

O'Rell Max

Friend Mac Donald



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CHAPTER I

A Word to Donald. – The Scotch Anecdote and its Character. – The Scotch painted by Themselves.

Ah! my dear Donald, what good stories you told me in the few months that I had the pleasure of passing with you! How you stuffed and saturated me with them!

And the English pretend that nobody laughs in Scotland!

Don't they though! and with the right sort of laughter, too: a laugh that is frank, and full of *finesse* and good-humour.

You will be astonished, perhaps, that a three or four months' sojourn in Scotland should permit me to write a little volume on your dear country, and you will, may be, accuse me of having visited you with the idea of seeking two hundred pages for the printer.

You would be very wrong in your impression, if you thought so.

To tell the truth, I did not take a single note in Scotland; but, on my return home, all those delicious anecdotes came back to my memory, and I could not resist the temptation of telling a few

of them to my compatriots.

After all, Scotland is almost a closed letter to the French; and I thought I might make myself useful and agreeable in offering French readers a picture of the manners and character of the Caledonians.

If, in order to be a success, a book of travels must be full of the strange and the horrible, it is all up with this one. But such is not the case; and he who advanced this opinion calumniated the public.

I have as much right as anyone to contradict such an assertion; for the public has been pleased to give the kindest reception to my books on England, and I certainly never had any other aim or ambition than that of telling the truth according to Horace's principle, *Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?*

Scotland is perhaps the only country whose anecdotes alone would suffice to give an exact idea of her inhabitants.

Irish anecdotes are exceedingly droll; but they only tend to show the thoughtless side of the Irish character. They are very amusing bulls; but while they divert, they do not instruct.

In Scotland, on the contrary, you find in the anecdotes a picture of the Scotch manners and character, as complete as it is faithful.

The Scot has kept the characteristics of his ancestors; but his manners have been toned down, and the language he speaks is growing more and more English: he is a changed man, and, in good society, you might be puzzled to tell him from an

Englishman.

This is not a compliment, for he has no desire to pass for other than Scotch.

Among those characteristics, there are two which he has preserved intact to the present day: *finesse* and matter-of-fact good-humour. You will find these two traits in every grade of Scotch life – in tradesman, mechanic, and peasant.

This is why, setting aside the upper classes, the Scotch differ essentially from the English.

It is because of that good-humour that the Scot is more communicative than the Englishman. He knows his failings, and does not mind talking about them; in fact, he will give you anecdotes to illustrate them, and this because they are national, and he loves to dwell on anything which reminds him that Scotland is a nation.

I might have entitled this volume, "The Scotch painted by themselves," for I do but write down what I saw and heard. I owe the scenes of life I describe to the Scotch who enacted them before me, and the anecdotes to those who were kind enough to tell them to me.

CHAPTER II

Donald, a British subject, but no Englishman. – Opinion of the greatest English Wit on the Scotch, and the worth of that Opinion. – The Wit of Donald and the Wit of the Cockney. – Intelligence and Intellectuality. – Donald's Exterior. – Donald's Interior. – Help yourself and Heaven will help you. – An Irish and a Scotch Servant facing a Difficulty. – How a small Scotchman may make himself useful in the Hour of Danger. – Characteristics. – Donald on Train Journeys. – One Way of avoiding Tolls.

In the eyes of the French, the Scot is a British subject – in other words, an Englishman – dressed in a Tam-o'-Shanter, a plaid, and kilt of red and green tartan, and playing the bagpipes; for the rest, speaking English, eating roast beef, and swearing by the Bible.

For that matter, many English people are pleased to entertain the same illusions on the subject of the dwellers in the north of Great Britain.

Yet, never were two nations¹ so near on the map, and so far removed in their ways and character.

The Scots English! Well, just advance that opinion in the presence of one, and you will see how it will be received.

¹ I mean "the people." As for the higher classes, their manners and dress are perfectly English; they only differ in their political and religious opinions.

