JOHN GALT

THE AYRSHIRE LEGATEES; OR, THE PRINGLE FAMILY

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CHAPTER I – THE DEPARTURE

On New Year's day Dr. Pringle received a letter from India, informing him that his cousin, Colonel Armour, had died at Hydrabad, and left him his residuary legatee. The same post brought other letters on the same subject from the agent of the deceased in London, by which it was evident to the whole family that no time should be lost in looking after their interests in the hands of such brief and abrupt correspondents. "To say the least of it," as the Doctor himself sedately remarked, "considering the greatness of the forth-coming property, Messieurs Richard Argent and Company, of New Broad Street, might have given a notion as to the particulars of the residue." It was therefore determined that, as soon as the requisite arrangements could be made, the Doctor and Mrs. Pringle should set out for the metropolis, to obtain a speedy settlement with the agents, and, as Rachel had now, to use an expression of her mother's, "a prospect before her," that she also should accompany them: Andrew, who had just been called to the Bar, and who had come to the manse

to spend a few days after attaining that distinction, modestly suggested, that, considering the various professional points which might be involved in the objects of his father's journey, and considering also the retired life which his father had led in the rural village of Garnock, it might be of importance to have the advantage of legal advice.

Mrs. Pringle interrupted this harangue, by saying, "We see what you would be at, Andrew; ye're just wanting to come with us, and on this occasion I'm no for making step-bairns, so we'll a' gang thegither."

The Doctor had been for many years the incumbent of Garnock, which is pleasantly situated between Irvine and Kilwinning, and, on account of the benevolence of his disposition, was much beloved by his parishioners. Some of the pawkie among them used indeed to say, in answer to the godly of Kilmarnock, and other admirers of the late great John Russel, of that formerly orthodox town, by whom Dr. Pringle's powers as a preacher were held in no particular estimation, – "He kens our pu'pit's frail, and spar'st to save outlay to the heritors." As for Mrs. Pringle, there is not such another minister's wife, both for economy and management, within the jurisdiction of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, and to this fact the following letter to Miss Mally Glencairn, a maiden lady residing in the Kirkgate of Irvine, a street that has been likened unto the Kingdom of Heaven, where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, will abundantly testify.

LETTER I

Mrs. Pringle to Miss Mally Glencairn
Garnock Manse.

Dear Miss Mally – The Doctor has had extraordinar news from India and London, where we are all going, as soon as me and Rachel can get ourselves in order, so I beg you will go to Bailie Delap's shop, and get swatches of his best black bombaseen, and crape, and muslin, and bring them over to the manse the morn's morning. If you cannot come yourself, and the day should be wat, send Nanny Eydent, the mantua-maker, with them; you'll be sure to send Nanny, onyhow, and I requeesht that, on this okasion, ye'll get the very best the Bailie has, and I'll tell you all about it when you come. You will get, likewise, swatches of mourning print, with the lowest prices. I'll no be so particular about them, as they are for the servan lasses, and there's no need, for all the greatness of God's gifts, that we should be wasterful. Let Mrs. Glibbans know, that the Doctor's second cousin, the colonel, that was in the East Indies, is no more; – I am sure she will sympatheese with our loss on this melancholy okasion. Tell her, as I'll no be out till our mournings are made, I would take it kind if she would come over and eate a bit of dinner on Sunday. The Doctor will no preach himself, but there's to be an excellent young man, an acquaintance of Andrew's, that has the repute of being both sound and hellaquaint. But no more at present, and

looking for you and Nanny Eydent, with the swatches, – I am, dear Miss Mally, your sinsare friend,

Janet Pringle.

The Doctor being of opinion that, until they had something in hand from the legacy, they should walk in the paths of moderation, it was resolved to proceed by the coach from Irvine to Greenock, there embark in a steam-boat for Glasgow, and, crossing the country to Edinburgh, take their passage at Leith in one of the smacks for London. But we must let the parties speak for themselves.

LETTER II

Miss Rachel Pringle to Miss Isabella Tod
Greenock.

My dear Isabella – I know not why the dejection with which I parted from you still hangs upon my heart, and grows heavier as I am drawn farther and farther away. The uncertainty of the future – the dangers of the sea – all combine to sadden my too sensitive spirit. Still, however, I will exert myself, and try to give you some account of our momentous journey.

The morning on which we bade farewell for a time – alas! it was to me as if for ever, to my native shades of Garnock – the weather was cold, bleak, and boisterous, and the waves came rolling in majestic fury towards the shore, when we arrived at the Tontine Inn of Ardrossan. What a monument has the late Earl of Eglinton left there of his public spirit! It should embalm his memory in the hearts of future ages, as I doubt not but in time Ardrossan will become a grand emporium; but the people of Saltcoats, a sordid race, complain that it will be their ruin; and the Paisley subscribers to his lordship's canal grow pale when they think of profit.

The road, after leaving Ardrossan, lies along the shore. The blast came dark from the waters, and the clouds lay piled in every form of grandeur on the lofty peaks of Arran. The view on the right hand is limited to the foot of a range of abrupt mean hills,

and on the left it meets the sea – as we were obliged to keep the glasses up, our drive for several miles was objectless and dreary. When we had ascended a hill, leaving Kilbride on the left, we passed under the walls of an ancient tower. What delightful ideas are associated with the sight of such venerable remains of antiquity!

Leaving that lofty relic of our warlike ancestors, we descended again towards the shore. On the one side lay the Cumbra Islands, and Bute, dear to departed royalty. Afar beyond them, in the hoary magnificence of nature, rise the mountains of Argyllshire; the cairns, as my brother says, of a former world. On the other side of the road, we saw the cloistered ruins of the religious house of Southenan, a nunnery in those days of romantic adventure, when to live was to enjoy a poetical element. In such a sweet sequestered retreat, how much more pleasing to the soul it would have been, for you and I, like two captive birds in one cage, to have sung away our hours in innocence, than for me to be thus torn from you by fate, and all on account of that mercenary legacy, perchance the spoils of some unfortunate Hindoo Rajah!

At Largs we halted to change horses, and saw the barrows of those who fell in the great battle. We then continued our journey along the foot of stupendous precipices; and high, sublime, and darkened with the shadow of antiquity, we saw, upon its lofty station, the ancient Castle of Skelmorlie, where the Montgomeries of other days held their gorgeous banquets, and that brave knight who fell at Chevy-Chace came pricking

forth on his milk-white steed, as Sir Walter Scott would have described him. But the age of chivalry is past, and the glory of Europe departed for ever!

When we crossed the stream that divides the counties of Ayr and Renfrew, we beheld, in all the apart and consequentiality of pride, the house of Kelly overlooking the social villas of Wemyss Bay. My brother compared it to a sugar hogshead, and them to cotton-bags; for the lofty thane of Kelly is but a West India planter, and the inhabitants of the villas on the shore are Glasgow manufacturers.

