splendid length for the first time, "Weel, wi' a' their haverin', it's but half a street onyway!"—which always reminded me of the Western farmer who came from his native plains to the beautiful Berkshire hills. "I've always heard o' this scenery," he said. "Blamed if I can find any scenery; but if there was, nobody could see it, there's so much high ground in the way!"

To think that not so much more than a hundred years ago Princes Street was nought but a straight country road, the 'Lang Dykes' and the 'Lang Gait,' as it was called.

We looked down over the grassy chasm that separates the New from the Old Town; looked our first on Arthur's Seat, that crouching lion of a mountain; saw the Corstorphine Hill, and Calton heights, and Salisbury Crags, and finally that stupendous bluff of rock that culminates so majestically in Edinburgh Castle. There is something else which, like Susanna Crum's name, is absolutely and ideally right! Stevenson calls it one of the most satisfactory crags in nature—a Bass rock upon dry land, rooted in a garden, shaken by passing trains, carrying a crown of battlements and turrets, and describing its warlike shadow over the liveliest and brightest thoroughfare of the new town. It dominates the whole countryside from water and land. The men

who would have the courage to build such a castle in such a spot are all dead; all dead, and the world is infinitely more comfortable without them. They are all gone, and no more like unto them will ever be born, and we can most of us count upon dying safely in our beds, of diseases bred of modern civilisation. But I am glad that those old barbarians, those rudimentary creatures working their way up into the divine likeness, when they were not hanging, drawing, quartering, torturing, and chopping their neighbours, and using their heads in conventional patterns on the tops of gate-posts, did devote their leisure intervals to rearing fortresses like this. Edinburgh Castle could not be conceived, much less built, nowadays, when all our energy is consumed in bettering the condition of the 'submerged tenth'! What did they care about the 'masses,' that 'regal race that is now no more,' when they were hewing those blocks of rugged rock and piling them against the sky-line on the top of that great stone mountain! It amuses me to think how much more picturesque they left the world, and how much better we shall leave it; though if an artist were requested to distribute individual awards to different generations, you could never persuade him to give first prizes to the centuries that produced steam laundries, trolleys, X rays, and sanitary plumbing.

What did they reck of Peace Congresses and bloodless arbitrations when they lighted the beacon-fires, flaming out to the gudeman and his sons ploughing or sowing in the Lang Dykes the news that their 'ancient enemies of England had crossed the

Tweed'!

I am the most peaceful person in the world, but the Castle was too much for my imagination. I was mounted and off and away from the first moment I gazed upon its embattled towers, heard the pipers in the distance, and saw the Black Watch swinging up the green steps where the huge fortress 'holds its state.' The modern world had vanished, and my steed was galloping, galloping, galloping back into the place-of-the-things-that-are-past, traversing centuries at every leap.

'To arms! Let every banner in Scotland float defiance to the breeze!' (So I heard my new-born imaginary spirit say to my real one.) 'Yes, and let the Deacon Convener unfurl the sacred Blue Blanket, under which every liege burgher of the kingdom is bound to answer summons! The bale-fires are gleaming, giving alarm to Hume, Haddington, Dunbar, Dalkeith, and Eggerhope. Rise, Stirling, Fife, and the North! All Scotland will be under arms in two hours. One bale-fire: the English are in motion! Two: they are advancing! Four in a row: they are of great strength! All men in arms west of Edinburgh muster there! All eastward, at Haddington! And every Englishman caught in Scotland is lawfully the prisoner of whoever takes him!' (What am I saying? I love Englishmen, but the spell is upon me!) 'Come on, Macduff!' (The only suitable and familiar challenge my warlike tenant can summon at the moment.) 'I am the son of a Gael! My dagger is in my belt, and with the guid broadsword at my side I can with one blow cut a man in twain! My bow is

cut from the wood of the yews of Glenure; the shaft is from the wood of Lochetive, the feathers from the great golden eagles of Locktreigside! My arrowhead was made by the smiths of the race of Macphedran! Come on, Macduff!'

And now a shopkeeper has filled his window with royal Stuart tartans, and I am instantly a Jacobite.

'The Highland clans wi' sword in hand,
Frae John o' Groat's to Airly,
Hae to a man declar'd to stand
Or fa' wi' Royal Charlie.

'Come through the heather, around him gather,
Come Ronald, come Donald, come a'thegither,
And crown your rightfu' lawfu' king,
For wha'll be king but Charlie?'

It is the eve of the battle of Prestonpans. Is it not under the Rock of Dunsappie on yonder Arthur's Seat that our Highland army will encamp to-night? At dusk the prince will hold a council of his chiefs and nobles (I am a chief and a noble), and at daybreak we shall march through the old hedgerows and woods of Duddingston, pipes playing and colours flying, bonnie Charlie at the head, his claymore drawn and the scabbard flung away! (I mean awa'!)—

'Then here's a health to Charlie's cause,

And be't complete an' early;
His very name my heart's blood warms
To arms for Royal Charlie!

'Come through the heather, around him gather,
Come Ronald, come Donald, come a'thegither,
And crown your rightfu', lawfu' king,
For wha'll be king but Charlie?'

I hope that those in authority will never attempt to convene a Peace Congress in Edinburgh, lest the influence of the Castle be too strong for the delegates. They could not resist it nor turn their backs upon it, since, unlike other ancient fortresses, it is but a stone's-throw from the front windows of all the hotels. They might mean never so well, but they would end by buying dirk hat-pins and claymore brooches for their wives, their daughters would all run after the kilted regiment and marry as many of the pipers as asked them, and before night they would all be shouting with the noble FitzEustace—

'Where's the coward who would not dare
To fight for such a land?'