The Scotchman is a British subject; but if you take him for an Englishman, he draws himself up, and says:

"No, Sir; I am not English. I am a Scotchman."

He is Scotch, and he intends to remain Scotch. He is proud of his nationality, and I quite understand it.

Of all the inhabitants of the more-or-less-United Kingdom, Friend Donald is the most keen, sturdy, matter-of-fact, persevering, industrious, and witty.

The most witty! Now I have said something.

Yes, the most witty, with all due respect to the shade of Sydney Smith.

So little do the English know the Scotch, that when I spoke to them of my intention to lecture in Scotland, they laughed at me.

"But don't you know, my dear fellow," they exclaimed, "that it is only by means of a pickaxe that you can get a joke into the skull of a Scotchman?"

And the fact is, that since the day when Sydney Smith, of jovial memory, pronounced his famous dictum, that it required a surgical operation to make a Scotchman understand a joke, poor Donald has been powerless to prevent past and present generations from repeating the phrase of the celebrated wit.

All in vain did Scotland produce Smollett, Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and Thomas Carlyle, in the eyes of the English, the Scotchman has remained the personification of slow-wittedness – a poor fellow incapable of making much beyond prayers and money, and the Londoner who has never travelled – the poor

Cockney who still firmly believes that the French are feeble creatures, living on snails and frogs – this Londoner, the most stupid animal in the world (after the Paris *badaud*, perhaps), goes about repeating to all who will listen to such nonsense:

"Dull and heavy as a Scotchman!"

Give a few minutes' start to a hoax, and you will never be able to overtake it.

To tell the truth, the wit of, I will not say, an Englishman, but a Cockney, is not within the reach of the Scot. Jokes, play upon words, and bantering are not in his line. A pun will floor him completely; but I hope to be able to prove, by means of a few anecdotes, that Donald has real wit, and humour above all – humour of the light, subtle kind, that would pass by a Cockney without making the least impression.

I do not wish to say that there is more intelligence in Scotland than in England; but I can in all security say there is more intellectuality.

The Cockney must have his puns and small jokes. On the stage, he delights in jigs; and to really please him, the best of actors have to become rivals of the mountebanks at a fair. A hornpipe delights his heart. An actor who, for an hour together, pretends not to be able to keep on his hat, sends him into the seventh heaven of delight; and I have seen the tenants of the stalls applaud these things. Such performances make the Scotch smile, but with pity. The Cockney! When you have said that you have said everything: it is a being who will find fault with the opera

of *Faust*, because up to the present time no manager has given the Kermess scene the attraction of an acrobat turning a wheel or standing on his head.

No, no; the Scotchman has no wit of this sort. In the matter of wit, he is an epicure, and only appreciates dainty food. A smart repartee will tickle his sides agreeably; he understands *demi-mots*; he is good-tempered, and can take a joke as well as see through one. His quick-wittedness and the subtlety of his character make him full of quaint remarks and funny and unexpected comparisons. He is a stranger to affectation – that dangerous rock to the would-be wit; he is natural, and is witty without trying to be a wit.

Yes, Donald is witty; but he possesses more solid qualities as well.

We will make acquaintance with his intellectual qualities presently.

As to his exterior – look at him: he is as strong as his own granite, and cut out for work.

A head well planted on a pair of broad shoulders; a strong-knit, sinewy frame; small, keen eyes; iron muscles; a hand that almost crushes your own as he shakes it; and large flat feet that only advance cautiously and after having tried the ground: such is Donald.

Needless to say that he generally lives to a good old age.

I never knew a Christian so confident of going to Paradise, or less eager to set out.

Why does the Scotchman succeed everywhere? Why, in Australia, New Zealand, and all the other British Colonies, do you find him landowner, director of companies, at the head of enterprises of all kinds? Again, why do you find in almost all the factories of Great Britain that the foreman is Scotch?