To this succeeded a dull drive of about two miles, and then at once we entered the pretty village of Inverkip. A slight snow-shower had given to the landscape a sort of copperplate effect, but still the forms of things, though but sketched, as it were, with China ink, were calculated to produce interesting impressions. After ascending, by a gentle acclivity, into a picturesque and romantic pass, we entered a spacious valley, and, in the course of little more than half an hour, reached this town; the largest, the most populous, and the most superb that I have yet seen. But what are all its warehouses, ships, and smell of tar, and other odoriferous circumstances of fishery and the sea, compared with the green swelling hills, the fragrant bean-fields, and the peaceful groves of my native Garnock!

The people of this town are a very busy and clever race, but much given to litigation. My brother says, that they are the greatest benefactors to the Outer House, and that their lawsuits

are the most amusing and profitable before the courts, being less for the purpose of determining what is right than what is lawful. The chambermaid of the inn where we lodge pointed out to me, on the opposite side of the street, a magnificent edifice erected for balls; but the subscribers have resolved not to allow any dancing till it is determined by the Court of Session to whom the seats and chairs belong, as they were brought from another house where the assemblies were formerly held. I have heard a lawsuit compared to a country-dance, in which, after a great bustle and regular confusion, the parties stand still, all tired, just on the spot where they began; but this is the first time that the judges of the land have been called on to decide when a dance may begin.

We arrived too late for the steam-boat, and are obliged to wait till Monday morning; but to-morrow we shall go to church, where I expect to see what sort of creatures the beaux are. The Greenock ladies have a great name for beauty, but those that I have seen are perfect frights. Such of the gentlemen as I have observed passing the windows of the inn may do, but I declare the ladies have nothing of which any woman ought to be proud. Had we known that we ran a risk of not getting a steam-boat, my mother would have provided an introductory letter or two from some of her Irvine friends; but here we are almost entire strangers: my father, however, is acquainted with one of the magistrates, and has gone to see him. I hope he will be civil enough to ask us to his house, for an inn is a shocking place to

live in, and my mother is terrified at the expense. My brother, however, has great confidence in our prospects, and orders and directs with a high hand. But my paper is full, and I am compelled to conclude with scarcely room to say how affectionately I am yours,

Rachel Pringle.

LETTER III

The Rev. Dr. Pringle to Mr. Micklewham, Schoolmaster and Session-Clerk, Garnock
Edinburgh.

Dear Sir – We have got this length through many difficulties, both in the travel by land to, and by sea and land from Greenock, where we were obligated, by reason of no conveyance, to stop the Sabbath, but not without edification; for we went to hear Dr. Drystour in the forenoon, who had a most weighty sermon on the tenth chapter of Nehemiah. He is surely a great orthodox divine, but rather costive in his delivery. In the afternoon we heard a correct moral lecture on good works, in another church, from Dr. Eastlight – a plain man, with a genteel congregation. The same night we took supper with a wealthy family, where we had much pleasant communion together, although the bringing in of the toddy-bowl after supper is a fashion that has a tendency to lengthen the sederunt to unseasonable hours.

On the following morning, by the break of day, we took shipping in the steam-boat for Glasgow. I had misgivings about the engine, which is really a thing of great docility; but saving my concern for the boiler, we all found the place surprising comfortable. The day was bleak and cold; but we had a good fire in a carron grate in the middle of the floor, and books to read, so that both body and mind are therein provided for.

Among the books, I fell in with a *History of the Rebellion*, anent the hand that an English gentleman of the name of Waverley had in it. I was grieved that I had not time to read it through, for it was wonderful interesting, and far more particular, in many points, than any other account of that affair I have yet met with; but it's no so friendly to Protestant principles as I could have wished. However, if I get my legacy well settled, I will buy the book, and lend it to you on my return, please God, to the manse.

We were put on shore at Glasgow by breakfast-time, and there we tarried all day, as I had a power of attorney to get from Miss Jenny Macbride, my cousin, to whom the colonel left the thousand pound legacy. Miss Jenny thought the legacy should have been more, and made some obstacle to signing the power; but both her lawyer and Andrew Pringle, my son, convinced her, that, as it was specified in the testament, she could not help it by standing out; so at long and last Miss Jenny was persuaded to put her name to the paper.

Next day we all four got into a fly coach, and, without damage or detriment, reached this city in good time for dinner in Macgregor's hotel, a remarkable decent inn, next door to one Mr. Blackwood, a civil and discreet man in the bookselling line.

Really the changes in Edinburgh since I was here, thirty years ago, are not to be told. I am confounded; for although I have both heard and read of the New Town in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, and the *Scots Magazine*, I had no notion of what has come to pass.

It's surprising to think wherein the decay of the nation is; for at Greenock I saw nothing but shipping and building; at Glasgow, streets spreading as if they were one of the branches of cotton-spinning; and here, the houses grown up as if they were sown in the seed-time with the corn, by a drill-machine, or dibbled in rigs and furrows like beans and potatoes.

To-morrow, God willing, we embark in a smack at Leith, so that you will not hear from me again till it please Him to take us in the hollow of His hand to London. In the meantime, I have only to add, that, when the Session meets, I wish you would speak to the elders, particularly to Mr. Craig, no to be overly hard on that poor donsie thing, Meg Milliken, about her bairn; and tell Tam Glen, the father o't, from me, that it would have been a sore heart to that pious woman, his mother, had she been living, to have witnessed such a thing; and therefore I hope and trust, he will yet confess a fault, and own Meg for his wife, though she is but something of a tawpie. However, you need not diminish her to Tam. I hope Mr. Snodgrass will give as much satisfaction to the parish as can reasonably be expected in my absence; and I remain, dear sir, your friend and pastor,

Zachariah Pringle.

Mr. Micklewham received the Doctor's letter about an hour before the Session met on the case of Tam Glen and Meg Milliken, and took it with him to the session-house, to read it to the elders before going into the investigation. Such a long and particular letter from the Doctor was, as they all justly remarked,

kind and dutiful to his people, and a great pleasure to them.

Mr. Daff observed, "Truly the Doctor's a vera funny man, and wonderfu' jocose about the toddy-bowl." But Mr. Craig said, that "sic a thing on the Lord's night gi'es me no pleasure; and I am for setting my face against Waverley's *History of the Rebellion*, whilk I hae heard spoken of among the ungodly, both at Kilwinning and Dalry; and if it has no respect to Protestant principles, I doubt it's but another dose o' the radical poison in a new guise." Mr. Icenor, however, thought that "the observe on the great Doctor Drystour was very edifying; and that they should see about getting him to help at the summer Occasion." [1]

While they were thus reviewing, in their way, the first epistle of the Doctor, the betherel came in to say that Meg and Tam were at the door. "Oh, man," said Mr. Daff, slyly, "ye shouldna hae left them at the door by themselves." Mr. Craig looked at him austerely, and muttered something about the growing immorality of this backsliding age; but before the smoke of his indignation had kindled into eloquence, the delinquents were admitted. However, as we have nothing to do with the business, we shall leave them to their own deliberations.

