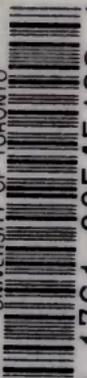


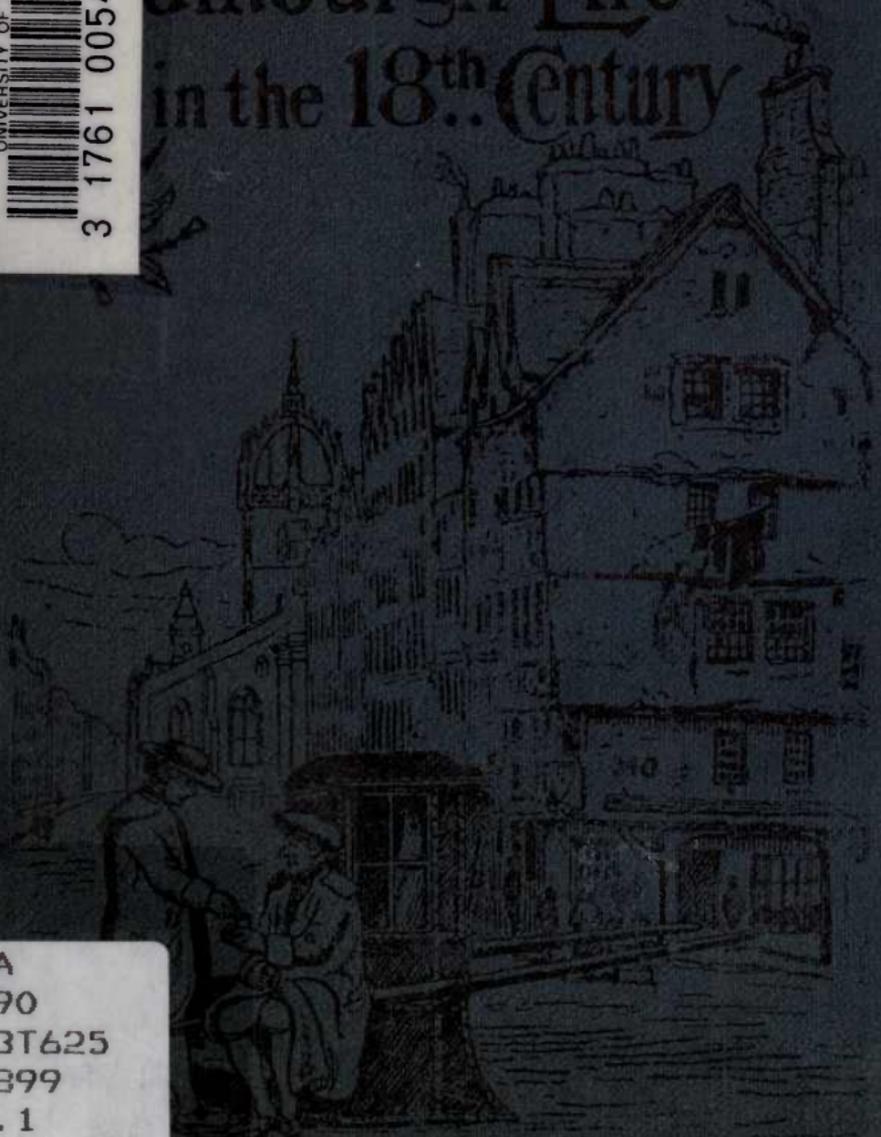
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# Edinburgh Life in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

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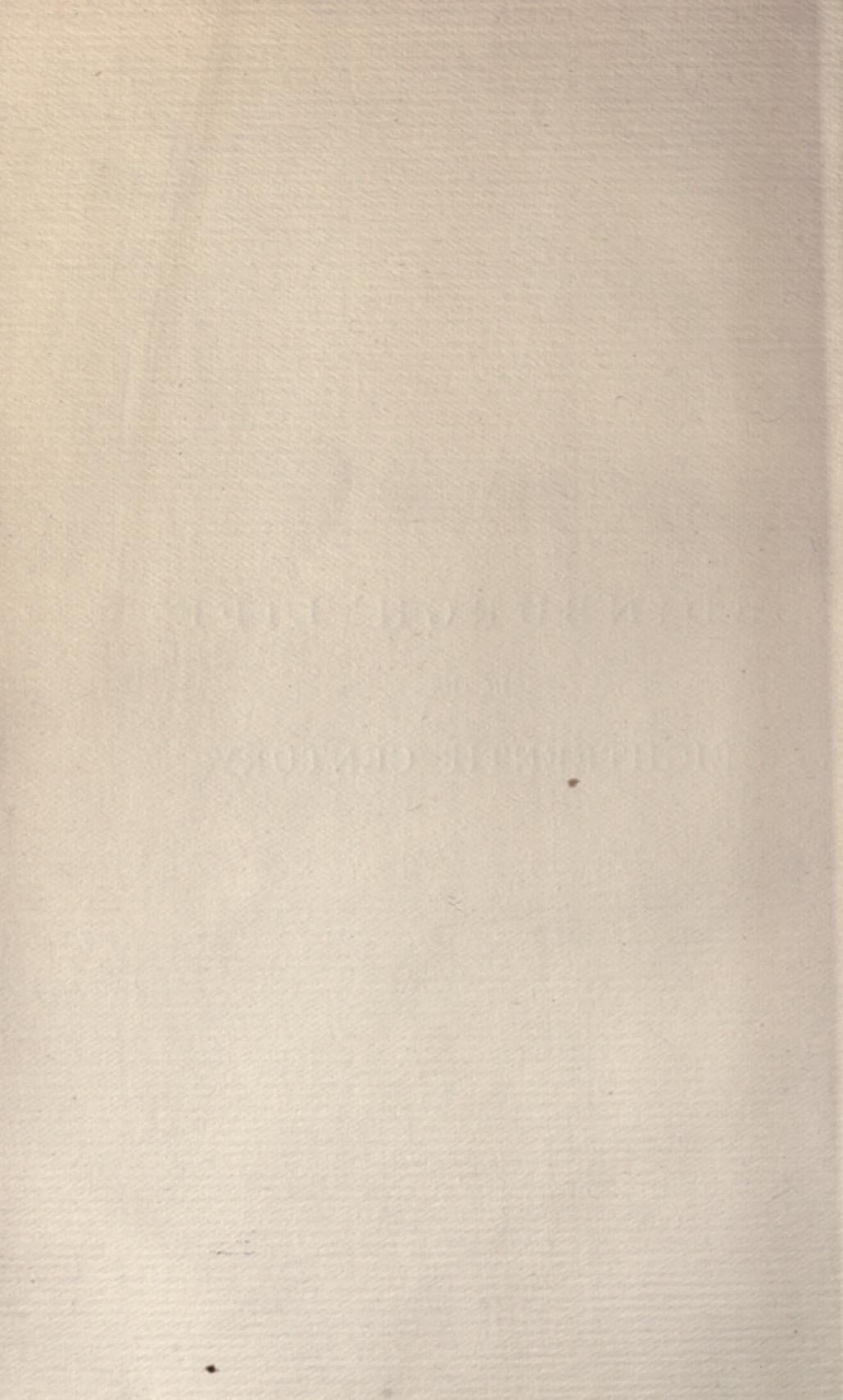
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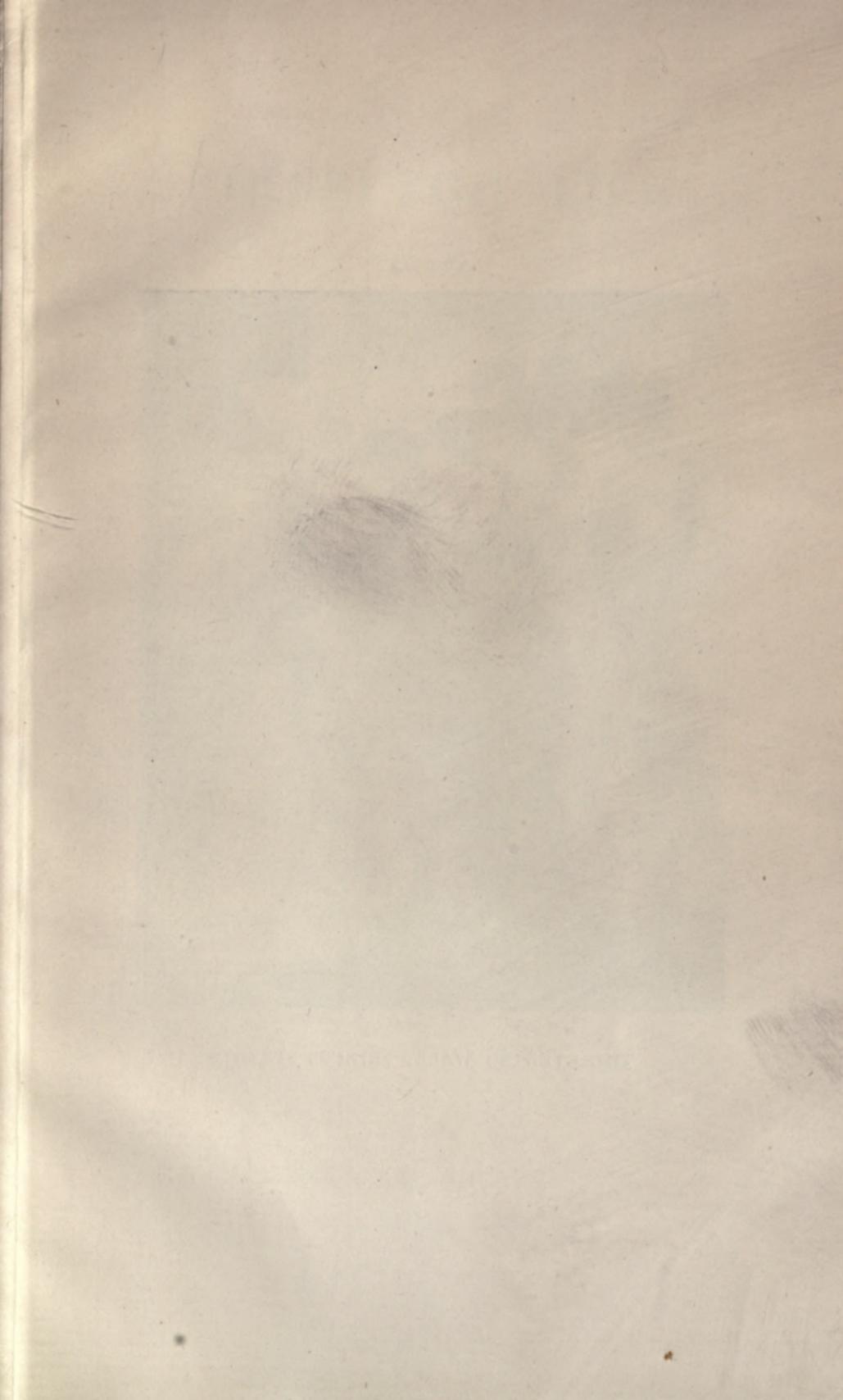


EDINBURGH LIFE

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.







THE EVENING WALK, PRINCES STREET.

EDINBURGH LIFE  
IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

With an Account of the  
Fashions and Amusements  
of Society

Selected and Arranged from "Captain Topham's Letters."

*NEW EDITION*  
*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

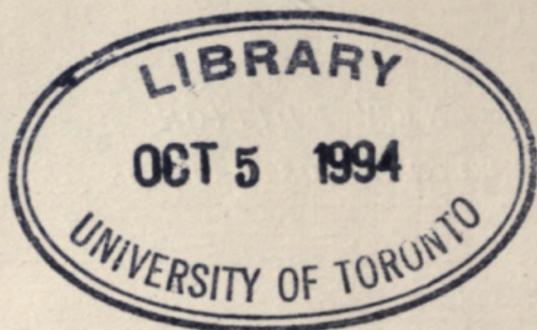
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## P R E F A C E.

THE following pages are gleaned from an entertaining volume, well known to Collectors of Old Edinburgh literature, entitled "Letters from Edinburgh, written in the years 1774 and 1775." This book, which appeared anonymously, consists of a portion of the correspondence of Captain Topham, an English officer of culture and ability, written during his six months residence in the Northern Capital. The peculiar value and interest of his pages lie not merely in their clever descriptions of men and things, but in their being from the pen of one who was both a travelled, well-informed man of the world, capable of unbiassed judgment, and a resident in the city long enough to enable him to become

intimately acquainted with its people and their ways.

Dr Johnson's celebrated tour in Scotland was contemporary with Captain Topham's residence in Edinburgh, and some very pertinent remarks are made by the latter upon the great lexicographer's narrow, and somewhat petty criticisms of the Scottish people. The spirit of fairness and breadth of view displayed in our author's own observations are readily accounted for by his wider experience and more catholic training. The opening passage of one of his letters is interesting in this connection. He writes: "I have been now resident in this city so considerable a time, that I begin to look on myself, and indeed wish to be thought by the inhabitants of it, almost a native of the country. In all respects I have endeavoured to accommodate myself to their manners and customs, as, in my opinion, every stranger ought to do in a foreign climate; and am become so habituated to them, that I consider them as my

own." The pages following will show that he could criticise unsparingly what he reckoned as faults and weaknesses, and his record is all the more valuable on that account, but he distinctly expresses the hope, in his last letter, that his correspondence may help to dispel the prejudices and misconceptions of his English friends.

Of the author's life and character, nothing need here be said beyond what is chronicled in the following brief obituary notice, which the late Scottish antiquarian, Mr James Maidment, secured from some journal of the day, and prefixed to his own copy of the "Letters." It bears date 1820, in the handwriting of Mr Maidment, is headed "Major Topham," and reads as follows:—

"April 26th.—At Doncaster, in his sixty-ninth year, Edward Topham, Esq., of the Wold Cottage, in Yorkshire, one of His Majesty's Deputy-Lieutenants, and during many years an acting Magistrate for the North and East Ridings of that county. He

was the son of Dr Francis Topham, Master of Faculties, and Judge of the Prerogative Court at York ; was educated at Eton, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. On leaving the University he obtained a Commission in the Guards, became Adjutant, and afterwards rose to the rank of Major. He possessed a considerable share of literary taste and talent, which has been displayed in several poetical effusions, particularly in Prologues and Epilogues, in which he excelled. He was at one time a proprietor of the newspaper called *The World* ; on leaving which, he retired to his family seat in Yorkshire, with three daughters, whom he had by the once celebrated Mrs Wells.

“No man had more the manners of a gentleman, or more of the ease and elegance of fashionable life, than Major Topham. Though fond of retirement, he communicated himself through a large circle of acquaintance, and was of a temper so easy and companionable, that

those who saw him once knew him, and those who knew him had a pleasing acquaintance; and, if service were required, a warm and zealous friend. His knowledge of life and manners enlivened his conversation with a perpetual novelty, while his love of humour and ridicule (always restrained within the bounds of benevolence and good nature) added to the pleasures of the social table, and animated the jocundity of the festive board."

In this reprint a slight rearrangement of material has been found necessary, and the merely formal and less local references have been omitted. Although the dating has been replaced by headings, indicating the subjects discussed, the author's vigorous epistolary style has not been interfered with.