Ah! it is very simple.

Success is very rarely due to extraordinary circumstances, or to chance, as the social failures are fond of saying.

The Scot is economical, frugal, matter-of-fact, exact, thoroughly to be depended upon, persevering, and hard-working.

He is an early riser; when he earns but half-a-crown a day, he puts by sixpence or a shilling; he minds his own business, and does not meddle with other people's.

Add to these qualities the body that I was speaking of – a body healthy, bony, robust, and rendered impervious to fatigue by the practice of every healthful exercise – and you will understand why the Scotch succeed everywhere.

His religion teaches him to trust in God, and to rely upon his own resources – an eminently practical religion, whose device is:

Help yourself and Heaven will help you.

If a Scotchman were wrecked near an outlandish island in Oceania, I guarantee that you will find him, a few years later, installed as a landed proprietor, exacting rents and taxes from the natives.

Where the English, the Irish especially, will starve, the Scotch will exist; where the English can exist, the Scotch will dine.

The following little scene, which took place in my house, enlightened me very much as to why one finds the Scotch farming their own land in the colonies, while the Irish are doing labourers' work.

I had an Irish cook, an honest woman if ever there was one, faithful, and of a religion as sincere as it was unpractical.

The housemaid, a true-born Scotch girl, came down one morning to find the poor cook on her knees in the act of imploring Heaven to make her fire burn.

"But your wood is damp," she exclaimed; "how can ye expect it to burn? Pray, if ye will, but the Lord has a muckle to mind; and ye'd do weel to pit your wood in the oven o' nights, instead of bothering Him wi' such trifles."

"It was faith, nevertheless," said a worthy lady, to whom I told the matter.

It was idleness, thought I, or very much like it.

Doctor Norman Macleod tells how he was once in a boat, on a Highland lake, when a storm came on, which menaced him and his companions with the most serious danger. The doctor, a tall, strong man, had with him a Scotch minister, who was small and delicate. The latter addressed himself to the boatman, and, drawing his attention to the danger they were in, proposed that they should all pray.

"Na, na," said the boatman; "let the little ane gang to pray, but first the big ane maun tak' an oar, or we shall be drowned."

Donald is the most practical man on earth.

He is a man who takes life seriously, and whom nothing will divert from the road that leads to the goal.

He is a man who monopolises all the good places in this world and the next; who keeps the Commandments, and everything else worth keeping; who swears by the Bible – and as hard² as a Norman carter; who serves God every Sabbath day and Mammon all the week; who has a talent for keeping a great many things, it is true, but especially his word, when he gives it you.

He is not a man of brilliant qualities, but he is a man of solid ones, who can only be appreciated at his true worth when you have known him some time. He does not jump at you with demonstrations of love, nor does he swear you an eternal friendship; but if you know how to win his esteem, you may rely upon him thoroughly.

He is a man who pays prompt cash, but will have the value of his money.

If ever you travel with a Scotchman from Edinburgh to London, you may observe that he does not take his eyes off the country the train goes through. He looks out of the window all the time, so as not to miss a pennyworth of the money he has paid for his place. Remark to him, as you yawn and stretch yourself, that it's a long, tiring, tiresome journey, and he will probably exclaim:

"Long, indeed, long! I should think so, sir; and so it ought to be for £2 17s. 6d.!"

² I trust to the intelligence of the reader to distinguish here between the well-bred Scot and his humbler brethren.

I know of a Scot, who, rather than pay the toll of a bridge in Australia, takes off his coat, which he rolls and straps on his back, in order to swim across the stream.

He is not a miser; on the contrary, his generosity is well known in his own neighbourhood. He is simply an eccentric Scot, who does not see why he should pay for crossing a river that he can cross for nothing.