[1] The administration of the Sacrament.

CHAPTER II – THE VOYAGE

On the fourteenth day after the departure of the family from the manse, the Rev. Mr. Charles Snodgrass, who was appointed to officiate during the absence of the Doctor, received the following letter from his old chum, Mr. Andrew Pringle. It would appear that the young advocate is not so solid in the head as some of his elder brethren at the Bar; and therefore many of his flights and observations must be taken with an allowance on the score of his youth.

LETTER IV

Andrew Pringle, Esq., Advocate, to the Rev. Charles Snodgrass
London.

My dear Friend – We have at last reached London, after a stormy passage of seven days. The accommodation in the smacks looks extremely inviting in port, and in fine weather, I doubt not, is comfortable, even at sea; but in February, and in such visitations of the powers of the air as we have endured, a balloon must be a far better vehicle than all the vessels that have been constructed for passengers since the time of Noah. In the first place, the waves of the atmosphere cannot be so dangerous as those of the ocean, being but "thin air"; and I am sure they are not so disagreeable; then the speed of the balloon is so much greater, – and it would puzzle Professor Leslie to demonstrate that its motions are more unsteady; besides, who ever heard of sea-sickness in a balloon? the consideration of which alone would, to any reasonable person actually suffering under the pains of that calamity, be deemed more than an equivalent for all the little fractional difference of danger between the two modes of travelling. I shall henceforth regard it as a fine characteristic trait of our national prudence, that, in their journies to France and Flanders, the Scottish witches always went by air on broom-sticks and benweeds, instead of venturing by water in sieves, like those of England. But the English are under the influence of a

maritime genius.

When we had got as far up the Thames as Gravesend, the wind and tide came against us, so that the vessel was obliged to anchor, and I availed myself of the circumstance, to induce the family to disembark and go to London by land; and I esteem it a fortunate circumstance that we did so, the day, for the season, being uncommonly fine. After we had taken some refreshment, I procured places in a stage-coach for my mother and sister, and, with the Doctor, mounted myself on the outside. My father's old-fashioned notions boggled a little at first to this arrangement, which he thought somewhat derogatory to his ministerial dignity; but his scruples were in the end overruled.

The country in this season is, of course, seen to disadvantage, but still it exhibits beauty enough to convince us what England must be when in leaf. The old gentleman's admiration of the increasing signs of what he called civilisation, as we approached London, became quite eloquent; but the first view of the city from Blackheath (which, by the bye, is a fine common, surrounded with villas and handsome houses) overpowered his faculties, and I shall never forget the impression it made on myself. The sun was declined towards the horizon; vast masses of dark low-hung clouds were mingled with the smoky canopy, and the dome of St. Paul's, like the enormous idol of some terrible deity, throned amidst the smoke of sacrifices and magnificence, darkness, and mystery, presented altogether an object of vast sublimity. I felt touched with reverence, as if I was indeed

approaching the city of the human powers.

The distant view of Edinburgh is picturesque and romantic, but it affects a lower class of our associations. It is, compared to that of London, what the poem of the *Seasons* is with respect to *Paradise Lost*– the castellated descriptions of Walter Scott to the *Darkness* of Byron – the *Sabbath* of Grahame to the *Robbers* of Schiller. In the approach to Edinburgh, leisure and cheerfulness are on the road; large spaces of rural and pastoral nature are spread openly around, and mountains, and seas, and headlands, and vessels passing beyond them, going like those that die, we know not whither, while the sun is bright on their sails, and hope with them; but, in coming to this Babylon, there is an eager haste and a hurrying on from all quarters, towards that stupendous pile of gloom, through which no eye can penetrate; an unceasing sound, like the enginery of an earthquake at work, rolls from the heart of that profound and indefinable obscurity – sometimes a faint and yellow beam of the sun strikes here and there on the vast expanse of edifices; and churches, and holy asylums, are dimly seen lifting up their countless steeples and spires, like so many lightning rods to avert the wrath of Heaven.

The entrance to Edinburgh also awakens feelings of a more pleasing character. The rugged veteran aspect of the Old Town is agreeably contrasted with the bright smooth forehead of the New, and there is not such an overwhelming torrent of animal life, as to make you pause before venturing to stem it; the noises are not so deafening, and the occasional sound of a ballad-

singer, or a Highland piper, varies and enriches the discords; but here, a multitudinous assemblage of harsh alarms, of selfish contentions, and of furious carriages, driven by a fierce and insolent race, shatter the very hearing, till you partake of the activity with which all seem as much possessed as if a general apprehension prevailed, that the great clock of Time would strike the doom-hour before their tasks were done. But I must stop, for the postman with his bell, like the betherel of some ancient "borough's town" summoning to a burial, is in the street, and warns me to conclude. – Yours,

Andrew Pringle.

LETTER V

The Rev. Dr. Pringle to Mr. Micklewham, Schoolmaster and Session-Clerk, Garnock
London, 49 Norfolk Street, Strand.

Dear Sir – On the first Sunday forthcoming after the receiving hereof, you will not fail to recollect in the remembering prayer, that we return thanks for our safe arrival in London, after a dangerous voyage. Well, indeed, is it ordained that we should pray for those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business on the great deep; for what me and mine have come through is unspeakable, and the hand of Providence was visibly manifested.

On the day of our embarkation at Leith, a fair wind took us onward at a blithe rate for some time; but in the course of that night the bridle of the tempest was slackened, and the curb of the billows loosened, and the ship reeled to and fro like a drunken man, and no one could stand therein. My wife and daughter lay at the point of death; Andrew Pringle, my son, also was prostrated with the grievous affliction; and the very soul within me was as if it would have been cast out of the body.

On the following day the storm abated, and the wind blew favourable; but towards the heel of the evening it again came vehement, and there was no help unto our distress. About midnight, however, it pleased Him, whose breath is the tempest, to be more sparing with the whip of His displeasure on our

poor bark, as she hirpled on in her toilsome journey through the waters; and I was enabled, through His strength, to lift my head from the pillow of sickness, and ascend the deck, where I thought of Noah looking out of the window in the ark, upon the face of the desolate flood, and of Peter walking on the sea; and I said to myself, it matters not where we are, for we can be in no place where Jehovah is not there likewise, whether it be on the waves of the ocean, or the mountain tops, or in the valley and shadow of death.

The third day the wind came contrary, and in the fourth, and the fifth, and the sixth, we were also sorely buffeted; but on the night of the sixth we entered the mouth of the river Thames, and on the morning of the seventh day of our departure, we cast anchor near a town called Gravesend, where, to our exceeding great joy, it pleased Him, in whom alone there is salvation, to allow us once more to put our foot on the dry land.