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EDINBURGH LIFE  
IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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**Description of the Town in 1775.**

THE situation of Edinburgh is probably as extraordinary an one as can well be imagined for a metropolis. The immense hills, on which great part of it is built, though they make the views uncommonly magnificent, not only in many places render it impassable for carriages, but very fatiguing for walking. The principal or great street runs along the ridge of a very high hill, which, taking its rise from the palace of Holyrood House, ascends, and not very gradually, for the length of a mile and a quarter, and after opening a spacious area, terminates in the Castle. On one side, far as the eye can reach, you view the sea, the port of Leith, its harbour and various vessels, the river of Forth, the immense hills around, some of which ascend above even the Castle; and on the other side you look over a rich and cultivated country,

## 2 *Description of the Town in 1775.*

terminated by the dark, abrupt, and barren hills of the Highlands.

You have seen the famous street at Lisle, la Rue royale, leading to the port of Tournay, which is said to be the finest in Europe ; but which I can assure you is not to be compared either in length or breadth to the High Street at Edinburgh ; and would they be at the expense of removing some buildings which obstruct the view, by being placed in the middle of the street, nothing could be conceived more magnificent. Not content, however, with this, they suffer a weekly market to be held, in which stalls are erected nearly the whole length of it, and make a confusion almost impossible to be conceived. All sorts of iron and copper ware are exposed to sale ; here likewise the herb market is held, and the herb women, who are in no country either the most peaceable or the most cleanly beings upon earth, throw about the roots, stalks, &c., of the bad vegetables, to the great nuisance of the passengers.

The style of building here is much like the French : the houses, however, in general are higher, as some rise to twelve, and one in particular to thirteen storeys in height. But to the front of the street nine or ten storeys is the common run ; it is the back part of the edifice

which, by being built on the slope of an hill, sinks to that amazing depth, so as to form the above number. This mode of dwelling, though very proper for the turbulent times to which it was adapted, has now lost its convenience; as they no longer stand in need of the defence from the castle, they no more find the benefit of being crowded together so near it.

The buildings are divided, by extremely thick partition walls, into large houses, which are here called lands, and each storey of a land is called a house. Every land has a common staircase, in the same manner as the inns of court in London, and houses in Paris; from whence, it is most probable, this custom was taken. This staircase must always be dirty, and is in general very dark and narrow. It has this advantage, however, that as they are all of stone, they have little to apprehend from fire, which, in the opinion of some, would more than compensate for every other disadvantage. As each house is occupied by a family, a land, being so large, contains many families; and I make no manner of doubt but that the High Street in Edinburgh is inhabited by a greater number of persons than any street in Europe. The ground floors and cellars are in general made use of for shops by the tradesmen; who here style themselves merchants, as in France; and the

#### 4 *Description of the Town in 1775.*

higher houses are possessed by the genteeler people.

In London, you know, such an habitation would not be deemed the most eligible, and many a man in such a situation would not be sorry to descend a little lower. The style of building here has given rise to different ideas : Some years ago a Scotch gentleman, who went to London for the first time, took the uppermost storey of a lodging house, and was very much surprised to find what he thought the genteelest place in the whole at the lowest price. His friends who came to see him, in vain acquainted him with the mistake he had been guilty of. "He ken'd vera weel," he said, "what gentility was, and when he lived all his life in a sixth storey, he was not come to London to live upon the ground."

The merchants here, as in France, have the horrid custom of painting on the outside of their houses the figure of the commodity which is to be sold within ; which, in this place, makes the oddest appearance you can conceive ; for each storey, perhaps, from top to bottom, is chequered with ten thousand different forms and colours, that the whole resembles the stall of a fair, presenting at one view, the goods of a variety of shops. They are likewise remarkably fond of glaring colours,—as red, yellow, and blue,—

*Description of the Town in 1775.* 5

on which the figures are painted in black. You would laugh to see a black quartern loaf directly over a black full-trimmed periwig of a professor, with a Cheshire cheese, and a rich firkin of butter, displayed in black greasiness under stays, petticoats, and child-bed linen.

The other principal streets are parallel to the High Street on the south side, at the bottom of the hill, and are called the Cowgate and Grassmarket. Tradition says, the Cowgate two hundred years ago was the polite part of the town, and in it were the houses of the nobility and the senators of the College of Justice; but, at present, the buildings are much inferior to those on the top of the hill. The original town has been fortified, is surrounded by a wall, and has nine ports. The buildings are all of them of stone of a brown cast.

From the right of the High Street you pass over a very long bridge to the New Town. Before this bridge was built you had a very steep hill to descend and to ascend, which was found extremely inconvenient. A subscription therefore was entered into to build one; and a most stupendous work it is indeed: it is thrown over this immense valley; and by having no water run under it, you have the whole effect of its height. From it you have a fine view up and down the vale, and the prospect through

## 6 *Description of the Town in 1775.*

the middle arch is inconceivably beautiful. Not long ago a part of this bridge gave way, and many people who were upon it sunk into the chasm, and were buried in the ruins. Many others, who were likewise upon the bridge, saw the fate of their unfortunate companions without being able to assist them. All was terror and consternation; every one fled from this scene of death as fast as possible, expecting the bridge to sink under them at every step, and themselves to be crushed to pieces. When the bridge was cleared, and the general consternation had a little subsided, it was found that only a small part had given way; which they are now repairing and making stronger than ever. But so great was the fear it occasioned amongst all ranks of people, that many of them look upon it with terror even to this day, and make it an objection to residing in the New Town that they must necessarily pass over it.

The New Town has been built upon one uniform plan, which is the only means of making a city beautiful. Great part of this plan as yet remains to be executed, though they proceed as fast as their supplies of money will allow them. The rent of the houses in general amount to £100 per annum, or upwards, and are most of them let to the inhabitants by builders, who buy the ground, and make what

*Description of the Town in 1775.* 7

advantage they can of it. The greatest part of the New Town is built after the manner of the English, and the houses are what they call here "houses to themselves." Though this mode of living, one would imagine, is much preferable to the former, yet such is the force of prejudice, that there are many people who prefer a little dark confined tenement on a sixth storey to the convenience of a whole house. One old lady fancies she should be lost if she was to get into such an habitation ; another, that she should be blown away in going over the new bridge ; and a third lives in the old style because she is sure that these new fashions can come to "nae gude." But different as these sentiments are in regard to living, they are not more different than the buildings themselves. In no town that I ever saw can such a contrast be found betwixt the ancient and modern architecture, or anything that better merits the observation of a stranger.

The pavement of the whole town is excellent : the granite, which long supplied London till Jersey and Guernsey robbed them of those advantages, is dug from the hills close to the town, and brought at very small expense. Maitland, in his history of this town, calls it "grey marble ;" but without disputing about the propriety of the name, every one must

## 8 *Watching and Cleaning of the City.*

allow it the very best stone possible for the purpose. They finish it with an exactness which the London workmen are indifferent about, and which indeed London would not admit of, from the number of weighty carriages that continually go over it.

From the left of the High Street you pass down by a number of different alleys, or as they call them here, wynds and closes, to the different parts of the old town. They are many of them so very steep that it requires great attention to the feet to prevent falling; but so well accustomed are the Scotch to that position of body required in descending these declivities, that I have seen a Scotch girl run down them with great swiftness in pattens.

### **Watching and Cleaning of the City, with an Account of the City Guard and the "Cadies."**

This town has long been reproached with many uncleanly customs. A gentleman who lately published his travels through Spain, says "that Madrid, some years ago, might have vied with Edinburgh in filthiness." It may probably be some pleasure to this author, and to those who read him, to learn that his remarks are now very erroneous. And although, from the un-

## *Watching and Cleaning of the City.* 9

favourable situation of the houses, it is amazing the inhabitants preserve any degree of decency; yet you rarely find, in the worst part of the town, an obscure lodging that has not some degree of neatness, and a certain simplicity about it, to make it comfortable.

The police set an example by being particularly careful of the cleanness of the streets, into which, as a common sewer, all the nuisances of the houses are emptied at a stated time in the night, on the ringing of a bell, and immediately removed by persons appointed for that purpose; and at the same time the reservoirs being set open, which are placed at certain intervals in the streets, carry everything away; so that in the morning the streets are so clean that foot passengers walk in the middle of them. But I cannot help observing the intolerable stench that is produced at this season of the night on the moving the tub of nastiness from each floor: such a concatenation of smells I never before was sensible of; it has been sometimes so powerful as to wake me, and prevent my sleeping till it was somewhat pacified.

If a stranger may be allowed to complain, it would be that in the wynds, which are very numerous, the dirt is sometimes suffered to remain two or three days without removal, and becomes offensive to more senses than one.

## 10 *Watching and Cleaning of the City.*

The magistrates, by imposing fines and other punishments, have long put a stop to the throwing anything from the windows into the open street; but as these alleys are unlighted, narrow, and removed from public view, they still continue these practices with impunity. Many an elegant suit of clothes has been spoiled; many a powdered, well-dressed macaroni sent home for the evening; and, to conclude this period, in Dr Johnson's own simple words, "many a full-flowing periwig moistened into flaccidity."

Such particulars, however, as these scarce merit observation—they are circumstances resulting from the peculiar inconvenience of the buildings, and not from the natural disposition of the Scotch, who love cleanliness and practise it. They lament the impropriety of these customs, and join in the laugh at the accidents they occasion.

An Englishman, who has passed much of his life in London, and who has been entertained every morning with some dreadful account of robbery or outrage committed the evening before, would be much surprised on coming here to find that he might go with the same security at midnight as at noonday. A man, in the course of his whole life, shall not have the fortune here to meet with a house-breaker,

or even so much as a single foot-pad ; and a woman shall walk along the streets at any hour in an evening, without being “broke in upon,” as Tristram Shandy says, “by one tender salutation.” At eleven o’clock all is quiet and silent ; not so much as a watchman to disturb the general repose. Now and then at a late—or rather an early—hour of the morning, you hear a little party at the taverns amusing themselves by breaking the bottles and glasses ; but this is all in good-humour, and what the constable has no business with.

As I do not imagine this is owing to the peculiar dispositions of the Scotch—for human nature, when occasion presents itself, is, I take it, the same in all places—we must attribute it to the excellence of the police. The city guard, who I assure you are very terrible-looking men, and perform their exercises every day in the High Street, to show people what they can do, have their stations, during the whole night, in the street, to prevent any quarrels or disorders that may arise there. These are relieved by others in their turn, so that the duty is performed by all of them in succession.

This guard is of very old standing, and commanded at present by no less a person than the Provost of Edinburgh, who is generally a tradesman, and consequently much

used to arms. But I can with great truth inform you, that the command has been vested in persons equally formidable for two centuries or more. In the year 1580, the Common Council of Edinburgh formed citizens into companies of fifty men each, and appointed burgesses of the best experience in martial affairs to command them; for, as the Act wisely says, "It hath been found by experience, in many countries, that it is not so much the multitude that overcometh, as the experience and skill of well-trained and exercised soldiers, seeing it is the knowledge of warfare that emboldeneth to fight." So the experienced burgesses led on this bold band of citizens as often as their skill was called for. At present, however, their great knowledge in warfare has not many opportunities of showing itself; and as they are chiefly used as a guard during the night time, their heroic deeds are unfortunately concealed from public view. To do them justice, however, they seldom sleep upon their posts, which is saying a great deal for men who are not kept awake by the fear of an enemy. But whether the extreme good order and regularity which is observed in the streets, and the very few robberies which are committed, are entirely owing to these military men or not, is rather difficult to determine. I believe there



CAPTAINS OF THE CITY GUARD.



are other people of a more civil nature, who share with them the hardships as well as the honour of accomplishing so great a task. These are a set of men who are called in this country Cadies, and who have been formed many years into a society for their own emolument and the public good—a society which is probably as useful and extraordinary as ever existed. It is under particular regulations, and it requires some interest to become a member of it. It is numerous, and contains persons for every use and employment, who faithfully execute all commands at a very reasonable price. To tell you what these people do is impossible; for there is nothing almost which they do not do. They are the only persons who may truly be said to have attained universal knowledge, for they know every thing and every body; they even know sometimes what you do, better than you yourself. The moment a stranger comes into Edinburgh, they know it; how long he is to stay, whither he is going, where he comes from, and what he is. In regard to the police, this may be a convenience, otherwise it would be a great nuisance. A certain number of them stand all day long, and most of the night, at the Cross in the High Street, waiting for employment. Whoever has occasion for them has only to pronounce the word “Cadie,” and they

fly from all parts to attend the summons. Whatever person you want, they know immediately where he is to be found, while without them it would be very difficult to find anybody, on account of the great height of the houses, and the number of families in every building. Trust them with what sum of money you please, you are quite safe; they are obliged by the rules of their Order to make good everything they lose. A gentleman once sent one of these Mercuries with a letter enclosing bills for some hundred pounds; the man lost it, and the Society (who are responsible for these losses) restored the sum to the proprietor.

These men act likewise in the capacity of Sir John Fielding's thief-takers in London, and take all the thieves here, as they have intelligence of the places where such a person is likely to be found. In short, nothing can escape them, for they are the people who are the great means of preserving the public peace, and of preventing all those crimes which are generally perpetrated under a Police which is ill-observed. In short, they are the tutelary guardians of the City; and it is entirely owing to them that there are fewer robberies, and less housebreaking in Edinburgh, than anywhere else.

Nothing can reflect more honour on this

City, than the safety in which every man finds himself and his property. An Englishman, who has his house broken open twenty times in his life, calls it his Castle; and though he is afraid of stirring out of his doors after it is dark, he is continually boasting to you of his liberty, and the security of his person.

The police of Paris has long been a subject of general and deserved admiration. A man may pass through the streets there at any hour in an evening, with as little danger as he would in the middle of the day. It is by the same means as in Paris that the police in Edinburgh is so well observed, which otherwise, from its populousness, and the style of the buildings, is as much calculated to conceal villains as any city whatever.