CHAPTER III

All Scots know how to reckon. – Rabelais in Scotland. – How Donald made two pence halfpenny by going to the Lock-up. – Difference between buying and stealing. – Scotch Honesty. – Last words of a Father to his Son. – Abraham in Scotland. – How Donald outdid Jonathan. – Circumspection, Insinuations, and Negations. – Delicious Declarations of Love. – Laconism. – Conversation reduced to its simplest Expression. – A, e, i, o, u. – A visit to Thomas Carlyle. – The Silent Academy of Hamadan. – With the Author's Compliments.

All the Scotch know how to read, write, and reckon.
Especially reckon.

The following adventure happened but the other day.

A wily Caledonian, accused of having insulted a policeman, was condemned by the Bailie of his village to pay a fine of half-a-crown, with the alternative of six days' imprisonment.

As there are few Scots who have not half-a-crown in their pockets, you will perhaps imagine that Friend Donald paid the money, glad to get out of the scrape so cheaply.

Not at all: when you are born in Scotland, you do not part with your cash without a little reflection.

So Donald reflected a moment.

Will he pay or go to jail? His heart wavers.

"I will go to jail," he exclaims, suddenly struck with a luminous idea.

Now the prison was in the chief town of his county, and it so happened that he had a little business to arrange there, but the railway fare was two shillings and eight pence halfpenny.

He passes the night in the lock-up, and in the morning is taken off by train to the prison.

Once safely there, Donald pulls half-a-crown from his purse, and demands a receipt of the governor, who has no choice but to give it him and set him at liberty. Our hero, proud as a king at the success of his plan, and the two pence halfpenny clear profit it has brought him, steers for the town and arranges his business.

Rabelais was not more cunning when he hit upon his stratagem for getting carried to Paris.

The Scotch themselves are fond of telling the following:

Dugald – "Did ye hear that Sandy McNab was ta'en up for stealin' a coo?"

Donald – "Hoot, toot, the stipit body! Could he no bocht it, and no paid for 't."

This explains why the Scotch prisons are relatively empty. Donald is often in the county court, but seldom in the police-court.

A good Scot begins the day with the following prayer:

"O Lord! grant that I may take no one in this day, and that no one may take me in. If Thou canst grant me but one of these favours, O Lord, grant that no one may take me in."

He would be a clever fellow, however, who could take in Donald.

There is no country where compacts are more faithfully kept than in Scotland. When you have the signature of a Scotchman in your pocket, you may make your mind easy; but, if you sign an agreement with him, you may be certain that he runs no risk of repenting of the transaction.

He is rarely at fault in his reckoning; but if, by chance, an error escapes him, it is not he who suffers by it.

I must hasten, however, to say that the honesty of the Scotch in England is proverbial. I have always heard the English say they liked doing business with Scotch firms, because they had the very qualities desirable in a customer: straight-forwardness and solvency.

Donald's honesty is all the more admirable, because he is firmly convinced in his heart, that he will go straight to Paradise whatever he may do. You will confess that there is danger about a Christian who feels sure that many things shall be forgiven him.

Perhaps his honesty may be the result of reflection, if the following little anecdote that was told me in Scotland is any criterion:

A worthy father, feeling death at hand, sends for his son to hear his last counsels.

"Donald," he says to him, "listen to the last words of your old father. If you want to get on in the world, be honest. Never forget that, in all business, honesty is the best policy. You may take my

word for it, my son, —*I hae tried baith.*"

This worthy Scot deserved an epitaph in the style of that one which the late Count Beust speaks of having seen on a tombstone at Highclere:

"Here lies Donald, who was as honest a man as it is possible to be in this world."

The Jews never got a footing in Scotland: they would have starved there.

They came; but they saw ... and gave it up.

You may find one or two in Glasgow, but they are in partnership with Scotchmen, and do not form a band apart. They do not do much local business: they are exporters and importers.

The Aberdonians tell of a Jew who once came to their city and set up in business; but it was not long before he packed up his traps and decamped from that centre of Scotch 'cuteness.