When we had partaken of a repast, the first blessed with the blessing of an appetite, from the day of our leaving our native land, we got two vacancies in a stage-coach for my wife and daughter; but with Andrew Pringle, my son, I was obligated to mount aloft on the outside. I had some scruple of conscience about this, for I was afraid of my decorum. I met, however, with nothing but the height of discretion from the other outside passengers, although I jealoused that one of them was a light woman. Really I had no notion that the English were so civilised; they were so well bred, and the very duddiest of them

spoke such a fine style of language, that when I looked around on the country, I thought myself in the land of Canaan. But it's extraordinary what a power of drink the coachmen drink, stopping and going into every change-house, and yet behaving themselves with the greatest sobriety. And then they are all so well dressed, which is no doubt owing to the poor rates. I am thinking, however, that for all they cry against them, the poor rates are but a small evil, since they keep the poor folk in such food and raiment, and out of the temptations to thievery; indeed, such a thing as a common beggar is not to be seen in this land, excepting here and there a sorner or a ne'er-do-weel.

When we had got to the outskirts of London, I began to be ashamed of the sin of high places, and would gladly have got into the inside of the coach, for fear of anybody knowing me; but although the multitude of by-goers was like the kirk scailing at the Sacrament, I saw not a kent face, nor one that took the least notice of my situation. At last we got to an inn, called *The White Horse*, Fetter-Lane, where we hired a hackney to take us to the lodgings provided for us here in Norfolk Street, by Mr. Pawkie, the Scotch solicitor, a friend of Andrew Pringle, my son. Now it was that we began to experience the sharpers of London; for it seems that there are divers Norfolk Streets. Ours was in the Strand (mind that when you direct), not very far from Fetter-Lane; but the hackney driver took us away to one afar off, and when we knocked at the number we thought was ours, we found ourselves at a house that should not be told. I was so mortified,

that I did not know what to say; and when Andrew Pringle, my son, rebuked the man for the mistake, he only gave a cunning laugh, and said we should have told him whatna Norfolk Street we wanted. Andrew stormed at this – but I discerned it was all owing to our own inexperience, and put an end to the contention, by telling the man to take us to Norfolk Street in the Strand, which was the direction we had got. But when we got to the door, the coachman was so extortionate, that another hobbleshaw arose. Mrs. Pringle had been told that, in such disputes, the best way of getting redress was to take the number of the coach; but, in trying to do so, we found it fastened on, and I thought the hackneyman would have gone by himself with laughter. Andrew, who had not observed what we were doing, when he saw us trying to take off the number, went like one demented, and paid the man, I cannot tell what, to get us out, and into the house, for fear we should have been mobbit.

I have not yet seen the colonel's agents, so can say nothing as to the business of our coming; for, landing at Gravesend, we did not bring our trunks with us, and Andrew has gone to the wharf this morning to get them, and, until we get them, we can go nowhere, which is the occasion of my writing so soon, knowing also how you and the whole parish would be anxious to hear what had become of us; and I remain, dear sir, your friend and pastor,

Zachariah Pringle.

On Saturday evening, Saunders Dickie, the Irvine postman, suspecting that this letter was from the Doctor, went with it

himself, on his own feet, to Mr. Micklewham, although the distance is more than two miles, but Saunders, in addition to the customary *twal pennies* on the postage, had a dram for his pains. The next morning being wet, Mr. Micklewham had not an opportunity of telling any of the parishioners in the churchyard of the Doctor's safe arrival, so that when he read out the request to return thanks (for he was not only school-master and session-clerk, but also precentor), there was a murmur of pleasure diffused throughout the congregation, and the greatest curiosity was excited to know what the dangers were, from which their worthy pastor and his whole family had so thankfully escaped in their voyage to London; so that, when the service was over, the elders adjourned to the session-house to hear the letter read; and many of the heads of families, and other respectable parishioners, were admitted to the honours of the sitting, who all sympathised, with the greatest sincerity, in the sufferings which their minister and his family had endured. Mr. Daff, however, was justly chided by Mr. Craig, for rubbing his hands, and giving a sort of sniggering laugh, at the Doctor's sitting on high with a light woman. But even Mr. Snodgrass was seen to smile at the incident of taking the number off the coach, the meaning of which none but himself seemed to understand.

When the epistle had been thus duly read, Mr. Micklewham promised, for the satisfaction of some of the congregation, that he would get two or three copies made by the best writers in his school, to be handed about the parish, and Mr. Icenor remarked,

that truly it was a thing to be held in remembrance, for he had not heard of greater tribulation by the waters since the shipwreck of the Apostle Paul.

CHAPTER III – THE LEGACY

Soon after the receipt of the letters which we had the pleasure of communicating in the foregoing chapter, the following was received from Mrs. Pringle, and the intelligence it contains is so interesting and important, that we hasten to lay it before our readers: —

LETTER VI

Mrs. Pringle to Miss Mally Glencairn
London.

My dear Miss Mally – You must not expect no particulars from me of our journey; but as Rachel is writing all the calamities that befell us to Bell Tod, you will, no doubt, hear of them. But all is nothing to my losses. I bought from the first hand, Mr. Treddles the manufacturer, two pieces of muslin, at Glasgow, such a thing not being to be had on any reasonable terms here, where they get all their fine muslins from Glasgow and Paisley; and in the same bocks with them I packit a small crock of our ain excellent poudered butter, with a delap cheese, for I was told that such commodities are not to be had genuine in London. I likewise had in it a pot of marmlet, which Miss Jenny Macbride gave me at Glasgow, assuring me that it was not only dentice, but a curiosity among the English, and my best new bumbeseen goun in peper. Howsomever, in the nailing of the bocks, which I did carefully with my oun hands, one of the nails gaed in ajee, and broke the pot of marmlet, which, by the jolting of the ship, ruined the muslin, rottened the peper round the goun, which the shivers cut into more than twenty great holes. Over and above all, the crock with the butter was, no one can tell how, crackit, and the pickle lecking out, and mixing with the seerip of the marmlet, spoilt the cheese. In short, at the object I beheld, when

the bocks was opened, I could have ta'en to the greeting; but I behaved with more composity on the occasion, than the Doctor thought it was in the power of nature to do. Howsomever, till I get a new goun and other things, I am obliged to be a prisoner; and as the Doctor does not like to go to the counting-house of the agents without me, I know not what is yet to be the consequence of our journey. But it would need to be something; for we pay four guineas and a half a week for our dry lodgings, which is at a degree more than the Doctor's whole stipend. As yet, for the cause of these misfortunes, I can give you no account of London; but there is, as everybody kens, little thrift in their housekeeping. We just buy our tea by the quarter a pound, and our loaf sugar, broken in a peper bag, by the pound, which would be a disgrace to a decent family in Scotland; and when we order dinner, we get no more than just serves, so that we have no cold meat if a stranger were coming by chance, which makes an unco bare house. The servan lasses I cannot abide; they dress better at their wark than ever I did on an ordinaire week-day at the manse; and this very morning I saw madam, the kitchen lass, mounted on a pair of pattens, washing the plain stenes before the door; na, for that matter, a bare foot is not to be seen within the four walls of London, at the least I have na seen no such thing.