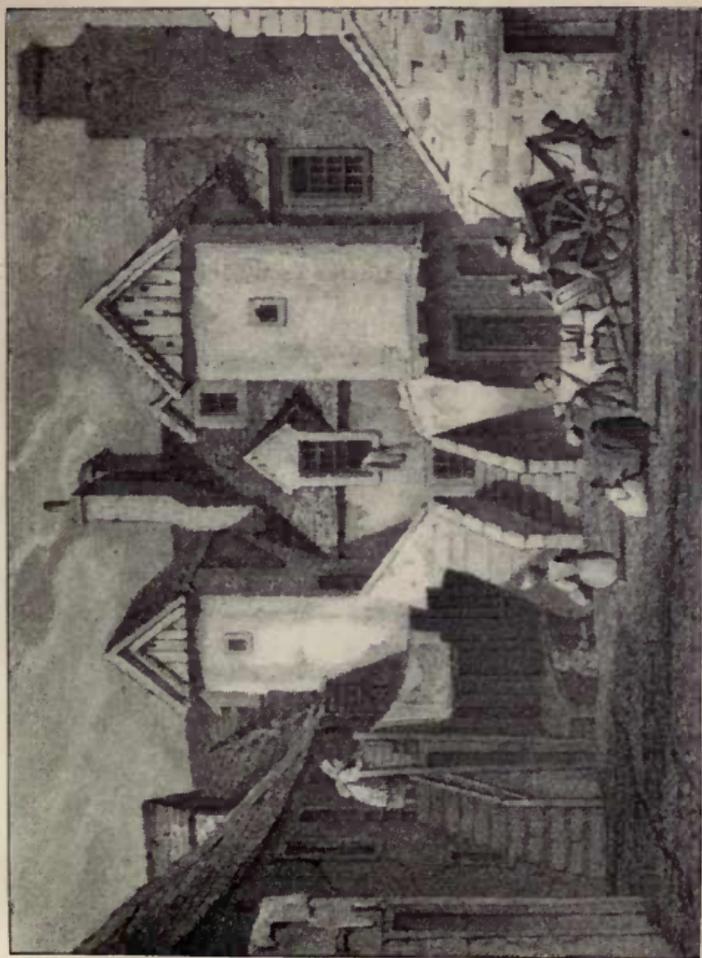
No people in the world undergo greater hardships, or live in a worse degree of wretchedness and poverty, than the lower classes here; but though they are very poor, I believe, as a nation, they are very honest: at least, their dishonesty takes a different turn from that of the common people in England; it runs into that concealed line of acting which, under the mask of insinuation and hypocrisy, works its way gradually to the purpose it wishes to attain, and not into that open and avowed villainy which seeks a miserable and precarious subsistence at the hazard of

## 16 *Bad Accommodation for Strangers.*

life, and which, even in danger and death, discovers a fortitude that ought to be the result of virtue alone.

### **The Bad Accommodation for Strangers.**

One can scarcely form in imagination the distress of a miserable stranger on his first entrance into this city, as there is no inn that is better than an alehouse, nor any accommodation that is decent, cleanly, or fit to receive a gentleman. On my first arrival, my companion and self, after the fatigue of a long day's journey, were landed at one of these stable-keepers (for they have modesty enough to give themselves no higher denomination) in a part of the town which is called the Pleasance; and on entering the house, we were conducted by a poor girl without shoes or stockings, and with only a single linsey-woolsey petticoat, which just reached half way to her ankles, into a room where about twenty Scotch drovers had been regaling themselves with whisky and potatoes. You may guess our amazement, when we were informed, "that this was the best inn in the metropolis—that we could have no beds, unless we had an inclination to sleep together, and in the same room with the company which a stage-coach had that moment discharged." Well, said I to my friend



AN OLD EDINBURGH INN, WHITEHORSE CLOSE.



*Bad Accommodation for Strangers.* 17

(for you must know that I have more patience on these occasions than wit on any other) there is nothing like seeing men and manners, perhaps we may be able to repose ourselves at some coffee-house. Accordingly, on inquiry, we discovered that there was a good dame by the Cross, who acted in the double capacity of pouring out coffee, or letting lodgings to strangers, as we were. She was easily to be found out; and with all the conciliating complaisance of a *Maîtresse d'Hotel*, conducted us to our destined apartments; which were indeed six storeys high, but so infernal to appearance, that you would have thought yourself in the regions of Erebus.

The truth of this, I will venture say, you will make no scruple to believe, when I tell you, that in the whole we had only two windows, which looked into an alley five foot wide, where the houses were at least ten storeys high, and the alley itself was so sombre in the brightest sunshine, that it was impossible to see any object distinctly.

It is extremely strange that a city which is a thoroughfare into all Scotland, and now little inferior in politeness to London in many respects, should not be better furnished with conveniences for strangers, or have a public lodging-house where you can find tolerable entertainment. But it really has not; and I should hope ere

long the pride or good sense of Scotland will so far prevail as to establish an hotel in some suitable part of the town to obviate the inconvenience of the want of these necessaries.

**The Manners of the People and Nature of their Amusements.**

A man who visits this country, after having been in France, will find, in a thousand instances, the resemblance which there is betwixt these two nations. That air of mirth and vivacity, 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 their poverty. Where there is any material difference, I believe it may be attributed to the difference of their religion ; for that same Catholic religion, to say the truth of it, is a most comfortable one. The article of absolution is certainly a blessed invention, and renders the spirits free and unclouded by placing all the burthen of our sins upon another man's back. A poor Englishman goes fretting and groaning, and carrying his miserable face into all companies, as contagious as an epidemical disorder, without one soul to take compassion on him, or pity his weakness ;

and should he not have a wife or family at home who cannot avoid him, he finds no person who will bear his infirmities, or look as sad as he does, but is constrained to wander about an unsociable being, till the month of November, and the *maladie Angloise*, relieve him from his distresses.

But though the Scotch have no absolution, they have something very like it—a superstitious reliance on the efficacy of going constantly to church. Many of them may be said to pass half their lives there; for they go almost without ceasing, and look as sorrowful at the time as if they were going, not only to bury their sins, but themselves. At other hours, they are as cheerful and as gay as possible; and, probably, from hence arises that ease, that spirit in their conversation, which charms in every company, and which is the life of every society. They see no harm in innocent familiarity. They think a frank and unrestrained behaviour the best sign of a good heart, and agree with Lord Shaftesbury, “that gravity is the very essence of imposture.”

Whenever the Scotch of both sexes meet, 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 sullen 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 ; they appear to be satisfied with one another, or at least, if they really are not so, they have the prudence to conceal their dislike. To see them in perfection is to see them at their entertainments.

When dinners are given here, they are invitations of form. The entertainment of pleasure is their suppers, which resemble the *petit soupers* of France. Of these they are very fond ; and it is a mark of their friendship to be admitted to be of the party. It is in these meetings that the pleasures of society and conversation reign, when the restraints of ceremony are banished, and you see people really as they are : and I must say, in honour of the Scotch, that I never met with a more agreeable people, with more pleasing or more insinuating manners, in my life. These little parties generally consist of about seven or eight persons, which prevents the conversation from being particular, which it always must be in larger companies. During the supper, which continues some time, the Scotch ladies drink more wine than an English woman could well bear ; but the climate

requires it, and probably in some measure it may enliven their natural vivacity. After supper is removed, and they are tired of conversing, they vary the scene by singing, in which many of the Scotch excel. There is a plaintive simplicity in the generality of their songs, to which the words are extremely well adapted, and which, from the mouth of a pretty Scotch girl, is inconceivably attracting. You frequently feel the force of those very expressions, that at another time you would not understand, when they are sung by a young person whose inclinations and affections are frequently expressed in the terms made use of, and which the heart claims as its own. The eye, the whole countenance speak frequently as much as the voice; for I have sometimes found, that I had a very just idea of the tenor of a song, though I did not comprehend three words in the whole.

Formerly it was the custom for the bagpipe to play during their entertainments, and every family had their bard. In these songs were rehearsed the martial and heroic deeds of their ancestors, as incentives to their own courage; but in these piping times of peace, "our stern alarms" have changed to "merry meetings," and tales of love and gentleness have succeeded to those of war. Instead of the drowsy hum of a bagpipe, which would certainly have laid my

noble courage asleep, the voice of some pretty girl claims your attention, which, in my opinion, is no bad change. Altogether, the entertainments which this country affords are by no means contemptible. We have an elegant Playhouse, and tolerable performers ; assemblies, concerts, public gardens, and walks, card parties, and a hundred other diversions, which in some degree keep me from pining for your Festino, Bach's concert, or Almack's.

As the genius of any people is not more easily discovered in their serious moments, than when they give a loose to freedom and pleasure : so the Scotch nation is peculiarly characterised by the mode of their diversions. A sober, sedate elegance pervades them all, blended with an ease and propriety which delights, and is sure to meet with approbation. A Scotchman does not relax himself for amusements, as if to pass away the hour : he seems, even in the height of pleasure, busy and intent, and as he would do, were he about to gain some advantage. His diversions are not calculated to seduce the unwary, or recreate the idle, but to unbend the mind, without corrupting it. He seems as if in his infancy he had been taught to make learning his diversion, and was now reversing it, and making his diversion his study. But besides the public entertainments of this city,

which are derived from company, the inhabitants have more resources of pleasure within themselves, than in many other places. The young people paint, draw, are fond of music, or employ their hours in reading and acquiring the accomplishments of the mind. Every boarding-school Miss has something of this kind to recommend her, and make her an agreeable companion: and instead of a little smattering of French, which is the highest ambition to attain in Queen Square, you find them in Edinburgh entertaining in conversation, sentimental, and well informed. The mode of education of the young ladies is here highly to be commended, and admirably calculated to make them good wives. Besides needlework, and those trifling arts, which are the principal of their instruction in England, the precepts of morality, virtue, and honour are taught them from their earliest infancy, whilst they are instructed to consider themselves as beings born for society, for more than outside appearance and transitory pleasure, and to attend to the knowledge of what is useful, rather than the œconomy of a tambour-frame. The ladies also who undertake this arduous task of instruction are persons much better qualified in general than in other countries. They likewise introduce them into the politest company, and give them a taste for elegant and

proper amusements, that when they leave school, they are not only mistresses of those accomplishments which are necessary to command a family, but have the deportment and behaviour of experienced women of fashion. No ladies in Scotland ever murder the precious moments in what is called "work," which is neither entertainment nor profit, merely because they must have the appearance of doing something, whilst they see everyone employed around them. They let no minute escape without its respective office, which may be of utility to themselves or others, and after a proper sacrifice to reading and literature, gain instruction from society and conversation.

The married ladies of this city seldom entertain large sets of company, or have routs, as in London. They give the preference to private parties and conversaziones, where they play at cards for small sums, and never run the risk of being obliged to discharge a debt of honour at the expense of their virtue and innocence. They often frequent the theatre, and show great taste and judgment in the choice of plays, where Mr Digges performs a principal character.

As to exercise, they seldom ride on horseback; but find much pleasure in walking, to which the soil and country is peculiarly adapted, being dry, pleasant, and abounding in prospects,

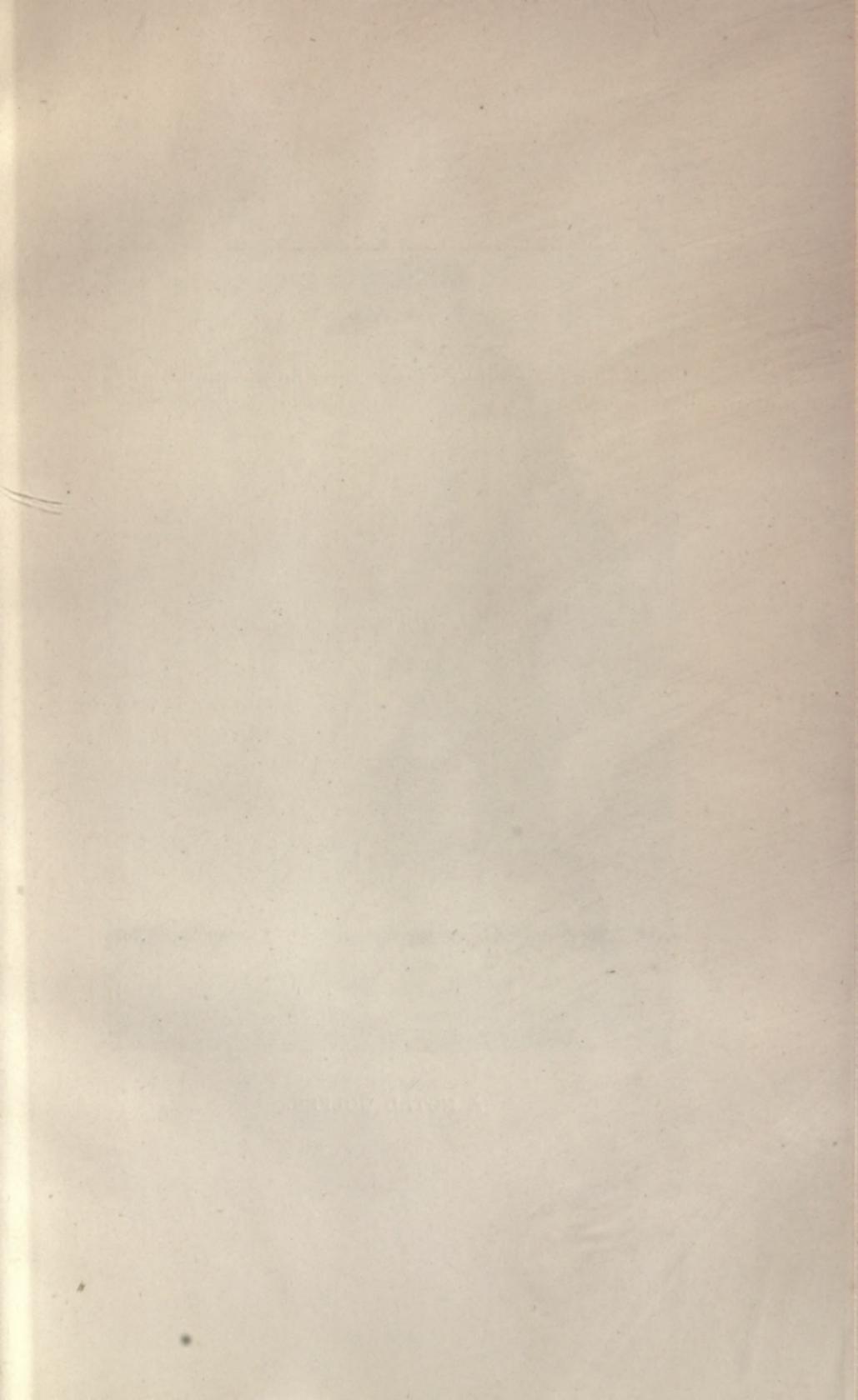
and romantic scenes. It is likewise customary for them to drive in their carriages to the sands at Leith and Musselburgh, and parade backwards and forwards, after the manner of Scarborough, and other public places of sea-bathing resort. For vivacity and agility in dancing, none excel the Scotch ladies: their execution in reels and country-dances is amazing; and the variety of steps which they introduce, and the justness of their ear is beyond description. They are very fond also of minuets, but fall greatly short in the performance of them, as they are deficient in grace and elegance in their motions. Many of them play on the harpsichord and guitar, and some have music in their voices: though they rather love to hear others perform than play themselves.

I do not think the Scotch ladies are great proficient in the languages. They rarely attempt anything further than the French; which, indeed, they speak with great propriety, fluency, and good accent; but they make up for it by their accurate and just knowledge of their own. They talk very grammatically; are peculiarly attentive to the conformity of their words to their ideas, and are great critics in the English tongue. They chiefly read history, and plaintive poetry: but elegies and pastorals are their favourites. Novels and romances they feel,

and admire; and those chiefly which are tender, sympathetic, soothing, or melancholy. Their hearts are soft and full of passion, and a well-told story makes a deep impression on them. Like virgin wax, a gentle heat mollifies their minds, which reflects the finest touches of art and sentiment.