"Why are you going?" they asked him. "Is it because there are no Jews in Aberdeen?"

"Oh, no," he replied; "I am going because you are all Jews here."

An American was so ill-inspired as to try his hand there where even a Jew had been beaten.

The good folk of Aberdeen are very proud of telling the following anecdote, which dates from only a few months back, and was in everyone's mouth at the time of my visit to the city of granite:

An American lecturer had signed an agreement with an

Aberdonian, by which he undertook to go and lecture in Aberdeen for a fee of twenty pounds.

Dazzled by the success of his lectures, which were drawing full houses in all parts of England, the American bethought himself that he might have made better terms with Donald. Acting on this idea, he soon sent him a telegram, running thus:

"Enormous success. Invitations numerous. Cannot do Aberdeen for less than thirty pounds. Reply prepaid."

The Scot was not born to be taken in.

On the contrary.

Donald, armed with the treaty in his pocket, goes calmly to the telegraph office and wires:

"All right. Come on."

Jonathan, encouraged by the success of this first venture, rubs his hands, and, two days later, sends a second telegram, as follows:

"Invitations more and more numerous. Impossible to do Aberdeen for less than forty pounds."

Donald thinks the thing very natural, and laughs in his sleeve. He bids the messenger wait, and without hesitation he scribbles:

"All right. Come on."

Jonathan doubtless rubbed his hands harder than ever, and might have been very surprised if he had been told that Donald was rubbing his too.

However, he arrived in Aberdeen radiant, gave his lecture, and at the end was presented by Donald with a cheque for twenty

pounds.

"Twenty pounds – but it is forty pounds you owe me!"

"You make a mistake," replied Donald, quietly: "here is our treaty, signed and registered."

"But I sent you a telegram to tell you that I could not possibly come for less than forty pounds."

"Quite so," replied Donald, unmoved.

"And you answered – 'All right. Come on.'"

"That is true."

"Well then?"

"Well, my dear sir, it is all right: you have come – now, you may go."

Like the crow in La Fontaine's fable, Jonathan registered a vow ... but a little late.

"Ah!" cried the Aberdonian who told me the story, "Jonathan will not go back to America to tell his compatriots that he took in a Scotchman." And his eyes gleamed with national pride as he added: "It was no harm to try."

He considered the conduct of the American quite natural, it was clear.

As for me, I thought that "All right – come on," a magnificent example of Scotch diplomacy and humour.

Donald has a still cooler head than his neighbour John Bull, and that is saying a good deal. In business, in love even, he never loses his head. He is circumspect. He proceeds by insinuations, still oftener by negations, and that even in the most trifling

matters. He does not commit himself: he *doubts*, he goes as far as to *believe*; but he will never push temerity so far as to be *perfectly sure*. Ask a Scotchman how he is. He will never reply that he is well, but that he is *no bad ava*.

I heard a Scotchman tell the butler to fill his guests' glasses in the following words:

"John, if you were to fill our glasses, we wadna be the waur for 't."

Remark to a Highlander that the weather is very warm, and he will reply:

"I don't doubt but it may be; but that's your opinion."

This manner of expressing themselves in hints and negations must have greatly sharpened the wits of the Scotch.

Here, for instance, is a delicious way of making a young girl understand that you love her, and wish to marry her. I borrow it from Dr. Ramsay's *Reminiscences*.

Donald proposes to Mary a little walk.

They go out, and in their ramble they pass through the churchyard.

Pointing with his finger to one of the graves, this lover says:

"My folk lie there, Mary; wad ye like to lie there?"

Mary took the grave hint, says the Doctor, and became his wife, but does not yet *lie there*.

Much in the same vein is an anecdote that was told me in an Edinburgh house one day at dessert:

Jamie and Janet have long loved each other, but neither has

spoken word to the other of this flame.

At last Donald one day makes up his mind to break the ice.

"Janet," he says, "it must be verra sad to lie on your death bed and hae no ane to houd your han' in your last moments?"