While I was rhapsodising, Salemina and Francesca were shopping in the Arcade, buying some of the cairngorms, and Tam O'Shanter purses, and models of Burns's cottage, and copies of Marmion in plaided covers, and thistle belt-buckles, and

bluebell penwipers, with which we afterwards inundated our native land. When my warlike mood had passed, I sat down upon the steps of the Scott monument and watched the passers-by in a sort of waking dream. I suppose they were the usual professors and doctors and ministers who are wont to walk up and down the Edinburgh streets, with a sprinkling of lairds and leddies of high degree and a few Americans looking at the shop windows to choose their clan tartans; but for me they did not exist. In their places stalked the ghosts of kings and queens and knights and nobles; Columba, Abbot of Iona; Queen Margaret and Malcolm—she the sweetest saint in all the throng; King David riding towards Drumsheugh forest on Holy Rood day, with his horns and hounds and huntsmen following close behind; Anne of Denmark and Jingling Geordie; Mary Stuart in all her girlish beauty, with the four Maries in her train; and lurking behind, Bothwell, 'that ower sune stepfaither,' and the murdered Rizzio and Darnley; John Knox, in his black Geneva cloak; Bonnie Prince Charlie and Flora Macdonald; lovely Annabella Drummond; Robert the Bruce; George Heriot with a banner bearing on it the words 'I distribute chearfully'; James I. carrying The King's Quair; Oliver Cromwell; and a long line of heroes, martyrs, humble saints, and princely knaves.

Behind them, regardless of precedence, came the Ploughman Poet and the Ettrick Shepherd, Boswell and Dr. Johnson, Dr. John Brown and Thomas Carlyle, Lady Nairne and Drummond of Hawthornden, Allan Ramsay and Sir Walter; and is it not

a proof of the Wizard's magic art, that side by side with the wraiths of these real people walked, or seemed to walk, the Fair Maid of Perth, Jeanie Deans, Meg Merrilies, Guy Mannering, Ellen, Marmion, and a host of others so sweetly familiar and so humanly dear that the very street-laddies could have named and greeted them as they passed by?

Chapter IV. Susanna Crum cudna say

Life at Mrs. M'Collop's apartments in 22 Breadalbane Terrace is about as simple, comfortable, dignified, and delightful as it well can be.

Mrs. M'Collop herself is neat, thrifty, precise, tolerably genial, and 'verra releegious.'

Her partner, who is also the cook, is a person introduced to us as Miss Diggity. We afterwards learned that this is spelled Dalgety, but it is not considered good form, in Scotland, to pronounce the names of persons and places as they are written. When, therefore, I allude to the cook, which will be as seldom as possible, I shall speak of her as Miss Diggity-Dalgety, so that I shall be presenting her correctly both to the eye and to the ear, and giving her at the same time a hyphenated name, a thing which is a secret object of aspiration in Great Britain.

In selecting our own letters and parcels from the common stock on the hall table, I perceive that most of our fellow-lodgers are hyphenated ladies, whose visiting-cards diffuse the intelligence that in their single persons two ancient families and fortunes are united. On the ground floor are the Misses Hepburn-Sciennes (pronounced Hebburn-Sheens); on the floor above us are Miss Colquhoun (Cohoon) and her cousin Miss Cockburn-Sinclair (Coburn-Sinkler). As soon as the Hepburn-Sciennes depart, Mrs. M'Collop expects Mrs. Menzies of Kilconquhar,

of whom we shall speak as Mrs. Mingess of Kinyuchar. There is not a man in the house; even the Boots is a girl, so that 22 Breadalbane Terrace is as truly a castra puellarum as was ever the Castle of Edinburgh with its maiden princesses in the olden time.

We talked with Miss Diggity-Dalgety on the evening of our first day at Mrs. M'Collop's, when she came up to know our commands. As Francesca and Salemina were both in the room, I determined to be as Scotch as possible, for it is Salemina's proud boast that she is taken for a native of every country she visits.

"We shall not be entertaining at present, Miss Diggity," I said, "so you can give us just the ordinary dishes,—no doubt you are accustomed to them: scones, baps or bannocks with marmalade, finnan-haddie or kippered herring for breakfast; tea,—of course we never touch coffee in the morning" (here Francesca started with surprise); "porridge, and we like them well boiled, please" (I hope she noted the plural pronoun; Salemina did, and blanched with envy); "minced collops for luncheon, or a nice little black-faced chop; Scotch broth, pease brose or cockyleekie soup at dinner, and haggis now and then, with a cold shape for dessert. That is about the sort of thing we are accustomed to,—just plain Scotch living."

I was impressing Miss Diggity-Dalgety,—I could see that clearly; but Francesca spoiled the effect by inquiring, maliciously, if we could sometimes have a howtowdy wi' drappit eggs, or her favourite dish, wee grumphie wi' neeps.

Here Salemina was obliged to poke the fire in order to conceal

her smiles, and the cook probably suspected that Francesca found howtowdy in the Scotch glossary; but we amused each other vastly, and that is our principal object in life.

Miss Diggity-Dalgety's forebears must have been exposed to foreign influences, for she interlards her culinary conversation with French terms, and we have discovered that this is quite common. A 'jigget' of mutton is of course a gigot, and we have identified an 'ashet' as an assiette. The 'petticoat tails' she requested me to buy at the confectioner's were somewhat more puzzling, but when they were finally purchased by Susanna Crum they appeared to be ordinary little cakes; perhaps, therefore, petits gastels, since gastel is an old form of gateau, as was bel for beau. Susanna, on her part, speaks of the wardrobe in my bedroom as an 'awmry.' It certainly contains no weapons, so cannot be an armoury, and we conjecture that her word must be a corruption of armoire.

"That was a remarkable touch about the black-faced chop," laughed Salemina, when Miss Diggity-Dalgety had retired; "not that I believe they ever say it."

"I am sure they must," I asserted stoutly, "for I passed a flesher's on my way home, and saw a sign with 'Prime Black-Faced Mutton' printed on it. I also saw 'Fed Veal,' but I forgot to ask the cook for it."