Nor are the gentlemen in Edinburgh less rational in their diversions than the ladies. There is only one, in which I can censure their conduct: they rather pay too much respect to the divinity of Bacchus, and offer too copious libations at the shrine of that jovial deity. Their wines, indeed, of all kinds are excellent, and their climate not the most comfortable; so that some allowance ought to be made them in that respect. But as they are, they are by no means so intemperate as the Germans; and, perhaps, their appearing to me in the least intemperate, may be occasioned by my peculiar aversion to, and abstinence from all intoxicating liquors. I have neither taste to relish, nor head to bear them. I have no idea of a man extending the pleasure of drinking beyond thrift, or forcing in imagination, an appetite artificial and against nature.

The youths in this country are very manly in their exercises and amusements. Strength and agility seems to be most their attention. The





A NOTED GOLFER.

insignificant pastimes of marbles, tops, &c., they are totally unacquainted with. The diversion which is peculiar to Scotland, and in which all ages find great pleasure, is golf. They play at it with a small leathern ball, like a fives ball, and a piece of wood, flat on one side, in the shape of a small bat, which is fastened at the end of a stick of three or four feet long, at right angles to it. The art consists in striking the ball with this instrument into a hole in the ground in a smaller number of strokes than your adversary. This game has the superiority of cricket and tennis, in being less violent and dangerous, but in point of dexterity and amusement, by no means to be compared with them. However, I am informed that some skill and nicety are necessary to strike the ball to the proposed distance and no farther, and that in this there is a considerable difference in players. It requires no great exertion and strength, and all ranks and ages play at it. They instruct their children in it as soon as they can run alone, and grey hairs boast their execution. As to their other diversions, they dance, play at cards, love shooting, hunting, and the pleasures of the field, but are proficient in none of them. When they are young, indeed, they dance, in the manner of their country, extremely well; but afterwards (to speak in the language of the

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turf) they train off, and are too robust and muscular to possess either grace or agility.

I am sorry to say the hazard table is in high fashion and estimation. There are clubs in Edinburgh who may vie with White's or Almack's. But the misfortune is, there is a deficiency of ready money, which obliges them to keep books, by which they transfer their debts to one another. This renders it both inconvenient and troublesome to strangers to engage them: for if you lose, their necessity compels them to demand immediate payment; and, on the contrary, if you chance to be successful, they refer you to twenty different people before you can expect your money; and you have reason to bless your stars if ever you obtain it. I do not know anything so disgusting, or against the grain of politeness, as being obliged to dun a gentleman for a game debt; but here it is absolutely necessary: if you do not, you play without the least chance of being a winner.

### **The Dress of the better sort of Inhabitants.**

The women here do not so readily adopt any trifling fashion from London. They conform themselves much more to the manners and taste of Paris, with which they have as constant a communication as with England. The ladies in Edinburgh dress, in general, with more ele-

gance, and in a way better accommodated to their persons, size, and shape, than most of the European nations; whilst they are peculiarly attentive to the nature of their climate and seasons, as well as to their age, after the manner of the French. You never see the mortifying spectacle of an old woman displayed in all the show and vanity of a boarding-school Miss; or the widowed wife of nineteen assuming the air and dress of an ancient married matron, in order to adapt herself to the age of a decrepit and peevish husband. In a morning, also, their dress is equally becoming; their *déshabillé* is never negligent and loose, but neat and plain, with a degree of smartness and elegance; and a genius for dress even then discovers itself, just as you may see the masterly strokes of a poet in two or three unpremeditated extempore verses. But I wish I could say as much for the men: they neither take so much care of their persons or appearance, nor have they half the taste in their dress that the ladies have, who choose the most becoming fashions from London and Paris, and form one of their own, more graceful, perhaps, than either. But the gentlemen neither know how, nor are studious of setting off their figure to advantage. In the politest assemblies in this city you rarely see a gentleman well dressed. In those that think

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themselves the best there is always some deficiency, whilst you will not find one lady without every assistance of ornament and art; and an ill-dressed lady is as great a novelty as an ill-bred one.

But however they may be indebted to external show, or whatever they may have borrowed from the French, they derive none of their beauty from paint, nor have they had folly enough to imitate that nation in this absurd fashion. Indeed, neither their colour nor complexion stand in need of it; for I know not where they will find their equals in either. The women's hair is either a dark brown or perfectly red, which I esteem a very beautiful colour, and is that which in ancient times was so admired, received the appellation of golden, and was given by way of distinction to a Pallas or a Juno. I am sorry to say the ladies here often conceal it by powder, making no difference between it and that sandy-coloured red, which of all hair is the most disagreeable and unbecoming. In most respects they dress their hair with great elegance and propriety, in no extremes, neither too elevated nor too depressed, but in that just-proportioned medium, which is always the result of taste and judgment. As to hoops, they seldom use them, and add very little to their height by the heels of their shoes.

Many of the ladies marry at fifteen, and many of the married ladies at twenty-five, look no younger than some of the English women at forty. This early loss of beauty may, in some measure, proceed from the negligence of their persons the moment they are married, as if, on that important day, all future desires of pleasing were to be closed, and one dark cloud of constancy and indifference was to shade the whole scene.

The gentlemen, after the custom of the French, wear their hair in bags, especially the advocates and professors of the College, who commonly dress in black. With respect to clothes, as I said before, I cannot speak in great praise of them; and they have the worst tailors, perhaps, in the world.

### **The Theatre.**

Edinburgh, which has been for a long time without trade or company, a mere mass without spirits, seems to be animated with new life. The classes in the College are sitting, the terms are begun, the scenes of diversion are opened, and all is business, pleasure, and confusion.

This metropolis is said to be very gay; and, if I may judge from the little specimen I have already had of it, reports say nothing but the

truth. The concerts have received the assistance of a new singer from London, the assemblies are opened for the reception of those who choose to dance, and the theatrical heroes have already opened their campaign. As yet, I believe, they have had but few spectators, as the genteel people here fix one day for beginning to partake of these amusements, and are so very polite, that they never go before that day on any account.

The present Theatre is situated at the end of the New Bridge in the New Town, and on the outside is a plain structure like most others of the same nature. It was built by the subscription of a certain number of gentlemen, who let it originally to a manager for four hundred pounds a year. Mr Ross was the first person who took it, and his name was inserted in the patent, which made him manager as long as he chose. A few years ago plays were not in that repute at Edinburgh they now are. The ministers, zealous for the good of their flock, preached against them, and the poor players were entirely routed: they have now, however, once more taken the field, and the clergy leave them to their ungodliness.

The Theatre is of an oblong form, and designed after the manner of foreign ones. I do not know its exact dimensions; but at three

shillings (which is the price of admittance into the pit and boxes) it is capable of containing about one hundred and thirty pounds. The pit seems considered here as the *Parterre* in the French theatre, into which gentlemen go who are not sufficiently dressed for the boxes. On very crowded nights the ladies sometimes sit here, and then that part of it is divided by a partition. The ornaments are few, and in an unaffected plain style, which, on the whole, has a very elegant appearance. It is lighted with wax, and the scenery is well painted; though they do not excel in those *jeux de théâtre* which please and astonish the common people in London. The whole of their machinery is luckily very bad; and, therefore, much to the credit of their understandings, they have seldom any Harlequin entertainments: I have only seen one or two since I came here; but the *deceptio visus*, if such it could be called, was so miserable, that the poor players themselves seemed ashamed of it.

The upper galleries, or, as they obligingly term them in London, "the Gods," seem here very compassionate Divinities. You sometimes hear the murmurings of displeasure at a distance; but they never rain down oranges, apples, &c., on the heads of the unfortunate actors. They suffer them very quietly "to strut their hour upon the stage," and if then they

dislike them, "they are literally heard no more."

It is probable, that from an attention to these small and seemingly trivial circumstances, that you discover more of the real manners of a people, than from the greater and more public events in life, where the passions are naturally excited, and men act under a disguise. A boisterous fellow in England, who thinks it a part of his privilege to do what he thinks proper, provided neither the laws nor *magna charta* forbid it, when he takes a dislike to an actor, drives all the players off the stage, puts an end to the performance, and insults the whole audience. A Frenchman, and a Scotchman, whom an arbitrary government in one instance, and the remains of it in the other, has softened and refined, keep their quarrels to themselves, consider the poor players as incapable of resistance, and show their dislike to them only by not applauding them.

### **The Modes of Dancing.**

The dances of this country are entirely void of grace, which appears to me to be the first principle, unless we consider it, as the savages do, merely as an exercise.

The general dance here is a reel, which re-

quires that particular sort of step, to dance properly, of which none but people of the country can have any idea. All the English whom I have seen attempt it were very deficient in their imitations; and though the Scotch were too polite openly to laugh at them, they saw and felt the ridicule of grown gentlemen learning to dance.

The perseverance which the Scotch ladies discover in these reels is not less surprising than their attachment to them in preference to all others. They will sit totally unmoved at the most sprightly airs of an English country dance; but the moment one of these tunes is played, which is liquid laudanum to my spirits, up they start, animated with new life, and you would imagine they had received an electrical shock, or been bit by a tarantula. A lady who, for half-an-hour before, has sat groaning under the weight of a large hoop and a corpulent habit of body, the instant one of these tunes is applied to her ear, shall bounce off her seat and frisk and fly about the room, to the great satisfaction of all the spectators.

These tunes were originally performed on the bagpipe; but you will naturally be surprised how so drowsy an instrument should be capable of inspiring such uncommon ardour. The effect which these national dances have, and the par-

tiality which many nations discover for them, is certainly matter of great surprise to a stranger. An ingenious writer says: "That the fury and violence which the Spaniards discover in dancing the fandango, the original dance of their country, can only be compared to the fire and eagerness of the Italian horses before the barrier is let down for their running." This violence, making allowance for the different heat of the different climates, is equally discoverable in the Scotch.

The young people in England, you know, only consider dancing as an agreeable means of bringing them together; and, was not gallantry to be of the party, I am afraid we should most of us think it a very stupid sort of a meeting. But the Scotch admire the reel for its own merit alone, and may truly be said to dance for the sake of dancing. I have often sat a very wearied spectator of one of these dances, in which not one graceful movement is seen, the same invariably, if continued for hours. How different is this from the *allemande*! A Scotchman comes into an assembly-room as he would into a field of exercise, dances till he is literally tired, possibly without ever looking at his partner, or almost knowing who he dances with. In most countries the men have a partiality for dancing with a woman, but here I have fre-

quently seen four gentlemen perform one of these reels seemingly with the same pleasure and perseverance as they would have done had they had the most sprightly girl for a partner. The reel is the only thing which gives them pleasure ; if the figure is formed, it appears, no matter with what ; and they give you the idea that they could, with equal glee, cast off round a joint stool, or set to a corner cupboard.

Another of the national dances is a kind of quick minuet, or what the Scotch call a *straspaë*. We in England are said to *walk* a minuet ; this is galloping a minuet. The French one is esteemed by all the people at the opera as peculiarly elegant, and affording the greatest opportunity possible for a fine woman to display her figure to advantage. In this of the Scotch, however, every idea of grace seems inverted, and the whole is a burlesque. Nothing of the minuet is preserved except the figure, the step and the time most resemble a hornpipe ; and I leave you to dwell upon the picture of a gentleman, full-dressed, and a lady in a hoop, lappets, and every other incumbrance of ornament, dancing a hornpipe before a large assembly.

It is no civility to attempt to show them anything new ; they hold their dances sacred, and will bear no innovation on that point. Cotillions, and other French dances, have not

travelled so far north,—and you may tell them (for I suppose you are at present in the midst of them) that they might as well stay where they are.

The ladies, however, to do them justice, dance much better than the men. But I once had the honour of being witness to a reel in the Highlands, where the party consisted of three maiden ladies, the youngest of whom was above fifty, which was conducted with gestures so uncouth, and a vivacity so hideous, that you would have thought they were acting some midnight ceremonies, or enchanting the moon.

The gravest men here, with the exception of the ministers, think it no disgrace to dance. I have seen a professor, who has argued most learnedly and most wisely in a morning, forgetting all his gravity in an evening, and dance away to the best of his abilities.

The lower class of people here are as fond of dancing as their betters; they have their little parties and private rooms, where they indulge themselves in this pleasure; and frequently, when the labours and the fatigues of the day are over, they refresh themselves by a dance. This is an odd custom, but they are not singular in it; a French peasant does just the same.

**The Ridotto.**

We have had a Ridotto here.

The manager of the theatre had at the first proposed introducing a masquerade, a species of entertainment hitherto unknown in a public style, but this being greatly opposed, he perceived that, for want of some of the principal people to patronise it, it would be impossible to have it in that fashionable and polite manner he could have wished, and therefore prudently changed the masquerade to a *Ridotto*; which I hope has out-done his most ardent expectations in point of profit, as his proper behaviour calls on every degree of testimony to his desert.

The pit was covered over after the manner of the Opera House in London on a like occasion. The side-boxes were converted into reservoirs of wines, ices, and every kind of refreshment, and at the upper end of the stage was an orchestra of all the principal musicians, both vocal and instrumental, who, after the company had been assembled a short time, displayed their several abilities, and performed some pieces adapted to the purpose.

The ornaments and decorations of the other parts of the theatre were with equal propriety, taste, and elegance. Over the boxes were the illuminated heads of the poets after whose

names the boxes are denominated, and over the stage-boxes landscapes done in the same form, by Runciman, the Sir Joshua Reynolds of this country, and whose invention is perhaps equal to that of any painter in Europe.

The ball began with minuets danced in different parts of the room, which lasted but a short time, and then gave place to the more enlivening harmony of a country dance ; after a certain interval, an orchestra afforded entertainment to the company during the time of administering refreshments. The night was closed by the addition of French horns and clarinets, which the gentlemen of the regiment who were quartered here politely provided.

You will wonder to hear me say that, notwithstanding there was the greatest profusion of excellent wines, not one person attempted to stay after the departure of the ladies, and not a single glass fell a victim to excess. In this respect, the Scotch gentlemen contradicted themselves, and, with an uncommon degree of prudence and regularity, endeavoured to make the entertainment as profitable as possible to the manager who had exerted himself to please them, and who justly had merited the general approbation.

**The Assemblies, Public and Private.**

The assemblies here afford a very agreeable diversion ; they are governed by seven directors and seven directresses, one of whom manages the dancing alternately, and performs the part of Mistress of the Ceremonies. As the room is too small for the company who generally frequent them, it is impossible for all to dance at the same time ; to prevent, therefore, the inconvenience and confusion which must necessarily be occasioned, the lady directress is obliged to divide the company into sets, and suit them according to their rank and quality, putting about twelve couple in a set. After this *etiquette* is over, the first set dance minuets, beginning in the order of the tickets which are distributed by the lady directress, and then one country dance in the middle of the room, which is surrounded by chairs, to prevent the rest of the company from interfering with the dancers. At the conclusion of this, the second set begin, and then the third and fourth in their respective turns, till all the sets have danced their minuet and country dance, and then the first begin again a country dance, and the others follow as at first.