"That is what I often say to mysel, Jamie. It must be a pleasant thing to feel that a frien's han' is there to close your ee when a' is ower."

"Ay, ay, Janet; and that is what mak's me sometimes think o' marriage. After all, we war na made to live alone."

"For my pairt, I am no thinkin' o' matrimony. But still, the thought of livin' wi' a mon that I could care for is no disagreeable to me," says Janet. "Unfortunately, I have not come across him yet."

"I believe I hae met wi' the woman I loe," responds Jamie; "but I dinna ken whether she lo'es me."

"Why dinna ye ask her, Jamie?"

"Janet," says Jamie, without accompanying his words with the slightest chalorous movement, "wad ye be that woman I was speakin' of?"

"If I died before you, Jamie, I wad like your han' to close my een."

The engagement was completed with a kiss to seal the compact.

The Scot, in his quality of a man of action, talks little; all the less, perhaps, because he knows that he will have to give an account of every idle word in the Last Day.

He has reduced conversation to its simplest expression. Sometimes even he will restrain himself, much to the despair of foreigners, so far as to only pronounce the accentuated syllable of each word. What do I say? The syllable? He will often sound but the vowel of that syllable.

Here is a specimen of Scotch conversation, given by Dr. Ramsay:

A Scot, feeling the warp of a plaid hanging at a tailor's door, enquires:

"Oo?" (Wool?)

Shopkeeper— "Ay, oo." (Yes, wool.)

Customer— "A' oo?" (All wool?)

Shopkeeper— "Ay, a' oo." (Yes, all wool.)

Customer— "A' ae oo?" (All one wool?)

Shopkeeper— "Ay, a' ae oo." (Yes, all one wool.)

These are two who will not have much to fear on the Day of Judgment — eh?"

You may, perhaps, imagine that laconism could no further go.

But you are mistaken; I have something better still to give you.

Alfred Tennyson at one time often paid a visit to Thomas Carlyle at Chelsea.

On one of those occasions, these two great men, having gone to Carlyle's library to have a quiet chat together, seated themselves one on each side of the fireplace, and lit their pipes.

And there for two hours they sat, plunged in profound meditation, the silence being unbroken save for the little dry

regular sound that the lips of the smokers made as they sent puffs of smoke soaring to the ceiling. Not one single word broke the silence.

After two hours of this strange converse between two great souls that understood each other without speech, Tennyson rose to take leave of his host. Carlyle went with him to the door, and then, grasping his hand, uttered these words:

"Eh, Alfred, we've had a grand night! Come back again soon."

If Thomas Carlyle had lived at Hamadan, he would have been worthy to fill the first seat in the Silent Academy, the chief statute of which was, as you may remember, worded thus:

"The Academicians must think much, write little, and speak as seldom as possible."

Another Scot very worthy of a place in the Silent Academy was the late Christopher North.

A professor of the Edinburgh University, having asked him for the hand of his daughter Jane, Christopher North fixed a small ticket to Miss Jane's chest, and announced his decision by thus presenting the young lady to the professor, who read with glad eyes:

"With the Author's compliments."

CHAPTER IV

The traditional Hospitality of the Highlands. – One more fond Belief gone. – Highland Bills. – Donald's Two Trinities. – Never trust Donald on Saturdays or Mondays. – The Game he prefers. – A well-informed Man. – Ask no Questions and you will be told no Tales. – How Donald showed prodigious Things to a Cockney in the Highlands. – There is no Man so dumb as he who will not be heard.

Ever since the French first heard Boïeldieu's opera, *La Dame Blanche*, and were charmed with the chorus, "Chez les montagnards écossais l'hospitalité se donne," the Highlander has enjoyed a tremendous reputation for hospitality on the other side of the Channel.

I am ready to acknowledge that the Scotch, as a nation, are most hospitable; but do not talk to me of the hospitality of the Highlander.