"We ought really to have kept house in Edinburgh," observed Francesca, looking up from the Scotsman. "One can get a 'self-contained residential flat' for twenty pounds a month. We are

such an enthusiastic trio that a self-contained flat would be everything to us; and if it were not fully furnished, here is a firm that wishes to sell a 'composite bed' for six pounds, and a 'gent's stuffed easy' for five. Added to these inducements there is somebody who advertises that parties who intend 'displenishing' at the Whit Term would do well to consult him, as he makes a specialty of second-handed furniture and 'cyclealities.' What are 'cyclealities,' Susanna?" (She had just come in with coals.)

"I cudna say, mam."

"Thank you; no, you need not ask Mrs. M'Collop; it is of no consequence."

Susanna Crum is a most estimable young woman, clean, respectful, willing, capable, and methodical, but as a Bureau of Information she is painfully inadequate. Barring this single limitation she seems to be a treasure-house of all good practical qualities; and being thus clad and panoplied in virtue, why should she be so timid and self-distrustful?

She wears an expression which can mean only one of two things: either she has heard of the national tomahawk and is afraid of violence on our part, or else her mother was frightened before she was born. This applies in general to her walk and voice and manner, but is it fear that prompts her eternal 'I cudna say,' or is it perchance Scotch caution and prudence? Is she afraid of projecting her personality too indecently far? Is it the indirect effect of heresy trials on her imagination? Does she remember the thumbscrew of former generations? At all events, she will

neither affirm nor deny, and I am putting her to all sorts of tests, hoping to discover finally whether she is an accident, an exaggeration, or a type.

Salemina thinks that our American accent may confuse her. Of course she means Francesca's and mine, for she has none; although we have tempered ours so much for the sake of the natives, that we can scarcely understand each other any more. As for Susanna's own accent, she comes from the heart of Aberdeenshire, and her intonation is beyond my power to reproduce.

We naturally wish to identify all the national dishes; so, "Is this cockle soup, Susanna?" I ask her, as she passes me the plate at dinner.

"I cudna say."

"This vegetable is new to me, Susanna; is it perhaps sea-kale?"

"I canna say, mam."

Then finally, in despair, as she handed me a boiled potato one day, I fixed my searching Yankee brown eyes on her blue-Presbyterian, non-committal ones, and asked, "What is this vegetable, Susanna?"

In an instant she withdrew herself, her soul, her ego, so utterly that I felt myself gazing at an inscrutable stone image, as she replied, "I cudna say, mam."

This was too much! Her mother may have been frightened, very badly frightened, but this was more that I could endure without protest. The plain boiled potato is practically universal.

It is not only common to all temperate climates, but it has permeated all classes of society. I am confident that the plain boiled potato has been one of the chief constituents in the building up of that frame in which Susanna Crum conceals her opinions and emotions. I remarked, therefore, as an, apparent afterthought, "Why, it is a potato, is it not, Susanna?"

What do you think she replied, when thus hunted into a corner, pushed against a wall, driven to the very confines of her personal and national liberty? She subjected the potato to a second careful scrutiny, and answered, "I wudna say it's no'!"

Now there is no inherited physical terror in this. It is the concentrated essence of intelligent reserve, caution, and obstinacy; it is a conscious intellectual hedging; it is a dogged and determined attempt to build up barriers of defence between the questioner and the questionee: it must be, therefore, the offspring of the catechism and the heresy trial.

Once again, after establishing an equally obvious fact, I succeeded in wringing from her the reluctant admission, "It depends," but she was so shattered by the bulk and force of this outgo, so fearful that in some way she had imperilled her life or reputation, so anxious concerning the effect that her unwilling testimony might have upon unborn generations, that she was of no real service the rest of the day.

I wish that the Lord Advocate, or some modern counterpart of Braxfield, the hanging judge, would summon Susanna Crum as a witness in an important case. He would need his longest plummet

to sound the depths of her consciousness.

I have had no legal experience, but I can imagine the scene.

"Is the prisoner your father, Susanna Crum?"

"I cudna say, my lord."

"You have not understood the question, Susanna. Is the prisoner your father?"

"I cudna say, my lord."

"Come, come, my girl! you must answer the questions put you by the court. You have been an inmate of the prisoner's household since your earliest consciousness. He provided you with food, lodging, and clothing during your infancy and early youth. You have seen him on annual visits to your home, and watched him as he performed the usual parental functions for your younger brothers and sisters. I therefore repeat, is the prisoner your father, Susanna Crum?"

"I wudna say he's no', my lord."

"This is really beyond credence! What do you conceive to be the idea involved in the word 'father,' Susanna Crum?"

"It depends, my lord."

And this, a few hundred years earlier, would have been the natural and effective moment for the thumbscrews.

I do not wish to be understood as defending these uncomfortable appliances. They would never have been needed to elicit information from me, for I should have spent my nights inventing matter to confess in the daytime. I feel sure that I should have poured out such floods of confessions and retractations that

if all Scotland had been one listening ear it could not have heard my tale. I am only wondering if, in the extracting of testimony from the common mind, the thumbscrew might not have been more necessary with some nations than with others.

Chapter V. We emulate the Jackdaw

Invitations had been pouring in upon us since the delivery of our letters of introduction, and it was now the evening of our debut in Edinburgh society. Francesca had volunteered to perform the task of leaving cards, ordering a private victoria for the purpose, and arraying herself in purple and fine linen.

"Much depends upon the first impression," she had said. "Miss Hamilton's 'party' may not be gifted, but it is well-dressed. My hope is that some of our future hostesses will be looking from the second-story front-windows. If they are, I can assure them in advance that I shall be a national advertisement."