This mode of conducting the assemblies is much approved of by the inhabitants of this city, and certainly has many conveniences, as you dance with the greatest ease, order, and regu-

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larity, from having the whole room, and no crowd or interruption; besides you generally know your company, which gives the public all the advantages of a private entertainment. But then the young ladies, who are fond of dancing, complain that by this means they are deprived of that pleasure, as it seldom happens that a set can dance oftener than twice. Indeed the worst circumstance attending it is that you are often prevented entirely from dancing, as there may be too many sets for it ever to come to your turn; but for my own part, I think that the comfort with which you dance balances every disadvantage, and makes it, upon the whole, a most eligible form for an assembly.

Were the Scotch gentlemen disposed to gallantry, this manner of managing the dancing would afford them the finest opportunity they could wish, as they are left the whole evening to furnish entertainment and conversation for their partners. But observations on the clothes and dancing of the party who are performing, too often fill up the vacant interval; and, instead of ogling, sighs, protestations, and endearments, the lady sits envying the more fortunate stars of her companion who is dancing, whilst her partner yawns for the approaching period of his own exhibition.

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Ever since I have been in Edinburgh, the office of Lady Directress has been discharged by Mrs Murray, sister to Lord Mansfield, who executes her part with so much success that the other ladies fear to attempt it after her; and, indeed, she deserves every encomium that can be bestowed on her. As long as Mrs Murray obliges the public with her assistance, the city of Edinburgh cannot wish for a more agreeable entertainment than their assemblies; but if any thing should happen to deprive them of her abilities, it is imagined they would furnish themselves with a better room, where a different plan would be adopted.

How far it is better for a public amusement to be under the influence of a lady, or how far the Scotch gentlemen are to be justified in giving so much trouble and fatigue to the fair sex, I will not pretend to say, but thus far I can speak from experience, that nothing was ever conducted with more propriety and regularity than they are at present, nor was I ever at an assembly where the authority of the manager was so observed or respected. With the utmost politeness, affability, and good humour, Mrs Murray attends to every one. All petitions are heard, and demands granted which appear reasonable.

The company is so much the more obliged to Mrs Murray, as the task is by no means to be

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envied. The crowd which immediately surrounds her on her entering the room, the importunate applications of *chaperons*, maiden-aunts, and the earnest entreaties of lovers to obtain a ticket in one of the first sets for the dear object, render the fatigue of the office of lady directress almost intolerable ; and I am sensible few would undertake it did not Mrs Murray's zeal and endeavours meet with universal approbation.

Besides minuets and country-dances, they in general dance reels in separate parts of the room ; which is a dance that every one is acquainted with, but none but a native of Scotland can execute in perfection. Their great agility, vivacity, and variety of hornpipe steps, render it to them a most entertaining dance ; but to a stranger, the sameness of the figure makes it trifling and insipid, though you are employed during the whole time of its operation ; which, indeed, is the reason why it is so peculiarly adapted to the Scotch, who are little acquainted with the attitude of standing still.

Allemandes and cotillons are neither admired nor known in public companies in this city. Those ladies who have seen them danced in Paris or London are unwilling to introduce them, well knowing how little calculated they are for the meridian of their country.

I was lately at an assembly here on the

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Queen's birth-day, where Mrs Murray, representing her Majesty, presided in the chair, and received the proper compliments. It was conducted with the usual elegance and propriety, and was so crowded, that not half the sets could dance that wished to do it. I assure you I never saw a stronger appearance of loyalty even at St James's, or more rejoicing on any public event.

But besides the general assemblies, there are a number of private ones given by societies, clubs, or subscription, and every week is productive of something new. Among the rest, the matrons and married ladies give an assembly and entertainment to the young ladies, to whom they distribute tickets to provide themselves partners. You may be sure the old ones are not backward in their invitation. Each of them is squired by some antiquated beau, who, with his best clothes, brushes up his best minuet, and revives in imagination the feats of ancient times.

In return for this ball the gentlemen of the Capilaire Club give another equally elegant and polite, with a supper, ices, and everything that luxury can invent. After the ladies are withdrawn, the gentlemen, in conformity with the manner of this country, retire into a private room, where each sacrifices his understanding and health to wishing, in full bumpers, the

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health of his fair partner, who, if she has any understanding, must ridicule, condemn, and abhor the custom. But the Scotch gentlemen are so resolute in their determination, that many of them, immediately after the departure of the ladies, retire for a short time, in order to change their dancing apparel, and put on a dress more adapted to the occasion of riot and excess.

### **The Dancing-Masters' Balls.**

I think I have told you everything relating to the public assemblies; but there are others which seem to afford the Scotch great entertainment, as they are much frequented, and in general more crowded than the others. These are Dancing-Masters' Balls, who swarm in Edinburgh, and who are constantly exhibiting their scholars to the public. You know it is a custom in London for some of the principal dancing-masters to have balls for their benefit; but here it is a general thing, from the one most in vogue, to the humble teacher of a reel to the drone of the bagpipe. Each has his ball and his public, or his two balls (for I can find no difference) at a particular season of the year, in the assembly room, where a degree of emulation fires their breast, and each endeavours to show his own excellence and skill as a master by the

execution and performance of his scholars. It is incredible the pleasure and satisfaction the inhabitants of this city take in this diversion. They seem to enjoy it much more than dancing themselves: I suppose from the pleasing remembrance of those happy times when they themselves made part of the entertainment. But on other accounts I cannot wonder at it, as it is not only an entertaining sight, but fills the mind with agreeable reflections and benevolence, to behold the rising generation in any part of their education that may hereafter contribute either to their own pleasure or the advantage of society and mankind.

The children on these occasions are dressed with much elegance, ease, and propriety, without the foppery of the French or negligence of the English. You neither see a boy of ten years old in the habiliment of a *petit maître*, with bag, solitaire, sword, and muff; or the youth of seventeen, with his hair dishevelled, in the dress of an infant. The Scotch gain great credit by the apparel of their children, especially the young ones, who indeed are fine subjects for the display of taste in this particular.

I do not suppose any nation in Europe is more beautiful than the Scotch for a certain time; but the shape and symmetry of the boys, the complexion and features of the female sex,

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continue but a short period—as men, they are too coarse and ill-fashioned to be handsome; as women, too masculine and robust to be beauties. They dress their children in fancy dresses rather than any regular one, particularly the heads of the girls, which they ornament in the most unaffected, pleasing manner possible, with ribands and flowers; the habit of the boys, also is elegant and plain. The performers, therefore, as to outside appearance, have everything to recommend and set off their excellence in dancing.

But I cannot say they are any great proficient in any style of dancing that requires grace: the Scotch are perfect strangers to it in any part of their life.

At these balls all the children dance minuets, which would be very tiresome and disagreeable, as well from the badness of the performance as from the length of time they would take up, were they regularly continued. But the dancing-masters enliven the entertainment by introducing between the minuets their high dances (which is a kind of double hornpipe), in the execution of which they excel perhaps the rest of the world. I wish I had it in my power to describe to you the variety of figures and steps they put into it. Besides all those common to the hornpipe, they have a number of their own, which I never

before saw or heard of ; and their neatness and quickness in the performance of them is incredible. So amazing is their agility, that an Irishman, who was standing by me the other night, could not help exclaiming, in his surprise, "that he never saw children so *handy* with their *feet* in all his life." The motion of the feet is indeed the only thing that is considered.

I do not know any place in the world where dancing is made so necessary a part of polite education as in Edinburgh. For the number of inhabitants, I suppose there are more dancing-masters than in any other city ; who gain large fortunes, though they instruct on very moderate terms, from the number of scholars who constantly attend them. In general they may be said to be very good ones, as well those of their own country as foreigners from most of the polite parts of Europe. Besides minuets and these high dances, they instruct the children in cotillons and allemandes, but not many of them, as they are sensible of their incapability of succeeding.

### **The Concerts.**

One of the principal entertainments in Edinburgh is a concert, which is supported by subscription, and under the direction of a governor,

deputy governor, treasurer, and five directors, who procure some of the best performers from other countries, and have a weekly concert in an elegant room, which they have built for that purpose, and which is styled St. Cecilia's Hall. It is rather too confined, but in every other respect the best accommodated to music of any room I ever was in. The figure of it is elliptical, and the roof is vaulted, and a single instrument is heard in it with the greatest possible advantage. The managers of the concert have a certain number of tickets to distribute to their friends, so that none are admitted but the people of fashion. Though the band is a good one in general, yet I cannot say much in favour of the vocal performers.

The natives of this country are not remarkable for their abilities in singing, and except in a few of the real Scotch tunes, I have never met with a voice that had either compass or an agreeable tone. But in order to make up this deficiency in their own countrymen, the managers take care to have some of the best singers from London and Italy. At present they have some tolerably good ones, who are not quite so admired as a Gabrielli or a Tenducci would be; the latter of whom, before he fled from Great Britain, resided here a considerable time, and was one cause of introducing that rage for

Italian music which is now so predominant. Indeed, the degree of attachment which is shown to music in general in this country exceeds belief. It is not only the principal entertainment, but the constant topic of every conversation; and it is necessary not only to be a lover of it, but to be possessed of a knowledge of the science, to make yourself agreeable to society.

In vain may a man of letters, whose want of natural faculties has prevented him from understanding an art from which he could derive no pleasure, endeavour to introduce other matters of discourse, however entertaining in their nature: everything must give place to music. Music alone engrosses every idea. In religion a Scotchman is grave and abstracted; in politics serious and deliberate; it is in the power of harmony alone to make him an enthusiast.

What a misfortune it is to the country, and how trifling does it appear to a stranger, to find so many philosophers, professors of science, and respectable characters, disputing on the merits of an Italian fiddle and the preciseness of a demiquaver, while poetry, painting, architecture, and theatrical amusements, whose province it is to instruct as well as to amuse, here couch beneath the dominion of an air or a ballad, which at best were only invented to pass away a

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vacant hour or ease the mind from more important duties !

### **The Entertainments of Oyster Cellars and Comely Gardens.**

There is here a species of entertainment which seems to give more real pleasure to the company who visit it than either Ranelagh or the Pantheon. The votaries to this shrine of pleasure are numerous, and the manner is entirely new. As soon as the evenings begin to grow late, a large party form themselves together and march to the Temple, where, after descending a few steps for the benefit of being removed from profaner eyes, they are admitted by the good guardian of it, who doubtless rejoices to see so large and well-disposed a company of worshippers. The Temple itself is very plain and humble. It knows no idle ornaments, no sculpture or painting, nor even so much as wax tapers—a few solitary candles of tallow cast a dim, religious light, verywell adapted to the scene. There are many separate cells of different sizes accommodated to the number of the religious, who attend in greater or smaller parties as the spirit moves them. After the company have made the proper sacrifices, and

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stayed as long as they think necessary, the utensils are removed, proper donations made to the priestess, who, like all others of her profession, is not very averse to money, and they retire in good order and disperse for the evening.

In plain terms this shrine of festivity is nothing more than an Oyster Cellar, and its votaries the first people in Edinburgh. A few evenings ago I had the pleasure of being asked to one of these entertainments by a lady. At that time I was not acquainted with this scene of "high life below stairs," and therefore, when she mentioned the word oyster cellar, I imagined I must have mistaken the place of invitation. She repeated it, however, and I found it was not my business to make objections, so agreed immediately. You will not think it very odd that I should expect, from the place where the appointment was made, to have had a *partie tete-à-tete*. I thought I was bound in honour to keep it a secret, and waited with great impatience till the hour arrived. When the clock struck the hour fixed on, away I went, and inquired if the lady were there. "Oh yes," cried the woman, "she has been here an hour or more." I had just time to curse my want of punctuality when the door opened, and I had the pleasure of being ushered in, not to one lady as I expected,

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but to a large and brilliant company of both sexes, most of whom I had the honour of being acquainted with.

The large table round which they were seated was covered with dishes full of oysters and pots of porter. For a long time I could not suppose that this was the only entertainment we were to have, and I sat waiting in expectation of a repast that was never to make its appearance. This I soon found verified, as the table was cleared and glasses introduced. The ladies were now asked whether they would choose brandy or rum punch. I thought this question an odd one, but I was soon informed by the gentleman who sat next me that no wine was sold here, but that punch was quite "the thing." The ladies, who always love what is best, fixed upon brandy punch, and a large bowl was immediately introduced. The conversation hitherto had been insipid and at intervals; it now became general and lively. The women, who, to do them justice, are much more entertaining than their neighbours in England, discovered a great deal of vivacity and fondness for repartee. A thousand things were hazarded and met with applause, to which the oddity of the scene gave propriety, and which could have been produced in no other place. The general ease with which they conducted

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themselves, the innocent freedom of their manners, and their unaffected good-nature, all conspired to make us forget that we were regaling in a cellar ; and was a convincing proof that, let local customs operate as they may, a truly polite woman is everywhere the same. Bigoted as I know you to be to more fashionable amusements, you yourself would have confessed that there was in this little assembly more real happiness and mirth than in all the ceremonies and splendid meetings at Soho.

When the company were tired of conversation, they began to dance reels, their favourite dance, which they performed with great agility and perseverance. One of the gentlemen, however, fell down in the most active part of it, and lamed himself ; so the dance was at an end for that evening. On looking at their watches, the ladies now found it was time to retire ; the coaches were therefore called, and away they went, and with them all our mirth.

The company, which was now reduced to a party of gentlemen, began to grow very argumentative, and consequently very dull. Pipes and politics were introduced ; but as I found we were not likely "*ex fumo dare lucem,*" I took my hat, and wished them a good night. The bill for entertaining half a dozen very fashionable women amounted only to two shil-

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lings a-piece. If you will not allow the entertainment an elegant one, you must at least confess that it is cheap.

The Oyster Cellar is only a winter entertainment. In summer, another kind takes place. This is a humble and very distant imitation of Marybone Gardens, and is held in a place called Comely Gardens—not that they have any relation to the name, for there is not the least beauty about them. They are open twice a week, from the beginning of June till the latter end of August, and the admittance is only one shilling.

Having nothing to do one evening, at the end of last summer, I went there with an intention of seeing what was to be seen. I walked up and down the Gardens, but nobody appeared. I then approached the orchestra, which was the ruins of an old pigeon house, with no other alteration but that of removing the pigeons and making room for four or five musicians, who were playing a composition, most musical, most melancholy, out of one of the windows. They continued this some time, but finding there was no one to listen to them, and that “they were wasting their sweetness on the desert air,” they gave over playing, and retired for the evening.

I now find that these Gardens are considered

by the fashionable people here as a very unfashionable place, and only frequented by the *Bourgeois*. It is possible that even this place, under the direction of a man of taste, with proper improvements, might, in some measure, resemble the public gardens in London. But the rage of diversions is here so much more moderated, and they have in general so little ready money to throw away upon articles of amusement, especially as the better sort of people are in the country at this season of the year, that I am persuaded they will never have any imitation of Vauxhall at Edinburgh. The climate would be no obstruction during the summer season, as they walk out at all hours in the evening without the least inconvenience. But the greatest objection is, that it has been thought unfashionable; and when that is the case, it is effectually condemned for ever. No place under the sun is more absolutely under the dominion of the word Fashion. If a few select people here choose to say that such a thing is *vulgar*, there is no further question; but it becomes so immediately.