In the way of marketing, things are very good here, and considering, not dear; but all is sold by the licht weight, only the fish are awful; half a guinea for a cod's head, and no bigger than the drouds the cadgers bring from Ayr, at a shilling and

eighteenpence apiece.

Tell Miss Nanny Eydent that I have seen none of the fashions as yet; but we are going to the burial of the auld king next week, and I'll write her a particular account how the leddies are dressed; but everybody is in deep mourning. Howsomever I have seen but little, and that only in a manner from the window; but I could not miss the opportunity of a frank that Andrew has got, and as he's waiting for the pen, you must excuse haste. From your sincere friend,

Janet Pringle.

LETTER VII

Andrew Pringle, Esq., to the Rev. Charles Snodgrass
London.

My dear Friend – It will give you pleasure to hear that my father is likely to get his business speedily settled without any equivocation; and that all those prudential considerations which brought us to London were but the phantasms of our own inexperience. I use the plural, for I really share in the shame of having called in question the high character of the agents: it ought to have been warrantry enough that everything would be fairly adjusted. But I must give you some account of what has taken place, to illustrate our provincialism, and to give you some idea of the way of doing business in London.

After having recovered from the effects, and repaired some of the accidents of our voyage, we yesterday morning sallied forth, the Doctor, my mother, and your humble servant, in a hackney coach, to Broad Street, where the agents have their counting-house, and were ushered into a room among other legatees or clients, waiting for an audience of Mr. Argent, the principal of the house.

I know not how it is, that the little personal peculiarities, so amusing to strangers, should be painful when we see them in those whom we love and esteem; but I own to you, that there was a something in the demeanour of the old folks on this occasion,

that would have been exceedingly diverting to me, had my filial reverence been less sincere for them.

The establishment of Messrs. Argent and Company is of vast extent, and has in it something even of a public magnitude; the number of the clerks, the assiduity of all, and the order that obviously prevails throughout, give at the first sight, an impression that bespeaks respect for the stability and integrity of the concern. When we had been seated about ten minutes, and my father's name taken to Mr. Argent, an answer was brought, that he would see us as soon as possible; but we were obliged to wait at least half an hour more. Upon our being at last admitted, Mr. Argent received us standing, and in an easy gentlemanly manner said to my father, "You are the residuary legatee of the late Colonel Armour. I am sorry that you did not apprise me of this visit, that I might have been prepared to give the information you naturally desire; but if you will call here to-morrow at 12 o'clock, I shall then be able to satisfy you on the subject. Your lady, I presume?" he added, turning to my mother; "Mrs. Argent will have the honour of waiting on you; may I therefore beg the favour of your address?" Fortunately I was provided with cards, and having given him one, we found ourselves constrained, as it were, to take our leave. The whole interview did not last two minutes, and I never was less satisfied with myself. The Doctor and my mother were in the greatest anguish; and when we were again seated in the coach, loudly expressed their apprehensions. They were convinced that some stratagem was

meditated; they feared that their journey to London would prove as little satisfactory as that of the Wrongheads, and that they had been throwing away good money in building castles in the air.

It had been previously arranged, that we were to return for my sister, and afterwards visit some of the sights; but the clouded visages of her father and mother darkened the very spirit of Rachel, and she largely shared in their fears. This, however, was not the gravest part of the business; for, instead of going to St. Paul's and the Tower, as we had intended, my mother declared, that not one farthing would they spend more till they were satisfied that the expenses already incurred were likely to be reimbursed; and a Chancery suit, with all the horrors of wig and gown, floated in spectral haziness before their imagination.

We sat down to a frugal meal, and although the remainder of a bottle of wine, saved from the preceding day, hardly afforded a glass apiece, the Doctor absolutely prohibited me from opening another.

This morning, faithful to the hour, we were again in Broad Street, with hearts knit up into the most peremptory courage; and, on being announced, were immediately admitted to Mr. Argent. He received us with the same ease as in the first interview, and, after requesting us to be seated (which, by the way, he did not do yesterday, a circumstance that was ominously remarked), he began to talk on indifferent matters. I could see that a question, big with law and fortune, was gathering in the breasts both of the Doctor and my mother, and that they were in

a state far from that of the blessed. But one of the clerks, before they had time to express their indignant suspicions, entered with a paper, and Mr. Argent, having glanced it over, said to the Doctor – "I congratulate you, sir, on the amount of the colonel's fortune. I was not indeed aware before that he had died so rich. He has left about £120,000; seventy-five thousand of which is in the five per cents; the remainder in India bonds and other securities. The legacies appear to be inconsiderable, so that the residue to you, after paying them and the expenses of Doctors' Commons, will exceed a hundred thousand pounds."

My father turned his eyes upwards in thankfulness. "But," continued Mr. Argent, "before the property can be transferred, it will be necessary for you to provide about four thousand pounds to pay the duty and other requisite expenses." This was a thunderclap. "Where can I get such a sum?" exclaimed my father, in a tone of pathetic simplicity. Mr. Argent smiled and said, "We shall manage that for you"; and having in the same moment pulled a bell, a fine young man entered, whom he introduced to us as his son, and desired him to explain what steps it was necessary for the Doctor to take. We accordingly followed Mr. Charles Argent to his own room.

Thus, in less time than I have been in writing it, were we put in possession of all the information we required, and found those whom we feared might be interested to withhold the settlement, alert and prompt to assist us.

Mr. Charles Argent is naturally more familiar than his father.

He has a little dash of pleasantry in his manner, with a shrewd good-humoured fashionable air, that renders him soon an agreeable acquaintance. He entered with singular felicity at once into the character of the Doctor and my mother, and waggishly drolled, as if he did not understand them, in order, I could perceive, to draw out the simplicity of their apprehensions. He quite won the old lady's economical heart, by offering to frank her letters, for he is in Parliament. "You have probably," said he slyly, "friends in the country, to whom you may be desirous of communicating the result of your journey to London; send your letters to me, and I will forward them, and any that you expect may also come under cover to my address, for postage is very expensive."

As we were taking our leave, after being fully instructed in all the preliminary steps to be taken before the transfers of the funded property can be made, he asked me, in a friendly manner, to dine with him this evening, and I never accepted an invitation with more pleasure. I consider his acquaintance a most agreeable acquisition, and not one of the least of those advantages which this new opulence has put it in my power to attain. The incidents, indeed, of this day, have been all highly gratifying, and the new and brighter phase in which I have seen the mercantile character, as it is connected with the greatness and glory of my country – is in itself equivalent to an accession of useful knowledge. I can no longer wonder at the vast power which the British Government wielded during the late war, when I reflect that the

method and promptitude of the house of Messrs. Argent and Company is common to all the great commercial concerns from which the statesmen derived, as from so many reservoirs, those immense pecuniary supplies, which enabled them to beggar all the resources of a political despotism, the most unbounded, both in power and principle, of any tyranny that ever existed so long. – Yours, etc.,

Andrew Pringle.