It is needless to remark that as it began to rain heavily as she was leaving the house, she was obliged to send back the open carriage, and order, to save time, one of the public cabs from the stand in the Terrace.

"Would you mind having the lamiter, being first in line?" asked Susanna of Salemina, who had transmitted the command.

When Salemina fails to understand anything, the world is kept in complete ignorance.—Least of all would she stoop to ask a humble maidservant to translate the vernacular of the country; so she replied affably, "Certainly, Susanna, that is the kind we always prefer. I suppose it is covered?"

Francesca did not notice, until her coachman alighted to deliver the first letter and cards, that he had one club foot and one

wooden leg; it was then that the full significance of 'lamiter' came to her. He was covered, however, as Salemina had supposed, and the occurrence gave us a precious opportunity of chaffing that dungeon of learning. He was tolerably alert and vigorous, too, although he certainly did not impart elegance to a vehicle, and he knew every street in the court end of Edinburgh, and every close and wynd in the Old Town. On this our first meeting with him, he faltered only when Francesca asked him last of all to drive to 'Kildonan House, Helmsdale'; supposing, not unnaturally, that it was as well known an address as Morningside House, Tipperlinn, whence she had just come. The lamiter had never heard of Kildonan House nor of Helmsdale, and he had driven in the streets of Auld Reekie for thirty years. None of the drivers whom he consulted could supply any information; Susanna Crum cudna say that she had ever heard of it, nor could Mrs. M'Collop, nor could Miss Diggity-Dalgety. It was reserved for Lady Baird to explain that Helmsdale was two hundred and eighty miles north, and that Kildonan House was ten miles from the Helmsdale railway station, so that the poor lamiter would have had a weary drive even had he known the way. The friends who had given us letters to Mr. and Mrs. Jameson-Inglis (Jimmyson-Ingals) must have expected us either to visit John o' Groats on the northern border, and drop in on Kildonan House en route, or to send our note of introduction by post and await an invitation to pass the summer. At all events, the anecdote proved very pleasing to our Edinburgh acquaintances. I hardly know whether, if they should

visit America, they would enjoy tales of their own stupidity as hugely as they did the tales of ours, but they really were very appreciative in this particular, and it is but justice to ourselves to say that we gave them every opportunity for enjoyment.

But I must go back to our first grand dinner in Scotland. We were dressed at quarter-past seven, when, in looking at the invitation again, we discovered that the dinner-hour was eight o'clock, not seven-thirty. Susanna did not happen to know the exact approximate distance to Fotheringay Crescent, but the maiden Boots affirmed that it was only two minutes' drive, so we sat down in front of the fire to chat.

It was Lady Baird's birthday feast to which we had been bidden, and we had done our best to honour the occasion. We had prepared a large bouquet tied with the Maclean tartan (Lady Baird is a Maclean), and had printed in gold letters on one of the ribbons, 'Another for Hector,' the battle-cry of the clan. We each wore a sprig of holly, because it is the badge of the family, while I added a girdle and shoulder-knot of tartan velvet to my pale green gown, and borrowed Francesca's emerald necklace, —persuading her that she was too young to wear such jewels in the old country.

Francesca was miserably envious that she had not thought of tartans first. "You may consider yourself 'geyan fine,' all covered over with Scotch plaid, but I wouldn't be so 'kenspeckle' for worlds!" she said, using expressions borrowed from Mrs. M'Collop; "and as for disguising your nationality, do not flatter

yourself that you look like anything but an American. I forgot to tell you the conversation I overheard in the tram this morning, between a mother and daughter, who were talking about us, I dare say. 'Have they any proper frocks for so large a party, Bella?' asked the mother.

"'I thought I explained in the beginning, mamma, that they are Americans.'

"'Still, you know they are only travelling,—just passing through, as it were; they may not be familiar with our customs, and we do want our party to be a smart one.'

"'Wait until you see them, mamma, and you will probably feel like hiding your diminished head! It is my belief that if an American lady takes a half-hour journey in a tram she carries full evening dress and a diamond necklace, in case anything should happen on the way. I am not in the least nervous about their appearance. I only hope that they will not be too exuberant; American girls are so frightfully vivacious and informal, I always feel as if I were being taken by the throat!'"

"A picturesque, though rather vigorous expression; however, it does no harm to be perfectly dressed," said Salemina consciously, putting a steel embroidered slipper on the fender and settling the holly in the silver folds of her gown; "then when they discover that we are all well bred, and that one of us is intelligent, it will be the more credit to the country that gave us birth."

"Of course it is impossible to tell what country did give YOU birth," retorted Francesca, "but that will only be to your

advantage—away from home!"

Francesca is inflexibly, almost aggressively American, but Salemina is a citizen of the world. If the United States should be involved in a war, I am confident that Salemina would be in front with the other Gatling guns, for in that case a principle would be at stake; but in all lesser matters she is extremely unprejudiced. She prefers German music, Italian climate, French dressmakers, English tailors, Japanese manners, and American—American something—I have forgotten just what; it is either the ice-cream soda or the form of government,—I can't remember which.

"I wonder why they named it 'Fotheringay' Crescent," mused Francesca. "Some association with Mary Stuart, of course. Poor, poor, pretty lady! A free queen only six years, and think of the number of beds she slept in, and the number of trees she planted; we have already seen, I am afraid to say how many. When did she govern, when did she scheme, above all when did she flirt, with all this racing and chasing over the country? Mrs. M'Collop calls Anne of Denmark a 'sad scattercash' and Mary an 'awfu' gadabout,' and I am inclined to agree with her. By the way, when she was making my bed this morning, she told me that her mother claimed descent from the Stewarts of Appin, whoever they may be. She apologised for Queen Mary's defects as if she were a distant family connection. If so, then the famous Stuart charm has been lost somewhere, for Mrs M'Collop certainly possesses no alluring curves of temperament."