#### On the Cookery, &c.; some particular Dishes.

I am just come from a dinner from which I rose up almost famished with hunger, and

tantalized to death by the enjoyment of other people, because my friend must needs entertain with dishes in the *highest taste*; and what was worse, entirely in the Scotch taste, whose cookery I cannot commend so much as their politeness and hospitality. As he is a true native of the North, and very zealous for the honour of his country, and everything that relates to it, it was impossible for me not to like a mixture, which had met with the highest approbation at Fortune's,\* had been applauded to the skies by my Lord Kelly, and other celebrated knights of the trencher: and I could not but relish, what I could not swallow, because it had received the sanction of the whole kingdom of Scotland. This was a *haggis*: a dish not more remarkable or more disgusting to the palate, than in appearance. When I first cast my eye on it, I thought it resembled a bullock's paunch, which you often meet in the streets of London in a wheel-barrow; and, on a nearer inspection, I found it really to be the stomach of a sheep, stuffed till it was as full as a football. An incision being made in the side of it, the entrails burst forth, "*ceu rapidus montano flumine torrens*," and presented such a display of oat meal, and sheep's liver and lights, with a

\* The name of a man who keeps a celebrated tavern in Edinburgh.

mofeta that accompanied them, that I could scarcely help thinking myself in the *Grotto del Cane*. As I mentioned, my politeness got the better of my delicacy, and I was prevailed on to taste it; but I could go no further, and, after a few encomiums on its being tender and savoury, which I thought sufficient to show that I was not wholly destitute of *taste*, I turned a hungry face towards a large tureen in the middle, which the master of the feast called cocky-lecky. With the greatest appearance of luxury and glee in his countenance, he extracted from a quantity of broth, in which it had been boiled with leeks, a large cock, which I dare say had been the herald of the morn for many a year. This, he exclaimed, would be exquisite, if the cook had taken care that the broth was sufficiently seasoned; and after he had tasted it, he declared that it exceeded his highest expectations. During this time, I found some of the company pay great attention; and, on the verdict being given, seem rather impatient: but as I was a stranger, and had not blessed my appetite with a considerable degree of haggis, my plate was filled first, and I began upon it, whilst their eyes were all fixed on me to hear me pronounce the sentence; which I did, indeed, in the words of the verdict, but with some reluctance; for it was so hard and tough,

that it seemed to require the stomach of an ostrich to digest it. I could not help thinking, that it would have cut a much better figure in a main than on a table, as I would have defied the best warrior cock that ever came victorious from the pit of battle, to have produced a breast more impenetrable, or a leg better fortified with spurs and sinew. But, "it was admirable, it was *the taste*;" that was sufficient. The Scotchmen devoured it unmercifully, and the ladies enjoyed the broth.

I was next solicited to eat some sheep's head, which had raised my curiosity for some time to find out what it was; and on being told, I concluded it was the head of a black sheep, and, perhaps, on that account, a rarity; for its appearance was so *sombre*, that otherwise it must have been dressed in the smoke-jack. My being unwilling to be disappointed again, prevented my having resolution to venture on it: in order therefore to fill up the vacant interim, till a Solan goose, which had been the cause of the invitation, should make its *entrée*, I enquired of my neighbour the manner of dressing this sheep's head; and, on account of his close attachment to his plate, it was with difficulty I squeezed from him, in half-eaten words, that it was nothing but a plain-boiled, common sheep's head with the skin on, from which the wool had

been singed, which was the cause of its dark complexion.

But behold the goose! The haggis had been in *taste*, the cocky-lecky had been in *the taste*, and the goose was to be *au dernier gout*. To be brief, then, a part of the breast fell to my share, which was something better than a hern or a sea-gull; but had a strong, oily, unpalatable flavour; of a blackish colour, and so very tender, that it gave me the opportunity of putting a bit into the orifice of my stomach, which, by this time, began to be rapacious for want of something to devour. However, plenty of good claret and agreeable conversation made up other deficiencies; and I took my leave in very good humour, though heartily praying never to be invited again to a dinner in *the highest taste*, where I must sacrifice my own to conform to the caprice of some pampered glutton, whose *want of taste* has been able to gain credit in the world, and set a fashion.

As I am on the subject of eating, I will finish this with mentioning three other dishes which are common in this country: cabbiclow, barley-broth, and friars-chicken. The first is cod-fish salted for a short time, and not dried in the manner of common salt-fish, and boiled with parsley and horse-radish. They eat it with egg sauce, and it is extremely luscious and palatable.

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Barley-broth is beef stewed with a quantity of pearl barley and greens of different sorts ; and the other is chicken cut into small pieces, and boiled with parsley, cinnamon, and eggs, in strong beef soup. I know not what holy order may have had the reputation of discovering this last dish ; but from the luxuriousness of it, it seems admirably adopted for the provision of a convent.

### **The Climate, and the State of Gardening and Planting.**

The natives of this country who have travelled much into warmer climates, tell you that Scotland is far colder than England, and that you cannot clothe yourself too warmly in winter. As to myself, I have not as yet found any of these precautions necessary, and I wear just the same number of clothes I should do in England at this season of the year.

The weather is much more changeable than it is in England, and frequently you experience all the seasons in one day. In the middle of it, when the sun is in his meridian, the heat is sometimes extremely powerful, and in the evening you have all that piercing cold you might expect here in winter.

The most particular effect which I find is the winds, which here reign in all their violence,

and seem indeed to claim the country as their own. A person who has passed all his time in England cannot be said to know what a wind is. He has zephyrs and breezes and gales, but nothing more ; at least they appear so to me after having felt the hurricanes of Scotland.

As this town is situated on the borders of the sea, and surrounded by hills of an immense height, the currents of air are carried down between them with a rapidity and a violence which nothing can resist. It has frequently been known that in the New Town at Edinburgh three or four people have scarce been able to shut the door of the house ; and it is a very common accident to hear of sedan chairs being overturned. It seems almost a necessary compliment here to wait upon a lady the next morning, to hope she got safe home. In many visits which I have made since I came here, two people have been obliged to go on each side of the chair to keep it even, while other two have carried it ; and sometimes even this precaution has not been sufficient. Not many days ago an officer, whom I have the honour of being acquainted with, a man of six feet high, and one would imagine by no means calculated to become the sport of winds, was, however, in following another gentleman out of the Castle, lifted up by their violence from the ground,

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carried over his companion's head, and thrown at some distance on the stones. This, I can assure you, is a literal fact.

At other times the winds, instead of rushing down with impetuosity, whirl about in eddies, and become still more dreadful. On these occasions it is almost impossible to stir out of doors, as the dust and stones gathered up in these vortices not only prevent your seeing, but frequently cut your legs by the velocity with which they are driven. The Scotch have a particular appellation for this, "*the stour.*"

The chief scene where these winds exert their influence is the New Bridge, which, by being thrown over a long valley that is open at both ends, and particularly from being ballustraded on each side, admits the wind in the most charming manner imaginable, and you receive it with the same force you would do were it conveyed to you through a pair of bellows. It is far from unentertaining for a man to pass over this bridge on a tempestuous day. In walking over it this morning I had the pleasure of adjusting a lady's petticoats, which had blown almost entirely over her head, and which prevented her disengaging herself from the situation she was in, while one poor gentleman who unfortunately forgot his hat and wig, had them lifted up by an unpremeditated puff, and entirely carried away.



CROSSING THE NORTH BRIDGE IN A HIGH WIND.



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But though the bleak air of this climate may give, as it is said to do, that keen and penetrating look to the inhabitants, which they certainly possess, as well as great activity of body, they are far from being healthy in general. I have scarce met with one instance of remarkable longevity amongst all the people I have seen, and there are very few places where you observe more funerals. Whether this is to be attributed entirely to the climate, or in some part to the College of Physicians, who are very eminent in their profession, I leave you to determine for yourself.

In horticultural matters there is no doubt but that the inhabitants of Scotland lie under many disadvantages. These prodigious north-east winds, which sweep everything before them near Edinburgh, render it impossible to have fruit in that perfection as in parts more to the south; but yet their knowledge in gardening is by no means inferior to their neighbours, and art and fire in some measure make up for natural deficiencies and the inclemency of their seasons. As to common kitchen-garden vegetables, I know of no place where they are to be had in greater plenty or perfection than here. The soil seems peculiarly favourable to them, and the whole country round Edinburgh is employed for that purpose. The great abund-

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ance of potatoes and carrots, which are excellent of their kind, makes it extremely comfortable to the poorer sort of people, who often can get nothing else to support their families during winter. There are also some places a little distant from the City, which by being in a valley have nothing to counteract the genial warmth of the sun, that have such a profusion of strawberries that I hardly think Switzerland produces them in greater quantities. I am informed, likewise, that gooseberries are equally plentiful, and arrive at the same perfection. There are few cherries, except on walls, that have any flavour. Apricots, peaches, and nectarines are but of an inferior quality. Figs and mulberries are not to be met with, and few sorts of vines will bear anything. Though there is but one orchard near Edinburgh, and hardly another in the whole country, I cannot say that common pears and apples are so scarce as you would imagine ; but good apples are not to be seen.

The little variety of fruit which this climate brings to perfection is the cause that the inhabitants set anything on their tables, after dinner, that has the appearance of it ; and I have often observed, at the houses of principal people, a plate of small turnips, which they call "Neeps," introduced in the dessert, and eat

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with as much avidity as if they had been fruit of the first perfection. But if the Scotch are deprived, by the nature of their situation, of the enjoyment of natural fruit, they have the best opportunity of furnishing themselves with hothouses, as well from the cheapness, as from the excellence of their coals; and, in this respect, have the advantage of the rest of Great Britain. There are few gentlemen of any consequence that are not supplied with fruit by this means; and indeed, melons, pines, grapes, and many other sorts are produced here with great success.

The Botanical or Physic Garden, belonging to the College, is perhaps one of the best in Europe. It is large and spacious, and placed in a warm retired situation, between Leith and Edinburgh, where it is little exposed to the fury of the blasts. There are many of the most curious exotic plants; and a neat and elegant apartment is provided for the professor, who reads a course of lectures constantly every year for the benefit of the students in medicine.

The gentlemen who have seats near Edinburgh, which, from the romantic and diversified nature of the country, are generally picturesque and beautiful, deserve the highest commendation, as well for their taste and judgment in planting, as for their encouragement in that useful and ornamental diversion. The rebellious

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spirit, and unhappy disturbances, which so long distracted this nation, and often brought ruin and desolation into the very heart of the kingdom, prevented, in former times, that attention to rural pleasures, and beautifying the face of their country, which our ancestors in England so much delighted in, and of which we every day enjoy the advantage and profit.

### **The Kirk, and Devotion of the People.**

There are already in this place six or seven clergymen of the Church of England, which is more than are necessary, some being without any duty. This is occasioned by a schism amongst them and the governors of the New Chapel. But the discarded gentlemen say the governors have no right to turn them out, *et adhuc sub judice lis est*. There is not one of them who can be called a good reader or an orator in the pulpit; so far from it, that I never attended to more insignificant, unprofitable discourses in any church. Even the Presbyterians, who preach without book, and consequently ought to have every allowance made them, excel them in such a manner that I am astonished any reasonable man, whatever may be the mode of worship in his own country, should think it worth his time to listen to them.

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The ministers of the Church of Scotland assume a virtue if they have it not ; and I must say for them (though it is incredible what nonsense I have sometimes heard from their pulpits) that they command attention even when you are shocked at the absurdity of their language, whereas those of the English Chapel drone out their common-place precepts of morality with so much coldness and indifference that it is with difficulty you can yawn out a sermon. Indeed, this real or pretended godliness is not confined to the ministers of the Church of Scotland, but is universal, especially on a Sabbath. During the time of kirk you scarcely see anybody in the streets, or loitering away the time of prayer in wantonness and excess ; though at other times, and even then in private, there is no crime they would scruple to commit. To be seen in the street after the summons of the bell, or to read any book on a Sunday which has no relation to religion, seems wicked and abominable to the most abandoned. You must acknowledge it redounds greatly to the credit of Presbyterianism that the mask of religion should bear so strong a resemblance to the reality, for, in general, good consequences must arise from it. "I never can imagine but that the person who lays so much stress upon the apparent and outward part of his duty must have a sufficient inward

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sense of it as would frequently lead him to the discharge and observance of those offices which can only arise from the heart, and which cannot be supposed to spring from a desire of applause or profit." But you may object that this parade of goodness is greatly instrumental to hypocrisy and deceit. Perhaps it may in some measure ; but surely the evil which may arise from that is abundantly counter-balanced by the advantages derived from it to society, if it is only in keeping the conscience awake—that silent monitor of what is good and right. Whereas, in London, what other difference do the common people make in Sunday except in the excess of idleness and riot? But far be it from me to say that the Scotch nation have more real religion than the English. I only affirm, let their principles be what they may, that there is a greater appearance of regard to public worship and more respect paid to the Sabbath. I must not forget to mention the extraordinary neatness and simplicity of dress which distinguish them at this time of public prayer. The poorest cottager, with his best face, puts on his best apparel, as it were, to present himself at the throne of mercy, a pure and unpolluted sacrifice. The kirks also, in general, are plain, unadorned, and such large edifices that they contain the most numerous congregations. I am told the Trone

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Church would hold with ease at least fifteen hundred persons.

With respect to their discourses from the pulpit, which are delivered as it were by inspiration, were I to speak in dispraise of them you might think, perhaps, I was too much bigoted in favour of the Church of England to give an impartial account. I shall only inform you, therefore, that their sermons are longer and not so correct as those of our clergymen, but better calculated for the generality of congregations, being addressed more to the passions, and never on any abstract topics of divinity, which are unintelligible to the common people. Indeed this may be one reason why the common people so universally frequent the kirk, for if they gain no instruction they are sure to be entertained, and have their understandings flattered. It is really a curious sight to behold, at the conclusion of the meeting, the inundation of people that flow from the kirks, on account of their being so crowded. I have seen the High Street in Edinburgh, which is no inconsiderable one, from having the appearance of a deserted place, so "thronged," as they call it, with people in ten minutes that it was nearly impossible to pass by.

The New English Chapel is a neat, elegant building, but hardly large enough for the mem-

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bers of the Church of England who are constant inhabitants of this city. The architect has been so unfortunate in his position of the pulpit, that in particular places the voice of the preacher is totally confounded with the echo. An excellent organ attracts by its novelty, as nothing of that kind is admitted in the kirks.

### **The Mode of Conducting Funerals.**

I know no place where you behold more frequent funerals than in this city, and they are conducted with a silence and a solemnity which makes sorrow appear still more dismal. On these occasions, in England, you know, no distress is seen; for, as the afflicted hire others to mourn for them, it cannot be supposed that people should be affected by distresses which are nothing to them. An Englishman seems to carry with him the same desires out of life, which he had in it; and as all his pleasure was centred in going post, you frequently meet his hearse at a full gallop, as if, after having been in a hurry all his lifetime, it was decreed he should find no rest even in death.