CHAPTER IV – THE TOWN

There was a great tea-drinking held in the Kirkgate of Irvine, at the house of Miss Mally Glencairn; and at that assemblage of rank, beauty, and fashion, among other delicacies of the season, several new-come-home Clyde skippers, roaring from Greenock and Port-Glasgow, were served up – but nothing contributed more to the entertainment of the evening than a proposal, on the part of Miss Mally, that those present who had received letters from the Pringles should read them for the benefit of the company. This was, no doubt, a preconcerted scheme between her and Miss Isabella Tod, to hear what Mr. Andrew Pringle had said to his friend Mr. Snodgrass, and likewise what the Doctor himself had indited to Mr. Micklewham; some rumour having spread of the wonderful escapes and adventures of the family in their journey and voyage to London. Had there not been some prethought of this kind, it was not indeed probable, that both the helper and session-clerk of Garnock could have been there together, in a party, where it was an understood thing, that not only Whist and Catch Honours were to be played, but even obstreperous Birky itself, for the diversion of such of the company as were not used to gambling games. It was in consequence of what took place at this Irvine route, that we were originally led to think of collecting the letters.

LETTER VIII

Miss Rachel Pringle to Miss Isabella Tod
London.

My dear Bell – It was my heartfelt intention to keep a regular journal of all our proceedings, from the sad day on which I bade a long adieu to my native shades – and I persevered with a constancy becoming our dear and youthful friendship, in writing down everything that I saw, either rare or beautiful, till the hour of our departure from Leith. In that faithful register of my feelings and reflections as a traveller, I described our embarkation at Greenock, on board the steam-boat, – our sailing past Port-Glasgow, an insignificant town, with a steeple; – the stupendous rock of Dumbarton Castle, that Gibraltar of antiquity; – our landing at Glasgow; – my astonishment at the magnificence of that opulent metropolis of the muslin manufacturers; my brother's remark, that the punch-bowls on the roofs of the Infirmary, the Museum, and the Trades Hall, were emblematic of the universal estimation in which that celebrated mixture is held by all ranks and degrees – learned, commercial, and even medical, of the inhabitants; – our arrival at Edinburgh – my emotion on beholding the Castle, and the visionary lake which may be nightly seen from the windows of Princes Street, between the Old and New Town, reflecting the lights of the lofty city beyond – with a thousand other delightful and romantic

circumstances, which render it no longer surprising that the Edinburgh folk should be, as they think themselves, the most accomplished people in the world. But, alas! from the moment I placed my foot on board that cruel vessel, of which the very idea is anguish, all thoughts were swallowed up in suffering-swallowed, did I say? Ah, my dear Bell, it was the odious reverse – but imagination alone can do justice to the subject. Not, however, to dwell on what is past, during the whole time of our passage from Leith, I was unable to think, far less to write; and, although there was a handsome young Hussar officer also a passenger, I could not even listen to the elegant compliments which he seemed disposed to offer by way of consolation, when he had got the better of his own sickness. Neither love nor valour can withstand the influence of that sea-demon. The interruption thus occasioned to my observations made me destroy my journal, and I have now to write to you only about London – only about London! What an expression for this human universe, as my brother calls it, as if my weak feminine pen were equal to the stupendous theme!

But, before entering on the subject, let me first satisfy the anxiety of your faithful bosom with respect to my father's legacy. All the accounts, I am happy to tell you, are likely to be amicably settled; but the exact amount is not known as yet, only I can see, by my brother's manner, that it is not less than we expected, and my mother speaks about sending me to a boarding-school to learn accomplishments. Nothing, however, is to be

done until something is actually in hand. But what does it all avail to me? Here am I, a solitary being in the midst of this wilderness of mankind, far from your sympathising affection, with the dismal prospect before me of going a second time to school, and without the prospect of enjoying, with my own sweet companions, that light and bounding gaiety we were wont to share, in skipping from tomb to tomb in the breezy churchyard of Irvine, like butterflies in spring flying from flower to flower, as a Wordsworth or a Wilson would express it.

We have got elegant lodgings at present in Norfolk Street, but my brother is trying, with all his address, to get us removed to a more fashionable part of the town, which, if the accounts were once settled, I think will take place; and he proposes to hire a carriage for a whole month. Indeed, he has given hints about the saving that might be made by buying one of our own; but my mother shakes her head, and says, "Andrew, dinna be carri't." From all which it is very plain, though they don't allow me to know their secrets, that the legacy is worth the coming for. But to return to the lodgings; – we have what is called a first and second floor, a drawing-room, and three handsome bedchambers. The drawing-room is very elegant; and the carpet is the exact same pattern of the one in the dress-drawing-room of Eglintoun Castle. Our landlady is indeed a lady, and I am surprised how she should think of letting lodgings, for she dresses better, and wears finer lace, than ever I saw in Irvine. But I am interrupted. —

I now resume my pen. We have just had a call from Mrs. and Miss Argent, the wife and daughter of the colonel's man of business. They seem great people, and came in their own chariot, with two grand footmen behind; but they are pleasant and easy, and the object of their visit was to invite us to a family dinner to-morrow, Sunday. I hope we may become better acquainted; but the two livery servants make such a difference in our degrees, that I fear this is a vain expectation. Miss Argent was, however, very frank, and told me that she was herself only just come to London for the first time since she was a child, having been for the last seven years at a school in the country. I shall, however, be better able to say more about her in my next letter. Do not, however, be afraid that she shall ever supplant you in my heart. No, my dear friend, companion of my days of innocence, – that can never be. But this call from such persons of fashion looks as if the legacy had given us some consideration; so that I think my father and mother may as well let me know at once what my prospects are, that I might show you how disinterestedly and truly I am, my dear Bell, yours,

Rachel Pringle.

When Miss Isabella Tod had read the letter, there was a solemn pause for some time – all present knew something, more or less, of the fair writer; but a carriage, a carpet like the best at Eglintoun, a Hussar officer, and two footmen in livery, were phantoms of such high import, that no one could distinctly express the feelings with which the intelligence affected them. It

was, however, unanimously agreed, that the Doctor's legacy had every symptom of being equal to what it was at first expected to be, namely, twenty thousand pounds; – a sum which, by some occult or recondite moral influence of the Lottery, is the common maximum, in popular estimation, of any extraordinary and indefinite windfall of fortune. Miss Becky Glibbans, from the purest motives of charity, devoutly wished that poor Rachel might be able to carry her full cup with a steady hand; and the Rev. Mr. Snodgrass, that so commendable an expression might not lose its edifying effect by any lighter talk, requested Mr. Micklewham to read his letter from the Doctor.