"I am going to select some distinguished ancestors this very

minute, before I go to my first Edinburgh dinner," said I decidedly. "It seems hard that ancestors should have everything to do with settling our nationality and our position in life, and we not have a word to say. How nice it would be to select one's own after one had arrived at years of discretion, or to adopt different ones according to the country one chanced to be visiting! I am going to do it; it is unusual, but there must be a pioneer in every good movement. Let me think: do help me, Salemina! I am a Hamilton to begin with; I might be descended from the logical Sir William himself, and thus become the idol of the university set!"

"He died only about thirty years ago, and you would have to be his daughter: that would never do," said Salemina. "Why don't you take Thomas Hamilton, Earl of Melrose and Haddington? He was Secretary of State, King's Advocate, Lord President of the Court of Session, and all sorts of fine things. He was the one King James used to call 'Tam o' the Cowgate'!"

"Perfectly delightful! I don't care so much about his other titles, but 'Tam o' the Cowgate' is irresistible. I will take him. He was my—what was he?"

"He was at least your great-great-great-great-grandfather; that is a safe distance. Then there's that famous Jenny Geddes, who flung her fauld-stule at the Dean in St. Giles',—she was a Hamilton too, if you fancy her!"

"Yes, I'll take her with pleasure," I responded thankfully. "Of course I don't know why she flung the stool,—it may have

been very reprehensible; but there is always good stuff in stool-flingers; it's the sort of spirit one likes to inherit in diluted form. Now, whom will you take?"

"I haven't even a peg on which to hang a Scottish ancestor," said Salemina disconsolately.

"Oh, nonsense! think harder. Anybody will do as a starting-point; only you must be honourable and really show relationship, as I did with Jenny and Tam."

"My aunt Mary-Emma married a Lindsay," ventured Salemina hesitatingly.

"That will do," I answered delightedly.

> "'The Gordons gay in English blude
> They wat their hose and shoon;
> The Lindsays flew like fire aboot
> Till a' the fray was dune.'

"You can play that you are one of the famous 'licht Lindsays,' and you can look up the particular ancestor in your big book. Now, Francesca, it's your turn!"

"I am American to the backbone," she declared, with insufferable dignity. "I do not desire any foreign ancestors."

"Francesca!" I expostulated. "Do you mean to tell me that you can dine with a lineal descendant of Sir Fitzroy Donald Maclean, Baronet, of Duart and Morven, and not make any effort to trace your genealogy back further than your parents?"

"If you goad me to desperation," she answered, "I will wear an

American flag in my hair, declare that my father is a Red Indian, or a pork-packer, and talk about the superiority of our checking system and hotels all the evening. I don't want to go, any way. It is sure to be stiff and ceremonious, and the man who takes me in will ask me the population of Chicago and the amount of wheat we exported last year,—he always does."

"I can't see why he should," said I. "I am sure you don't look as if you knew."

"My looks have thus far proved no protection," she replied sadly. "Salemina is so flexible, and you are so dramatic, that you enter into all these experiences with zest. You already more than half believe in that Tam o' the Cowgate story. But there'll be nothing for me in Edinburgh society; it will be all clergymen—"

"Ministers" interjected Salemina,—"all ministers and professors. My Redfern gowns will be unappreciated, and my Worth evening frocks worse than wasted!"

"There are a few thousand medical students," I said encouragingly, "and all the young advocates, and a sprinkling of military men—they know Worth frocks."

"And," continued Salemina bitingly, "there will always be, even in an intellectual city like Edinburgh, a few men who continue to escape all the developing influences about them, and remain commonplace, conventional manikins, devoted to dancing and flirting. Never fear, they will find you!"

This sounds harsh, but nobody minds Salemina, least of all Francesca, who well knows that she is the apple of that spinster's

eye. But at this moment Susanna opens the door (timorously, as if there might be a panther behind it) and announces the cab (in the same tone in which she would announce the beast); we pick up our draperies, and are whirled off by the lamiter to dine with the Scottish nobility.

Chapter VI. Edinburgh society, past and present

'Wha last beside his chair shall fa'
He is the king amang us three!'

It was the Princess Dashkoff who said, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, that of all the societies of men of talent she had met with in her travels, Edinburgh's was the first in point of abilities.

One might make the same remark to-day, perhaps, and not depart widely from the truth. One does not find, however, as many noted names as are associated with the annals of the Cape and Poker Clubs or the Crochallan Fencibles, those famous groups of famous men who met for relaxation (and intoxication, I should think) at the old Isle of Man Arms or in Dawney's Tavern in the Anchor Close. These groups included such shining lights as Robert Fergusson the poet, and Adam Ferguson the historian and philosopher, Gavin Wilson, Sir Henry Raeburn, David Hume, Erskine, Lords Newton, Gillies, Monboddo, Hailes, Kames, Henry Mackenzie, and the Ploughman Poet himself, who has kept alive the memory of the Crochallans in many a jovial verse like that in which he describes Smellie, the eccentric philosopher

and printer:—

'Shrewd Willie Smellie to Crochallan came,
The old cocked hat, the grey surtout the same,
His bristling beard just rising in its might;
'Twas four long nights and days to shaving night';

or in the characteristic picture of William Dunbar, a wit of the time, and the merriest of the Fencibles:—

'As I cam by Crochallan
I cannily keekit ben;
Rattlin', roarin' Willie
Was sitting at yon boord en';
Sitting at yon boord en',
And amang guid companie!
Rattlin', roarin' Willie,
Ye're welcome hame to me!'

or in the verses on Creech, Burns's publisher, who left Edinburgh for a time in 1789. The 'Willies,' by the way, seem to be especially inspiring to the Scottish balladists.

'Oh, Willie was a witty wight,
And had o' things an unco slight!
Auld Reekie aye he keepit tight
And trig and braw;
But now they'll busk her like a fright—

Willie's awa'!'