In this place, instead of applying to an undertaker for a group of grim figures, and dismal faces, they send a card, as the French do, to all the persons of their acquaintance, desiring their

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attendance at the funeral. If the people who are invited do not really feel sorrow, in compliment at least they affect to do so : and therefore, you are not shocked with any ill-timed mirth or outward signs of insensibility. They all dress themselves at these meetings in a suit of black, which has something in it peculiarly mournful : all the nearest relations, besides putting on weepers, which are common with us, fix a long piece of muslin to the collar of the shirt, that hangs down before as far as the middle of the waist. They continue this fashion all the time they wear their first mourning, and sometimes the excess of their grief is in proportion to these pieces of muslin.

In the funerals of the lower classes of people, the procession is always on foot. The coffin is carried by four people, the minister walks before it, and all the friends and relations follow. They proceed with a slow, solemn pace to the kirk ; and as the relationship extends itself a great way in this country, a whole street is sometimes nearly filled with this sable procession.

Persons of higher rank are carried in hearses ; but with none of that ostentatious pomp and ceremony which is so frequent, and generally so ridiculous in England. The vanity of people in this country dies with them. You are never astonished with a display of which they can be

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no longer sensible, and from whence no gratification can be derived, but one of the most melancholy and disgusting nature : a hearse, followed by a mourning coach, is all the parade that you see ; and if a man has done nothing in life worth remembering, he has no chance of making himself immortal by his funeral. The undertakers seem the only people who suffer by all this humility ; they neither find people to mourn, nor plumes of feathers, nor carriages, nor any of those *insignia mortis*, which few people would think of having, could they only see the bill.

There is one instance of politeness which the Scotch show each other, and which, as far as mere ceremonial can be agreeable, is certainly so ; whenever a relation of any family dies, the first visit made to them by their friends and even acquaintances, is always made in mourning, as if to sympathise with their distress. This piece of form they observe with great care ; and a person would be thought a strange creature who should go dressed in colours to the house of mourning. This custom is never repeated. From these civilities, and the frequent mournings which the numerous relationships occasion, many families are almost constantly clothed in black ; and on entering a large room full of company, one would sometimes imagine that an epidemical disorder was raging in the town, and that every

one of them had lost some near relation. But whether it is from the constant habit of mourning that the occasion of it loses in some measure its effect, or that they are a nation of philosophers, they do not appear to me to feel with all that lively and tender sensibility, which is visible in some countries. They weep for a little time, they then begin to think of something fashionable for a mourning dress, and everything goes on as before. The widows, indeed, put on so very sorrowful an appearance, and wrap themselves so entirely in black, that one would imagine they had devoted the rest of their lives to melancholy, and never intend to take another husband. But yet, in spite of all this, many of them do.

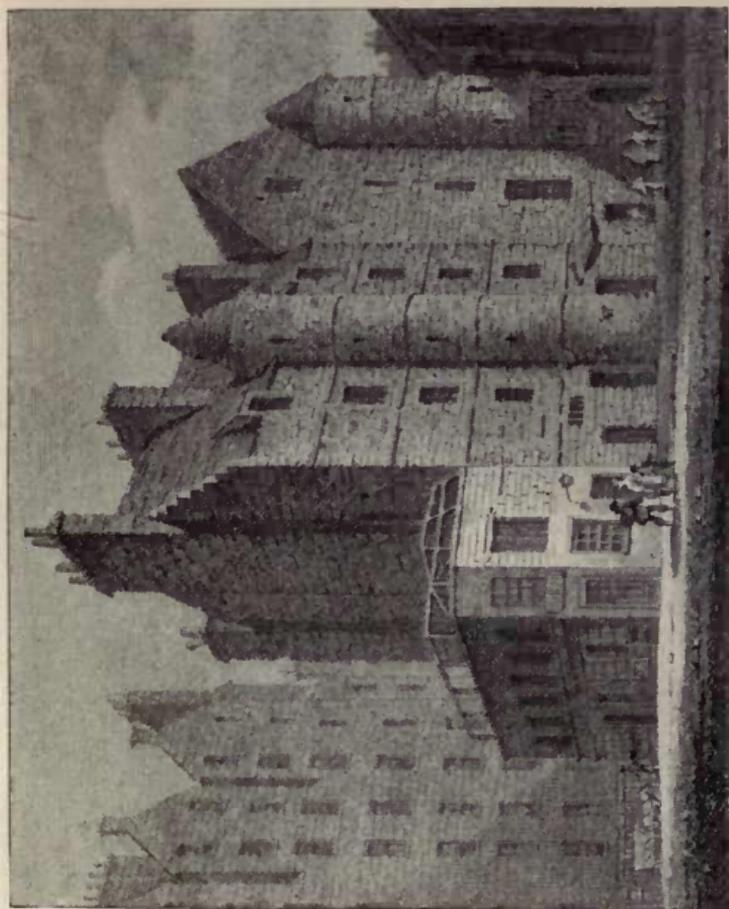
#### **An Execution.**

I was this morning a witness to one of the most solemn and mournful of all spectacles, the execution of a criminal. Death is always affecting; but it becomes still more moving when we behold a poor wretch sacrificed to the injured laws of his country.

In Scotland, and I mention it to its honour, there is, on these unhappy occasions, much more solemnity and decency observed than in Paris. The lenity of the laws here makes it necessary that a man shall be "habit and

repute" a thief, before he can be condemned to die for theft; and therefore, executions, except for murder, are very uncommon. This man had already been twice convicted and pardoned; so that there was no room for intercession to the King's mercy; nor was there the least hope of his amendment, as he was near sixty years old, had spent the whole of his life in a series of repeated thefts, and as he advanced in age, had advanced likewise in iniquity.

The town of Edinburgh, from the amazing height of its buildings, seems peculiarly formed to make a spectacle of this kind solemn and affecting. The houses, from the bottom up to the top, were lined with people, every window crowded with spectators to see the unfortunate man pass by. At one o'clock the City Guard went to the door of the Tolbooth, the common gaol here, to receive and conduct their prisoner to the place of execution, which is always in the Grass Market, at a very great distance from the prison. All the remaining length of the High Street was filled with people, not only from the town itself, but the country around, whom the novelty of the sight had brought together. On the Guard knocking at the door of the Tolbooth, the unhappy criminal made his appearance. He was dressed in a white waistcoat and breeches, usual on these occasions, bound with



THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN, OLD TOLBOOTH PRISON.



black ribands, and a night-cap tied with the same. His white hairs, which were spread over his face, made his appearance still more pitiable. Two clergymen walked on each side of him, and were discoursing with him on subjects of religion. The executioner, who seemed ashamed of the meanness of his office, followed, muffled up in a great coat, and the City Guards, with their arms ready, marched around him. The criminal, whose hands were tied behind him, and the rope about his neck, walked up the remaining part of the street. It is the custom in this country for the criminal to walk to the gallows, which has something much more decent in it than being thrown into a cart, as in England, and carried, like a beast, to slaughter. The slow, pensive, melancholy step of a man in these circumstances has something in it that seems to accord with affliction, and affects the mind forcibly with its distress. It is the pace which a man in sorrow naturally falls into.

When the criminal had descended three parts of the hill which leads to the Grass Market, he beheld the crowd waiting for his coming, and the instrument of execution at the end of it. He made a short stop here, naturally shocked at such a sight, and the people seemed to sympathise with his affliction. When he reached the end, he recalled his resolution; and, after

## 78 *The University and its Professors.*

passing some time in prayer with the clergyman, and once addressing himself to the people, he was turned off, and expired. So great is the abhorrence of the office of executioner in this country, that the poor wretch is obliged to be kept three or four days in prison, till the hatred of the mob has subsided, and his act is forgotten.

### **The University and its Professors.**

I must own that, in respect of civility and good manners, as of morality and virtue, the Professors of the College of Edinburgh shine conspicuous; and though all of them are men of letters, and skilled in the sciences they profess, they are not less acquainted with the world, and with polite behaviour, than with polite literature.

The College is a very ancient and irregular building, consisting of three courts on different planes, which are small, and contain rooms for the Professors to read their lectures. I do not find any of the Professors inhabit the College, except the Principal, who lives in a house which stands where formerly was situated the house of the Provost of the Kirk of Field, blown up by gunpowder, A.D. 1567, to conceal the murder of Henry, husband to Queen Mary.

As being the foundation of the citizens, the



THE PLACE OF EXECUTION, AT THE FOOT OF THE  
WEST BOW.



*The University and its Professors.* 79

College is in the patronage of the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh, who, as Curators have the management of its revenues. Oliver Cromwell, A.D. 1658, gave towards its support an annuity of £200 sterling; and the whole annual expenses of it amount to £2000. The poor students, who resemble the scholars in our universities, are fifty-one in number; they have different sums allowed them, and five of them have £10 a-year; they wear no gowns, and have no marks of distinction, as at Glasgow and St. Andrews.

The library is well furnished with books in variety of languages and sciences. There is a picture in it of Lord Napier of Merchiston, the celebrated inventor of the logarithms; and a very curious copy of a double-faced letter, written by Cardinal Richelieu to the ambassador of France at Rome, concerning a Benedictine monk, which implies either the best or the most villainous character.

In this, as in all the other Colleges of Scotland, till of late, were only taught Divinity, School-philosophy, Mathematics, and Languages; but in the last reigns, the number of Professors was so augmented, that nothing is wanting to form a complete academical education, since all the liberal arts are taught as in the other celebrated universities in Europe. Divinity, Church

## 80 *The University and its Professors.*

History, Civil Law, the Law of Nature and Nations, and Scotch Law, Anatomy, Theory of Physic, Practice of Physic, Chemistry, Botany, Mathematics, Universal History, Natural Philosophy, Logic, Metaphysics, and Ethics, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages have each their respective Professor; and as the sciences of Divinity and Mathematics, and the Greek tongue have two Professors, the number of the whole amounts to twenty-one, and the sciences taught by them eighteen. Their salaries are different; the largest is that of the Professor of the Law of Nature and Nations, being £150, and the lowest is £33 sterling; but the number of students that frequent the College amply recompense them for the trouble and expense of lectures.

As the University of Edinburgh is celebrated throughout Europe for its instruction in particular branches of philosophy and literature, the number of young persons that crowd here from different countries is prodigious, and the profit arising from them is sensibly perceived through all Scotland, as they contribute to the support of many thousands of its inhabitants, in supplying either their necessities or luxury by their manufactures and industry. They are under no restraint from the College, but have lodgings in the city. In general they are very extrava-

*The University and its Professors.* 81

gant, especially those from Ireland, who too often forsake the calm, retired paths of learning and science, to revel in the public scenes of dissipation and debauchery. But the students who are natives of this country, present a different picture. I cannot say their company are the most agreeable companions, they not being so remarkable for their cleanliness and politeness as for their poverty, famine and science. The miserable holes which some of them inhabit, their abstemiousness and parsimony, their constant attendance to study, their indefatigable industry, even border on romance. They seem to look on learning as a diversion, and when once they have roused her from her abstruse and concealed haunts, never quit her footsteps till they have pursued her to the covert. But, in general, they apply themselves to too many of the Professors, to pay a proper attention to each; and their excessive earnestness to obtain an universal knowledge, hinders them from gaining that proficiency in any one science, which ought to be the object of great minds. I take this to be one reason of that mediocrity of learning, which Dr Johnson speaks of in his Tour, and which is to be found in every part of Scotland. For, as the lectures of the Professors are open to every one, and the expense of attending them very trifling, it is in the power of almost

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every tradesman to furnish his son with that instruction which is most adapted to his taste or capacity, and is the reason why the middle degree of people are not in such a state of ignorance as in England and in other countries. On the contrary, the easy access to the lectures is an inducement, to those whose fortune and circumstances can support the expense, to attend so many that the knowledge which they acquire must be imperfect and superficial.

Each Professor has his room or theatre, which is surrounded by benches, that have desks before them for the students to write and take notes; and the Professor stands, or is seated, in the middle, as is best adapted to the purport of his lecture. Most of the Professors wear gowns like those of our Universities; and their lecture, in general, lasts about three-quarters of an hour.

As the College of Edinburgh has for many years been celebrated throughout Europe for its instruction in Physic, and the sciences which belong to it, you cannot but imagine that the greatest care is taken in the appointment of persons to the chair of those professorships which relate to this branch of knowledge; and indeed the electors gain great credit in the choice of all, there not being one who is not remarkable for his learning and abilities. The

*The University and its Professors.* 83

theory of physic, chemistry, and anatomy, have Dr Cullen, Dr Black, and Dr Munro: who are not more conspicuous for their skill in their profession, than for their knowledge of philosophy and mankind. But as the merit of these learned men must be as well known to you as to the rest of the world, who are at all acquainted with the sphere of literature, it would be needless for me to add my poor pittance of praise to characters which bear the stamp of general approbation. I shall only speak of them, therefore, as persons appointed to convey to the minds of youth that part of science which they profess, and of their manner of reading their lectures. In this last particular, I wish I could say as much in commendation of Dr Cullen, as of many others; a dryness and insipidity in his delivery, with a want of energy in his manner, too often renders his lectures, which have every other merit, dull and uninteresting: but at the same time it must be acknowledged that his wonderful penetration and sagacity, his clearness and perspicuity, his profound knowledge of the mysteries of his profession, make him the most qualified to instruct, and amply recompense any other deficiency.

The Professor of Chemistry is too diffident of the justness of his expression ever to appear an

## 84 *The University and its Professors.*

orator: he is so concise in his sentences, and at the same time abounds in such a profusion of ideas, that it is with the greatest difficulty he can find words satisfactory to himself: which might make many people imagine that he is ignorant of language. Indeed, sometimes he is at such a loss to explain his meaning, that he is obliged to make a long pause in his lecture; but when once his expression breaks forth, its propriety and strength more than reward your expectation: and no chemist was ever more successful in his experiments than Dr Black.

The Professor of Anatomy is the most frequented of any of the Professors; as it is necessary for all the votaries of Esculapius to have a competent knowledge of this, as the foundation and ground-work of the other parts of Physic. Dr Munro has all the advantages of a great orator, full of strength and force in his expression, round and manly in his periods, emphatical and bold in his manner of delivery: he particularly avoids that familiarity, which too many of the Professors are apt to fall into in their lectures, and which seems to degrade their dignity by giving them the air of common conversation: and from this reason he appears to many to excel more in the physiological than in any other part of anatomy; for the proper ex-

planation of which an inferior manner might be better accommodated.

But before I quit this subject, I must not forget the Professor of Rhetoric; who, of all others, though perhaps not the most attended, claims the regard and observation of the polite scholar. The harmony of his diction, the elegance and sagacity of his criticisms, the proper modulation of his voice, the spirit and fire of his imagination, all conspire to make him that orator which he wishes to make his pupils. I need say nothing further in commendation of Dr Blair, than that all his lectures are composed in the same graceful style, the same sweetness of language, the same vivacity of thought and nervous manliness, which is to be found in his "Essay on the Poems of Ossian," and which does not do him more credit as a scholar, than as a man.

I have mentioned these Professors to you, as in general they are more known in the learned world than many of the others; but indeed, most of them are equally great and meritorious in their respective offices.