LETTER IX

The Rev. Z. Pringle, D.D., to Mr. Micklewham, Schoolmaster and Session-Clerk of Garnock
London.

Dear Sir – I have written by the post that will take this to hand, a letter to Banker M-y, at Irvine, concerning some small matters of money that I may stand in need of his opinion anent; and as there is a prospect now of a settlement of the legacy business, I wish you to take a step over to the banker, and he will give you ten pounds, which you will administer to the poor, by putting a twenty-shilling note in the plate on Sunday, as a public testimony from me of thankfulness for the hope that is before us; the other nine pounds you will quietly, and in your own canny way, divide after the following manner, letting none of the partakers thereof know from what other hand than the Lord's the help comes, for, indeed, from whom but His does any good befall us!

You will give to auld Mizy Eccles ten shillings. She's a careful creature, and it will go as far with her thrift as twenty will do with Effy Hopkirk; so you will give Effy twenty. Mrs. Binnacle, who lost her husband, the sailor, last winter, is, I am sure, with her two sickly bairns, very ill off; I would therefore like if you will lend her a note, and ye may put half-a-crown in the hand of each of the poor weans for a playock, for she's a proud spirit, and will bear much before she complain. Thomas Dowy has been long

unable to do a turn of work, so you may give him a note too. I promised that donsie body, Willy Shachle, the betherel, that when I got my legacy, he should get a guinea, which would be more to him than if the colonel had died at home, and he had had the howking of his grave; you may therefore, in the meantime, give Willy a crown, and be sure to warn him well no to get fou with it, for I'll be very angry if he does. But what in this matter will need all your skill, is the giving of the remaining five pounds to auld Miss Betty Peerie; being a gentlewoman both by blood and education, she's a very slimmer affair to handle in a doing of this kind. But I am persuaded she's in as great necessity as many that seem far poorer, especially since the muslin flowering has gone so down. Her bits of brats are sairly worn, though she keeps out an apparition of gentility. Now, for all this trouble, I will give you an account of what we have been doing since my last.

When we had gotten ourselves made up in order, we went, with Andrew Pringle, my son, to the counting-house, and had a satisfactory vista of the residue; but it will be some time before things can be settled – indeed, I fear, not for months to come – so that I have been thinking, if the parish was pleased with Mr. Snodgrass, it might be my duty to my people to give up to him my stipend, and let him be appointed not only helper, but successor likewise. It would not be right of me to give the manse, both because he's a young and inexperienced man, and cannot, in the course of nature, have got into the way of visiting the sick-beds of the frail, which is the main part of a pastor's duty, and

likewise, because I wish to die, as I have lived, among my people. But, when all's settled, I will know better what to do.

When we had got an inkling from Mr. Argent of what the colonel has left, – and I do assure you, that money is not to be got, even in the way of legacy, without anxiety, – Mrs. Pringle and I consulted together, and resolved, that it was our first duty, as a token of our gratitude to the Giver of all Good, to make our first outlay to the poor. So, without saying a word either to Rachel, or to Andrew Pringle, my son, knowing that there was a daily worship in the Church of England, we slipped out of the house by ourselves, and, hiring a hackney conveyance, told the driver thereof to drive us to the high church of St. Paul's. This was out of no respect to the pomp and pride of prelacy, but to Him before whom both pope and presbyter are equal, as they are seen through the merits of Christ Jesus. We had taken a gold guinea in our hand, but there was no broad at the door; and, instead of a venerable elder, lending sanctity to his office by reason of his age, such as we see in the effectual institutions of our own national church – the door was kept by a young man, much more like a writer's whipper-snapper-clerk, than one qualified to fill that station, which good King David would have preferred to dwelling in tents of sin. However, we were not come to spy the nakedness of the land, so we went up the outside stairs, and I asked at him for the plate; "Plate!" says he; "why, it's on the altar!" I should have known this – the custom of old being to lay the offerings on the altar, but I had forgot; such is the force, you see, of habit,

that the Church of England is not so well reformed and purged as ours is from the abominations of the leaven of idolatry. We were then stepping forward, when he said to me, as sharply as if I was going to take an advantage, "You must pay here." "Very well, wherever it is customary," said I, in a meek manner, and gave him the guinea. Mrs. Pringle did the same. "I cannot give you change," cried he, with as little decorum as if we had been paying at a playhouse. "It makes no odds," said I; "keep it all." Whereupon he was so converted by the mammon of iniquity, that he could not be civil enough, he thought – but conducted us in, and showed us the marble monuments, and the French colours that were taken in the war, till the time of worship – nothing could surpass his discretion.

At last the organ began to sound, and we went into the place of worship; but oh, Mr. Micklewham, yon is a thin kirk. There was not a hearer forby Mrs. Pringle and me, saving and excepting the relics of popery that assisted at the service. What was said, I must, however, in verity confess, was not far from the point. But it's still a comfort to see that prelatical usurpations are on the downfall; no wonder that there is no broad at the door to receive the collection for the poor, when no congregation entereth in. You may, therefore, tell Mr. Craig, and it will gladden his heart to hear the tidings, that the great Babylonian madam is now, indeed, but a very little cutty.

On our return home to our lodgings, we found Andrew Pringle, my son, and Rachel, in great consternation about our

absence. When we told them that we had been at worship, I saw they were both deeply affected; and I was pleased with my children, the more so, as you know I have had my doubts that Andrew Pringle's principles have not been strengthened by the reading of the *Edinburgh Review*. Nothing more passed at that time, for we were disturbed by a Captain Sabre that came up with us in the smack, calling to see how we were after our journey; and as he was a civil well-bred young man, which I marvel at, considering he's a Hussar dragoon, we took a coach, and went to see the lions, as he said; but, instead of taking us to the Tower of London, as I expected, he ordered the man to drive us round the town. In our way through the city he showed us the Temple Bar, where Lord Kilmarnock's head was placed after the Rebellion, and pointed out the Bank of England and Royal Exchange. He said the steeple of the Exchange was taken down shortly ago – and that the late improvements at the Bank were very grand. I remembered having read in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, some years past, that there was a great deal said in Parliament about the state of the Exchange, and the condition of the Bank, which I could never thoroughly understand. And, no doubt, the taking own of an old building, and the building up of a new one so near together, must, in such a crowded city as this, be not only a great detriment to business, but dangerous to the community at large.