I think perhaps the gatherings of the present time are neither quite as gay nor quite as brilliant as those of Burns's day, when

'Willie brewed a peck o' maut,
An' Rob an' Allan cam to pree';

but the ideal standard of those meetings seems to be voiced in the lines:—

'Wha last beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three!'

As they sit in their chairs nowadays to the very end of the feast, there is doubtless joined with modern sobriety a soupcon of modern dulness and discretion.

To an American the great charm of Edinburgh is its leisurely atmosphere: 'not the leisure of a village arising from the deficiency of ideas and motives, but the leisure of a city reposing grandly on tradition and history; which has done its work, and does not require to weave its own clothing, to dig its own coals, or smelt its own iron.'

We were reminded of this more than once, and it never failed to depress us properly. If one had ever lived in Pittsburg, Fall River, or Kansas City, I should think it would be almost impossible to maintain self-respect in a place like Edinburgh,

where the citizens 'are released from the vulgarising dominion of the hour.' Whenever one of Auld Reekie's great men took this tone with me, I always felt as though I were the germ in a half-hatched egg, and he were an aged and lordly cock gazing at me pityingly through my shell. He, lucky creature, had lived through all the struggles which I was to undergo; he, indeed, was released from 'the vulgarising dominion of the hour'; but I, poor thing, must grow and grow, and keep pecking at my shell, in order to achieve existence.

Sydney Smith says in one of his letters, 'Never shall I forget the happy days passed there [in Edinburgh], amidst odious smells, barbarous sounds, bad suppers, excellent hearts, and the most enlightened and cultivated understandings.' His only criticism of the conversation of that day (1797-1802) concerned itself with the prevalence of that form of Scotch humour which was called wut; and with the disputations and dialectics. We were more fortunate than Sydney Smith, because Edinburgh has outgrown its odious smells, barbarous sounds, and bad suppers and, wonderful to relate, has kept its excellent hearts and its enlightened and cultivated understandings. As for mingled wut and dialectics, where can one find a better foundation for dinner-table conversation?

The hospitable board itself presents no striking differences from our own, save the customs of serving sweets in soup-plates with dessert-spoons, of a smaller number of forks on parade, of the invariable fish-knife at each plate, of the prevalent 'savoury'

and 'cold shape,' and the unusual grace and skill with which the hostess carves. Even at very large dinners one occasionally sees a lady of high degree severing the joints of chickens and birds most daintily, while her lord looks on in happy idleness, thinking, perhaps, how greatly times have changed for the better since the ages of strife and bloodshed, when Scottish nobles

> 'Carved at the meal with gloves of steel,
> And drank their wine through helmets barred.'

The Scotch butler is not in the least like an English one. No man could be as respectable as he looks, not even an elder of the kirk, whom he resembles closely. He hands your plate as if it were a contribution-box, and in his moments of ease, when he stands behind the 'maister,' I am always expecting him to pronounce a benediction. The English butler, when he wishes to avoid the appearance of listening to the conversation, gazes with level eye into vacancy; the Scotch butler looks distinctly heavenward, as if he were brooding on the principle of co-ordinate jurisdiction with mutual subordination. It would be impossible for me to deny the key of the wine-cellar to a being so steeped in sanctity, but it has been done, I am told, in certain rare and isolated cases.

As for toilets, the men dress like all other men (alas, and alas, that we should say it, for we were continually hoping for a kilt!) though there seems to be no survival of the finical Lord Napier's

spirit. Perhaps you remember that Lord and Lady Napier arrived at Castlemilk in Lanarkshire with the intention of staying a week, but announced next morning that a circumstance had occurred which rendered it indispensable to return without delay to their seat in Selkirkshire. This was the only explanation given, but it was afterwards discovered that Lord Napier's valet had committed the grievous mistake of packing up a set of neckcloths which did not correspond IN POINT OF DATE with the shirts they accompanied!

The ladies of the 'smart set' in Edinburgh wear French fripperies and chiffons, as do their sisters every where, but the other women of society dress a trifle more staidly than their cousins in London, Paris, or New York. The sobriety of taste and severity of style that characterise Scotswomen may be due, like Susanna Crum's dubieties, to the haar, to the shorter catechism, or perhaps in some degree to the presence of three branches of the Presbyterian Church among them; the society that bears in its bosom three separate and antagonistic kinds of Presbyterianism at the same time must have its chilly moments.

In Lord Cockburn's time the 'dames of high and aristocratic breed' must have been sufficiently awake to feminine frivolities to be both gorgeously and extravagantly arrayed. I do not know in all literature a more delicious and lifelike word-portrait than Lord Cockburn gives of Mrs. Rochead, the Lady of Inverleith, in the Memorials. It is quite worthy to hang beside a Raeburn canvas; one can scarce say more.

'Except Mrs. Siddons in some of her displays of magnificent royalty, nobody could sit down like the Lady of Inverleith. She would sail like a ship from Tarshish, gorgeous in velvet or rustling silk, done up in all the accompaniments of fans, ear-rings, and finger-rings, falling sleeves, scent-bottle, embroidered bag, hoop, and train; managing all this seemingly heavy rigging with as much ease as a full-blown swan does its plumage. She would take possession of the centre of a large sofa, and at the same moment, without the slightest visible exertion, cover the whole of it with her bravery, the graceful folds seeming to lay themselves over it, like summer waves. The descent from her carriage, too, where she sat like a nautilus in its shell, was a display which no one in these days could accomplish or even fancy. The mulberry-coloured coach, apparently not too large for what it contained, though she alone was in it; the handsome, jolly coachman and his splendid hammer-cloth loaded with lace; the two respectful liveried footmen, one on each side of the richly carpeted step,—these were lost sight of amidst the slow majesty with which the Lady of Inverleith came down and touched the earth.'