There are few places where a polite education can be better acquired than in this city; and where the knowledge requisite to form a gentleman, and a man of the world, can be sooner obtained. It is one of the greatest faults in our

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English universities, that so much attention and importance should be given to studies, which, perhaps, are of little use to a man in life when either his fortune or dignity calls on him to exert his knowledge for the happiness of his fellow-countrymen: and, on the contrary, that those qualifications which make a man an amiable friend, and an agreeable companion, should be held in contempt, or perfectly neglected. But here it is quite otherwise. Each attends that system of lectures which suits either his genius or intended pursuits, without restraint or compulsion. No particular study or science is in higher estimation than another: all are taught; each has its votaries, and a proper portion of time is allotted to those inferior qualifications, which we every day see assist the greater accomplishments in the acquisition of reputation and fortune. Hence it arises, that the Scotch in general have rather that kind of useful acquaintance with literature, which is so recommended in the *Cortegiano*, as procuring a man friends and esteem, than any great and deep knowledge in one particular art or language. And hence it is, that we find them excelling the English as courtiers, and men of the world; because they are always well stored with such acquisitions as render them more serviceable in society, and from which the most common occasions of life may reap some advantage.

The College of Edinburgh confers degrees as the universities of England and Scotland do ; but no degree under a Doctor is of any estimation ; which may be had as soon as the necessary instruction can be acquired to pass the proper examination.

### **Education and Trade.**

Besides the modern languages ; music, painting, fencing, riding, and dancing, are all taught here in some degree of perfection, and manly exercises are admired and encouraged.

The Royal Academy for Fencing and Riding is always supplied with one of the best masters ; who at present is one Angelo Tremmerondo, an Italian, and, one would conjecture from his name, from the confines of Mount Vesuvius. The riding-house is a large and spacious building, admirably adapted to the purpose, and of great benefit to the students : who, in the shortest time possible, have the advantage of taking these wholesome exercises. It is particularly necessary in this city, as the riding on the roads about Edinburgh is exceedingly disagreeable and inconvenient : as they are all paved like the *Pavée* in France, and no part left for the horses on each side. The inhabitants of the City are obliged to drive or ride on the sands at

Leith, or Mussleborough; which are at least three miles distant, and too far for the young candidate for literary fame constantly to frequent; as it would exhaust too much of his time from recreations of more important consequences.

As I am on the subject of riding, I must just make one observation, that the Scotch are exceedingly ignorant of horses, and the care and management of them. They have no idea of any thing beyond a Galloway or a strong, slow cart-horse; and what they look on as hunters, are little better. The thorough-bred, sinewy racer, which is now so common in England, is here a phenomenon. They have no genius or taste for riding, nor is it at all encouraged, except in the *Manege*. It is true, indeed, their country is but ill-suited to hunting; which is the reason that it is not worth while breeding that species of horse; and since their principal races are on the sands, on which four miles are equivalent to five on the turf, speed must always yield the victory to strength.

The Scotch are more fond of fencing than riding, and in general excel in it. But their greatest talent seems to be in acquiring the knowledge of, and speaking foreign languages; which they do with much greater facility than our countrymen. They read also the Latin

after the manner of the French, and other nations on the Continent; in which they find much advantage in travelling, as they can be always understood, if they are at a loss to explain themselves in the language of the country.

There are few of the middle rank of men in this nation but what are in some degree acquainted with the Latin tongue, as it is taught in almost all the common schools; and I believe there are several branches of business that find the advantage of it, though trade in general does not seem to flourish amongst them; and I fear it will still decrease, if the custom of emigrating to America continues so much in fashion. I find even now, that Scotland runs every year somewhat in debt, by importing so much beyond its exportation; which being to be drawn out in coin, will be a certain, slow consumption of the treasure of the kingdom, unless remedied by sumptuary laws, or examples for lessening the importation of foreign commodities, or else by industry for increasing the native, which are either consumed at home, or carried abroad. Two of the greatest sources of wealth to this people is the fishing trade and the linen; which they ought to promote by every exertion in their power; the one to keep their money at home, the other to bring in more from abroad.

## 90 *Booksellers, and their Publications.*

But on the whole, I do not think the natives of this country calculated for trade, not from their education, but from their natural dispositions and abilities. They want that dull and persevering genius, that aversion to nobler pursuits, which is the characteristic of the Dutch nation. They have a certain ambition implanted in their nature to know more, and appear greater in the eye of the world, than is expected from them ; and have (I must call it) such a ridiculous respect to family and ancestry, that one may say with propriety, they prefer a man of quality in poverty and rags, to the richest man upon Change in a coach and six. No wonder then that the idea of a tradesman should be disgusting and disagreeable, when almost every one fancies himself above it, because a century ago there was a peerage in his family.

### **The Booksellers, and their Publications.**

The most profitable trade now in Edinburgh appears to be that of a bookseller. Of all the other advantageous branches this place has only received a part in conjunction with many other towns in Scotland ; but they have appropriated this business at present entirely to themselves. If I am well informed, many thousand volumes are annually printed in this place, and sold in

London or elsewhere. The cheapness of labour here, when compared with London, induces many Scotch booksellers who reside there to have their books printed at Edinburgh, and then sent to them, which they find much better than printing at their own shops; and for this purpose many of them have partners in this place. By the ingenuity and application of those who are engaged in it, this trade has been brought to great perfection. I mean that perfection which includes every requisite in a book for the smallest price possible.

A bookseller in this city, who is not only a polite man, but a man of letters, is now printing a complete set of the English Classics in duodecimo; which, with the addition of a very handsome binding, amount only to eighteen pence a volume. It is such productions as these that do honour to a country; and I confess I feel a pleasure in reflecting that this has been the work of a Scotch bookseller.

Though the Scotch are certainly a very ingenious people, and in general good writers, you see very few publications make their appearance. You are pestered with none of those weekly, daily, and almost hourly pamphlets which every where meet one's eye in London, under the names of Nuptial Elegies, Sentimental Scruples, Juvenile Poems, Amorous Epistles,

## 92 *Reception of "Dr Johnson's Tour."*

and a thousand others of the same ingenious and tender natures. Such delicate productions would expire in this cold climate, as they owe their birth to idle hours and mild skies.

The only publications which appear constantly are the newspapers, a magazine, and a review, which are executed nearly in the same style as those in London.

Not long ago a little pamphlet made its appearance, complaining of some abuses committed in the management, or rather mismanagement of an hospital here, and dedicated to the most impudent man alive. You will confess that this title was rather disputable. One gentleman, however, by being very angry, showed he had some right to the dedication, from thus openly asserting his claim to it.

### **The Reception of "Dr Johnson's Tour."**

Dr Johnson's account of his tour into Scotland has just (January 1775) made its appearance here; and has put the country into a flame. Everybody finds some reason to be affronted. A thousand people, who know not a single creature in the Western Isles, interest themselves in their cause, and are offended at the accounts that are given of them. But let this unfortunate writer say what he will, it must be confessed they

*Reception of "Dr Johnson's Tour."* 93

return it with interest : newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, all teem with abuse of the Doctor ; while one day some very ingenious criticisms show how he might have wrote such a thing better ; the next, others, equally ingenious, prove that he had better never have wrote such a thing at all. In this general uproar, amidst this strife of tongues, it is impossible that a dispassionate man should be heard ; so I sit down a quiet spectator of what passes, and enjoy the storm in tranquillity.

Though I cannot say I am a friend to this method of revenge, or to seeing these great men descend to abuse one another, like mere common mortals, I must confess, at the same time, that Dr Johnson has deserved the treatment he meets with. He was received with the most flattering marks of civility by every one ; and his name had opened to him an acquaintance which his most sanguine wishes could scarce have hoped for, and which his manners would certainly never have obtained. He was indeed looked upon as a kind of miracle in this country ; and almost carried about for a show. Every one desired to have a peep at this phenomenon ; and those who were so happy as to be in his company, were silent the moment he spoke, lest they should interrupt him, and lose any of the good things he was going to say. It was ex-

94 *Reception of "Dr Johnson's Tour."*

pected that he should speak by inspiration. But the Doctor, who never said anything that did not convey some gross reflection upon themselves, soon made them sick of jokes which were at their own expense. Indeed, from all the accounts I have been able to learn, he repaid all their attention to him with ill-breeding; and when in the company of the ablest men in the country, and who are certainly his superiors in point of abilities, his whole design was to show them how contemptibly he thought of them. But those who make gods, and then fall down and worship them, should not be disappointed at the stupidity of their own idols. The Scotch, who looked up to Dr Johnson as something supernatural, should not have been surprised at finding him quite the reverse. Admiration and acquaintance, you know, are generally said to be incompatible; with him they must always be so: he has neither the ambition to desire, nor the manners to engage, attention. Had the Scotch been more acquainted with Dr Johnson's private character, they would have expected nothing better. A man of illiberal manners and surly disposition, who all his life long had been at enmity with the Scotch, takes a sudden resolution of travelling amongst them; not, according to his own account, "to find a people of liberal and refined education, but to see wild men and

wild manners." Confined to one place, and accustomed to one train of ideas, incapable of acquiescing in all the different tempers he might meet with, and of mingling with different societies, he descends from his study, where he had spent his whole life, to see the world in the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland. Behold this extraordinary man on his journey, in quest of barbarism ! and at length sitting down, wearied and discontented, because he has met with some degree of civility in the most desert parts ; or, to speak more properly, because he has found nothing more barbarous than himself.

Poor Johnson, who probably had never travelled more than a few miles from London before he came there, must naturally be astonished at everything he saw, and would dwell upon every common occurrence as a wonder. One cannot therefore be surprised at his observing "that the windows in some of the little hovels in Scotland do not draw up, as his own do in London, or that such a spot of ground does not produce grass, but is very fertile in thistles." He found himself in a new world ; his sensations were those of a child just brought forth into daylight, whose organs are confused with the numerous objects that surround him, and who discovers his surprise at everything he sees. Men of the world would not have de-

scended to such remarks. A petty and frivolous detail of trifling circumstances are the certain signs of ignorance or inexperience. The Scotch should have treated them in this manner, and disregarded them. For my own part, to say the best of it, I look upon all his observations in regard to men and manners to be those of a man totally unacquainted with mankind. Most of his information I know to have been received from the meanest and most ignorant of the people.

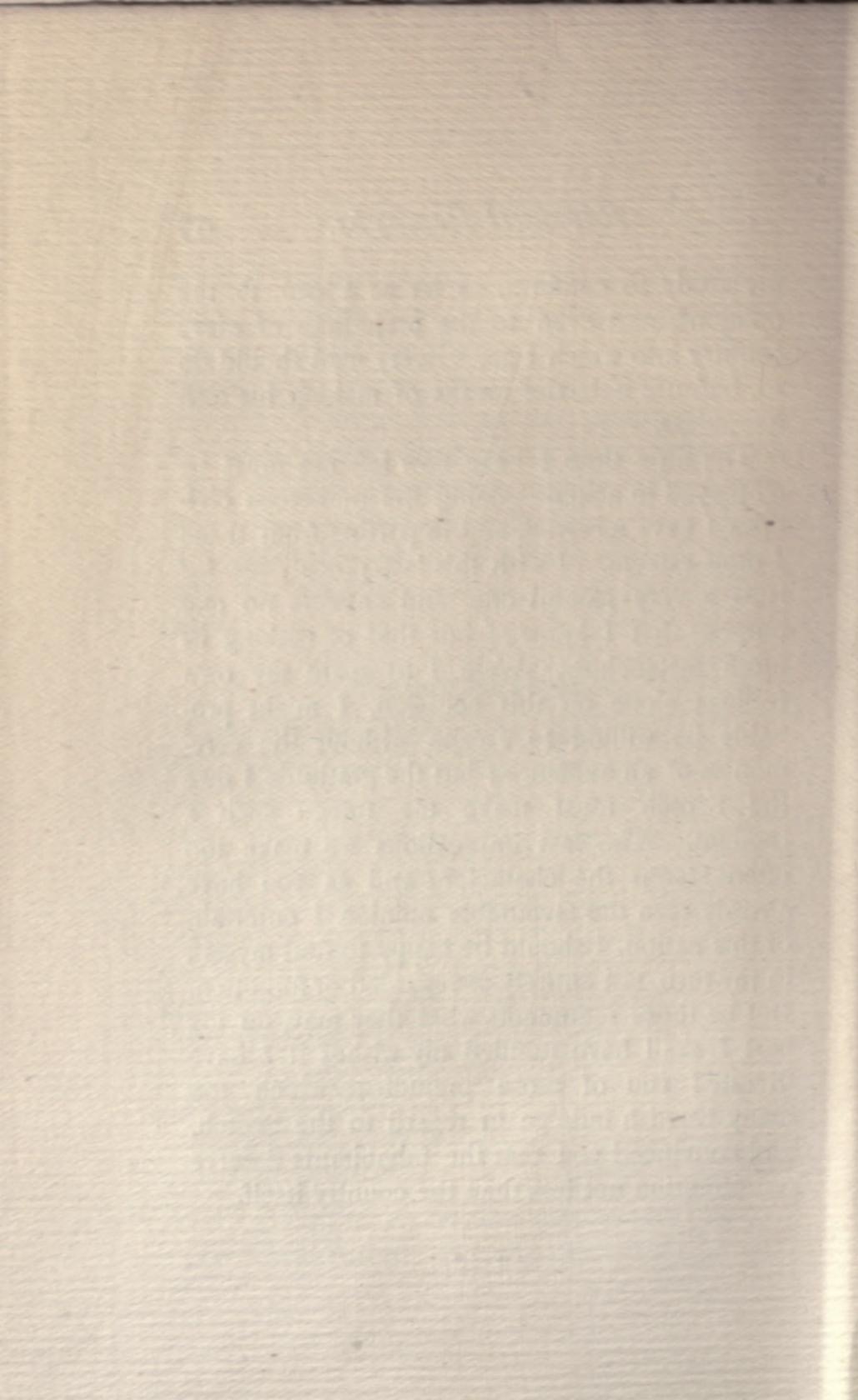
#### **Farewell Remarks.**

After all the agreeable hours I have passed here, the remembrance of which will ever be dear to me, I am on the point of taking my leave of this kingdom. Travellers, you know, generally affect a sorrow on parting with those who have received them civilly, and sometimes probably may feel one. But I can assure you that on this occasion it is not necessary "to assume a virtue which I have not." I am so well convinced of the merit of those I leave behind me, that I feel the most sincere regret for my departure.

The wandering life I have hitherto led has by no means extinguished these sensations; for, though I despise all attachments to this place or the other, merely for being such, I make it

my study to conform, as far as I can, to the opinions, and even to the prejudices of every country into which I go. Every man should do so, because it is the means of making his own happiness.

The little time I have now left me must be employed in acknowledging the numerous civilities I have received, and in parting from those I most esteem. I wish this last office over, for it is a very painful one, and answers no one purpose that I know of but that of making us more melancholy. Were I to spare my own feelings alone on this occasion, I might probably be willing to escape without the ceremonies of an audience; but the gratitude I owe the Scotch must make me forego such a thought. The last impressions we make too often stamp the character; and as you have already seen the favourable opinion I entertain of this nation, I should be happy to find myself, in my turn, not entirely disregarded or forgotten. But be those sentiments what they may, on my part I shall have fulfilled my wishes if I have divested you of those prejudices which too many English indulge in regard to the Scotch, and convinced you that the inhabitants deserve our attention not less than the country itself.



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