After we had driven about for more than two hours, and neither seen lions nor any other curiosity, but only the outside of houses, we returned home, where we found a copperplate

card left by Mr. Argent, the colonel's agent, with the name of his private dwelling-house. Both me and Mrs. Pringle were confounded at the sight of this thing, and could not but think that it prognosticated no good; for we had seen the gentleman himself in the forenoon. Andrew Pringle, my son, could give no satisfactory reason for such an extraordinary manifestation of anxiety to see us; so that, after sitting on thorns at our dinner, I thought that we should see to the bottom of the business. Accordingly, a hackney was summoned to the door, and me and Andrew Pringle, my son, got into it, and told the man to drive to second in the street where Mr. Argent lived, and which was the number of his house. The man got up, and away we went; but, after he had driven an awful time, and stopping and inquiring at different places, he said there was no such house as Second's in the street; whereupon Andrew Pringle, my son, asked him what he meant, and the man said that he supposed it was one Second's Hotel, or Coffee-house, that we wanted. Now, only think of the craftiness of the ne'er-da-weel; it was with some difficulty that I could get him to understand, that second was just as good as number two; for Andrew Pringle, my son, would not interfere, but lay back in the coach, and was like to split his sides at my confabulating with the hackney man. At long and length we got to the house, and were admitted to Mr. Argent, who was sitting by himself in his library reading, with a plate of oranges, and two decanters with wine before him. I explained to him, as well as I could, my surprise and anxiety at seeing his card, at which he

smiled, and said, it was merely a sort of practice that had come into fashion of late years, and that, although we had been at his counting-house in the morning, he considered it requisite that he should call on his return from the city. I made the best excuse I could for the mistake; and the servant having placed glasses on the table, we were invited to take wine. But I was grieved to think that so respectable a man should have had the bottles before him by himself, the more especially as he said his wife and daughters had gone to a party, and that he did not much like such sort of things. But for all that, we found him a wonderful conversible man; and Andrew Pringle, my son, having read all the new books put out at Edinburgh, could speak with him on any subject. In the course of conversation they touched upon politick economy, and Andrew Pringle, my son, in speaking about cash in the Bank of England, told him what I had said concerning the alterations of the Royal Exchange steeple, with which Mr. Argent seemed greatly pleased, and jocosely proposed as a toast, – "May the country never suffer more from the alterations in the Exchange, than the taking down of the steeple." But as Mrs. Pringle is wanting to send a bit line under the same frank to her cousin, Miss Mally Glencairn, I must draw to a conclusion, assuring you, that I am, dear sir, your sincere friend and pastor,

Zachariah Pringle.

The impression which this letter made on the auditors of Mr. Micklewham was highly favourable to the Doctor – all bore testimony to his benevolence and piety; and Mrs. Glibbans

expressed, in very loquacious terms, her satisfaction at the neglect to which prelacy was consigned. The only person who seemed to be affected by other than the most sedate feelings on the occasion was the Rev. Mr. Snodgrass, who was observed to smile in a very unbecoming manner at some parts of the Doctor's account of his reception at St. Paul's. Indeed, it was apparently with the utmost difficulty that the young clergyman could restrain himself from giving liberty to his risible faculties. It is really surprising how differently the same thing affects different people. "The Doctor and Mrs. Pringle giving a guinea at the door of St. Paul's for the poor need not make folk laugh," said Mrs. Glibbans; "for is it not written, that whosoever giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord?" "True, my dear madam," replied Mr. Snodgrass, "but the Lord to whom our friends in this case gave their money is the Lord Bishop of London; all the collection made at the doors of St. Paul's Cathedral is, I understand, a perquisite of the Bishop's." In this the reverend gentleman was not very correctly informed, for, in the first place, it is not a collection, but an exaction; and, in the second place, it is only sanctioned by the Bishop, who allows the inferior clergy to share the gains among themselves. Mrs. Glibbans, however, on hearing his explanation, exclaimed, "Gude be about us!" and pushing back her chair with a bounce, streaking down her gown at the same time with both her hands, added, "No wonder that a judgment is upon the land, when we hear of money-changers in the temple." Miss Mally Glencairn, to appease her

gathering wrath and holy indignation, said facetiously, “Na, na, Mrs. Glibbans, ye forget, there was nae changing of money there. The man took the whole guineas. But not to make a controversy on the subject, Mr. Snodgrass will now let us hear what Andrew Pringle, ‘my son,’ has said to him”: – And the reverend gentleman read the following letter with due circumspection, and in his best manner: —

LETTER X

Andrew Pringle, Esq., to the Reverend Charles Snodgrass

My dear Friend – I have heard it alleged, as the observation of a great traveller, that the manners of the higher classes of society throughout Christendom are so much alike, that national peculiarities among them are scarcely perceptible. This is not correct; the differences between those of London and Edinburgh are to me very striking. It is not that they talk and perform the little etiquettes of social intercourse differently; for, in these respects, they are apparently as similar as it is possible for imitation to make them; but the difference to which I refer is an indescribable something, which can only be compared to peculiarities of accent. They both speak the same language; perhaps in classical purity of phraseology the fashionable Scotchman is even superior to the Englishman; but there is a flatness of tone in his accent – a lack of what the musicians call expression, which gives a local and provincial effect to his conversation, however, in other respects, learned and intelligent. It is so with his manners; he conducts himself with equal ease, self-possession, and discernment, but the flavour of the metropolitan style is wanting.

I have been led to make these remarks by what I noticed in the guests whom I met on Friday at young Argent's. It

was a small party, only five strangers; but they seemed to be all particular friends of our host, and yet none of them appeared to be on any terms of intimacy with each other. In Edinburgh, such a party would have been at first a little cold; each of the guests would there have paused to estimate the characters of the several strangers before committing himself with any topic of conversation. But here, the circumstance of being brought together by a mutual friend, produced at once the purest gentlemanly confidence; each, as it were, took it for granted, that the persons whom he had come among were men of education and good-breeding, and, without deeming it at all necessary that he should know something of their respective political and philosophical principles, before venturing to speak on such subjects, discussed frankly, and as things unconnected with party feelings, incidental occurrences which, in Edinburgh, would have been avoided as calculated to awaken animosities.

But the most remarkable feature of the company, small as it was, consisted of the difference in the condition and character of the guests. In Edinburgh the landlord, with the scrupulous care of a herald or genealogist, would, for a party, previously unacquainted with each other, have chosen his guests as nearly as possible from the same rank of life; the London host had paid no respect to any such consideration – all the strangers were as dissimilar in fortune, profession, connections, and politics, as any four men in the class of gentlemen could well be. I never spent a more delightful evening.

The ablest, the most eloquent, and the most elegant man present, without question, was the son of a saddler. No expense had been spared on his education. His father, proud of his talents, had intended him for a seat in Parliament; but Mr. T- himself prefers the easy enjoyments of private life, and has kept himself aloof from politics and parties. Were I to form an estimate of his qualifications to excel in public speaking, by the clearness and beautiful propriety of his colloquial language, I should conclude that he was still destined to perform a distinguished part. But he is content with the liberty of a private station, as a spectator only, and, perhaps, in that he shows his wisdom; for undoubtedly such men are not cordially received among hereditary statesmen, unless they evince a certain suppleness of principle, such as we have seen in the conduct of more than one political adventurer.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.