My right-hand neighbour at Lady Baird's dinner was surprised at my quoting Lord Cockburn. One's attendant squires here always seem surprised when one knows anything; but they are always delighted, too, so that the amazement is less trying. True, I had read the Memorials only the week before, and had never heard of them previous to that time; but that detail, according to my theories, makes no real difference. The woman who knows

how and when to 'read up,' who reads because she wants to be in sympathy with a new environment; the woman who has wit and perspective enough to be stimulated by novel conditions and kindled by fresh influences, who is susceptible to the vibrations of other people's history, is safe to be fairly intelligent and extremely agreeable, if only she is sufficiently modest. I think my neighbour found me thoroughly delightful after he discovered my point of view. He was an earl; and it always takes an earl a certain length of time to understand me. I scarcely know why, for I certainly should not think it courteous to interpose any real barriers between the nobility and that portion of the 'masses' represented in my humble person.

It seemed to me at first that the earl did not apply himself to the study of my national peculiarities with much assiduity, but wasted considerable time in gazing at Francesca, who was opposite. She is certainly very handsome, and I never saw her lovelier than at that dinner; her eyes were like stars, and her cheeks and lips a splendid crimson, for she was quarrelling with her attendant cavalier about the relative merits of Scotland and America, and they apparently ceased to speak to each other after the salad.

When the earl had sufficiently piqued me by his devotion to his dinner and his glances at Francesca, I began a systematic attempt to achieve his (transient) subjugation. Of course I am ardently attached to Willie Beresford and prefer him to any earl in Britain, but one's self-respect demands something in the way

of food. I could see Salemina at the far end of the table radiant with success, the W.S. at her side bending ever and anon to catch the (artificial) pearls of thought that dropped from her lips. "Miss Hamilton appears simple" (I thought I heard her say); "but in reality she is as deep as the Currie Brig!" Now where did she get that allusion? And again, when the W.S. asked her whither she was going when she left Edinburgh, "I hardly know," she replied pensively. "I am waiting for the shade of Montrose to direct me, as the Viscount Dundee said to your Duke of Gordon." The entranced Scotsman little knew that she had perfected this style of conversation by long experience with the Q.C.'s of England. Talk about my being as deep as the Currie Brig (whatever it may be); Salemina is deeper than the Atlantic Ocean! I shall take pains to inform her Writer to the Signet, after dinner, that she eats sugar on her porridge every morning; that will show him her nationality conclusively.

The earl took the greatest interest in my new ancestors, and approved thoroughly of my choice. He thinks I must have been named for Lady Penelope Belhaven, who lived in Leven Lodge, one of the country villas of the Earls of Leven, from whom he himself is descended. "Does that make us relatives?" I asked. "Relatives, most assuredly," he replied, "but not too near to destroy the charm of friendship."

He thought it a great deal nicer to select one's own forebears than to allow them all the responsibility, and said it would save a world of trouble if the method could be universally adopted.

He added that he should be glad to part with a good many of his, but doubted whether I would accept them, as they were 'rather a scratch lot.' (I use his own language, which I thought delightfully easy for a belted earl.) He was charmed with the story of Francesca and the lamiter, and offered to drive me to Kildonan House, Helmsdale, on the first fine day. I told him he was quite safe in making the proposition, for we had already had the fine day, and we understood that the climate had exhausted itself and retired for the season.

The gentleman on my left, a distinguished Dean of the Thistle, gave me a few moments' discomfort by telling me that the old custom of 'rounds' of toasts still prevailed at Lady Baird's on formal occasions, and that before the ladies retired every one would be called upon for appropriate 'sentiments.'

"What sort of sentiments?" I inquired, quite overcome with terror.

"Oh, epigrammatic sentences expressive of moral feelings or virtues," replied my neighbour easily. "They are not quite as formal and hackneyed now as they were in the olden time, when some of the favourite toasts were 'May the pleasure of the evening bear the reflections of the morning!' 'May the friends of our youth be the companions of our old age!' 'May the honest heart never feel distress!' 'May the hand of charity wipe the eye of sorrow!'"

"I can never do it in the world!" I ejaculated. "Oh, one ought never, never to leave one's own country! A light-minded and

cynical English gentleman told me that I should frequently be called upon to read hymns and recite verses of Scripture at family dinners in Edinburgh, and I hope I am always prepared to do that; but nobody warned me that I should have to evolve epigrammatic sentiments on the spur of the moment."

My confusion was so evident that the good dean relented and confessed that he was imposing upon my ignorance. He made me laugh heartily at the story of a poor dominie at Arndilly. He was called upon in his turn, at a large party, and having nothing to aid him in an exercise to which he was new save the example of his predecessors, lifted his glass after much writhing and groaning and gave, "The reflection of the moon in the cawm bosom of the lake!"

At this moment Lady Baird glanced at me, and we all rose to go into the drawing-room; but on the way from my chair to the door, whither the earl escorted me, he said gallantly, "I suppose the men in your country do not take champagne at dinner? I cannot fancy their craving it when dining beside an American woman!"

That was charming, though he did pay my country a compliment at my expense. One likes, of course, to have the type recognised as fine; at the same time his remark would have been more flattering if it had been less sweeping.

When I remember that he offered me his ancestors, asked me to drive two hundred and eighty miles, and likened me to champagne, I feel that, with my heart already occupied and my

hand promised, I could hardly have accomplished more in the course of a single dinner-hour.

Chapter VII. Francesca meets th' unconquer'd Scot

Francesca's experiences were not so fortunate; indeed, I have never seen her more out of sorts than she was during our long chat over the fire, after our return to Breadalbane Terrace.

"How did you get on with your delightful minister?" inquired Salemina of the young lady, as she flung her unoffending wrap over the back of a chair. "He was quite the handsomest man in the room; who is he?"

"He is the Reverend Ronald Macdonald, and the most disagreeable, condescending, ill-tempered prig I ever met!"

"Why, Francesca!" I exclaimed. "Lady Baird speaks of him as her favourite nephew, and says he is full of charm."

"He is just as full of charm as he was when I met him," returned the girl nonchalantly; "that is, he parted with none of it this evening. He was incorrigibly stiff and rude, and oh! so Scotch! I believe if one punctured him with a hat-pin, oatmeal would fly into the air!"

"Doubtless you acquainted him, early in the evening, with the immeasurable advantages of our sleeping-car system, the superiority of our fast-running elevators, and the height of our buildings?" observed Salemina.

"I mentioned them," Francesca answered evasively.

"You naturally inveighed against the Scotch climate?"

"Oh, I alluded to it; but only when he said that our hot summers must be insufferable."

"I suppose you repeated the remark you made at luncheon, that the ladies you had seen in Princes Street were excessively plain?"

"Yes, I did!" she replied hotly; "but that was because he said that American girls generally looked bloodless and frail. He asked if it were really true that they ate chalk and slate pencils. Wasn't that unendurable? I answered that those were the chief solid article of food, but that after their complexions were established, so to speak, their parents often allowed them pickles and native claret to vary the diet."

"What did he say to that?" I asked.

"Oh, he said, 'Quite so, quite so'; that was his invariable response to all my witticisms. Then when I told him casually that the shops looked very small and dark and stuffy here, and that there were not as many tartans and plaids in the windows as we had expected, he remarked that as to the latter point, the American season had not opened yet! Presently he asserted that no royal city in Europe could boast ten centuries of such glorious and stirring history as Edinburgh. I said it did not appear to be stirring much at present, and that everything in Scotland seemed a little slow to an American; that he could have no idea of push or enterprise until he visited a city like Chicago. He retorted that, happily, Edinburgh was peculiarly free from the taint of

the ledger and the counting-house; that it was Weimar without a Goethe, Boston without its twang!"

"Incredible!" cried Salemina, deeply wounded in her local pride. "He never could have said 'twang' unless you had tried him beyond measure!"

"I dare say I did; he is easily tried," returned Francesca. "I asked him, sarcastically, if he had ever been in Boston. 'No,' he said, 'it is not necessary to GO there! And while we are discussing these matters,' he went on, 'how is your American dyspepsia these days,—have you decided what is the cause of it?'

"'Yes, we have,' said I, as quick as a flash; 'we have always taken in more foreigners than we could assimilate!' I wanted to tell him that one Scotsman of his type would upset the national digestion anywhere, but I restrained myself."

"I am glad you did restrain yourself—once," exclaimed Salemina. "What a tactful person the Reverend Ronald must be, if you have reported him faithfully! Why didn't you give him up, and turn to your other neighbour?"

"I did, as soon as I could with courtesy; but the man on my left was the type that always haunts me at dinners; if the hostess hasn't one on her visiting-list she imports one for the occasion. He asked me at once of what material the Brooklyn Bridge is made. I told him I really didn't know. Why should I? I seldom go over it. Then he asked me whether it was a suspension bridge or a cantilever. Of course I didn't know; I am not an engineer."

"You are so tactlessly, needlessly candid," I expostulated.

"Why didn't you say boldly that the Brooklyn Bridge is a wooden cantilever, with gutta-percha braces? He didn't know, or he wouldn't have asked you. He couldn't find out until he reached home, and you would never have seen him again; and if you had, and he had taunted you, you could have laughed vivaciously and said you were chaffing. That is my method, and it is the only way to preserve life in a foreign country. Even my earl, who did not thirst for information (fortunately), asked me the population of the Yellowstone Park, and I simply told him three hundred thousand, at a venture."

"That would never have satisfied my neighbour," said Francesca. "Finding me in such a lamentable state of ignorance, he explained the principle of his own stupid Forth Bridge to me. When I said I understood perfectly, just to get into shallower water, where we wouldn't need any bridge, the Reverend Ronald joined in the conversation, and asked me to repeat the explanation to him. Naturally I couldn't, and he knew that I couldn't when he asked me, so the bridge man (I don't know his name, and don't care to know it) drew a diagram of the national idol on his dinner-card and gave a dull and elaborate lecture upon it. Here is the card, and now that three hours have intervened I cannot tell which way to turn the drawing so as to make the bridge right side up; if there is anything puzzling in the world, it is these architectural plans and diagrams. I am going to pin it to the wall and ask the Reverend Ronald which way it goes."

"Do you mean that he will call upon us?" we cried in concert.

"He asked if he might come and continue our 'stimulating' conversation, and as Lady Baird was standing by I could hardly say no. I am sure of one thing: that before I finish with him I will widen his horizon so that he will be able to see something beside Scotland and his little insignificant Fifeshire parish! I told him our country parishes in America were ten times as large as his. He said he had heard that they covered a good deal of territory, and that the ministers' salaries were sometimes paid in pork and potatoes. That shows you the style of his retorts!"

"I really cannot decide which of you was the more disagreeable," said Salemina; "if he calls, I shall not remain in the room."

"I wouldn't gratify him by staying out," retorted Francesca. "He is extremely good for the circulation; I think I was never so warm in my life as when I talked with him; as physical exercise he is equal to bicycling. The bridge man is coming to call, too. I made him a diagram of Breadalbane Terrace, and a plan of the hall and staircase, on my dinner-card. He was distinctly ungrateful; in fact, he remarked that he had been born in this very house, but would not trust himself to find his way upstairs with my plan as a guide. He also said the American vocabulary was vastly amusing, so picturesque, unstudied, and fresh."

"That was nice, surely," I interpolated.

"You know perfectly well that it was an insult."

"Francesca is very like that young man," laughed Salemina, "who, whenever he engaged in controversy, seemed to take off

his flesh and sit in his nerves.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.