The hospitality of the mountains, like that of the valleys, is extinct in almost every place where modern civilisation has penetrated; the real old-fashioned article is scarcely to be found except among the savages.

Donald has made the acquaintance of railways and mail coaches, he has transformed his Highlands into a kind of little Switzerland; in fact, the man is no longer recognisable.

The Highlander of the year of grace 1887 is a wideawake

dog, who lies in wait for the innocent tourist, and knows how to tot you up a bill worthy of a Parisian boarding-house keeper at Exhibition time. Woe to you if you fall into his clutches; before you come out of them you will be plucked, veritably flayed.

The Highlander worships two trinities: the holy one on Sundays, and a metallic one all the week. £. s. d. is the base of his language. Though Gaelic should be the veriest Hebrew to you, you have but to learn the meaning and pronunciation of the three magic words, and you will have no difficulty in getting along in the Highlands.

Every Sabbath he goes in for a thorough spiritual cleaning; therefore trust him not on Saturday or Monday – on Saturday, because he says to himself, "Oh! one transgression more or less whilst I am at it, what does it matter? it is Sunday to-morrow;" on Monday, because he is all fresh washed, and ready to begin the week worthily.

He has a way of giving you your change which seems to say, "Is it the full change you expect?" If you keep your hand held out, and appear to examine what he gives you, his look says: "You are one of the wideawake sort; we understand each other."

Needless to say that the Highlander is glad to see the tourist, as the hunter is glad to see game.

Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, Englishmen, Americans, all are sure of a welcome – he loves them all alike.

Still, perhaps of all the foreign tourists who visit his hunting-grounds, it is the Americans who have found the royal road to

his heart.

"The Americans are a great people," said a Highland innkeeper to me one day. "When you present an Englishman with his bill, he looks it over to see that it is all right. He will often dispute and haggle. The American is a gentleman; he would think it beneath him to descend to such trifles. When you bring him his account, he will wave your hand away and tell you he does not want your bill; he wants to know how much he owes you, and that's the end of it."

His idea of a perfect gentleman is an innocent who pays his bills without looking at them.

When he recognises a tourist as a compatriot, you may imagine what a wry face he makes.

Just as the hotel-keeper of Interlaken or Chamounix relegates all his Swiss customers to the fifth floor rooms, so Donald gives the cold shoulder to all the Scotch who come his way. With them he is obliged to submit his bills to the elementary rules of arithmetic, and be careful that two and two make only four.

It is said that of all the inhabitants of the earth, the Paris *badaud* is the most easy to amuse. I think, for my part, that his London equivalent runs him very close. However this may be, the native of London is an easy prey to the wily Scot.

They are fond of telling, in Scotland, how friend Donald one day showed a Cockney really prodigious things in the Isle of Arran.

A Londoner, wishing to astonish his friends with the account

of his adventures in Scotland, resolved to make the ascent of the Goatfell without the aid of a guide. Arrived at the foot of the mountain, he informed the guides, who came to offer him their services, of his intention. You may imagine if Donald, who had sniffed a good day's work, meant to give up his bread and butter without a struggle.

"Your project is a mad one," our tourist is told. "You will miss many splendid points of view, and you will run a thousand risks."

The ascension of the Goatfell is about as difficult as that of the Monument; but our hero, who knew nothing about it, began to turn pale.

However, he appeared determined to keep to his resolution; and Donald, who considers he is being robbed every time anyone climbs his hills without a guide, begins to grumble.

Besides, when one is a Highlander, one does not give up a point so easily as all that. Our Caledonian resorts to diplomacy. A brilliant idea occurs to him.

"Since you will not have a guide," says he, pretending to withdraw, "good luck to you on your journey! Mind you don't miss the mysterious stone."

"What mysterious stone?" demands the Cockney.

"Oh, on the top of the Goatfell," replies Donald, "there is a stone that might well be called *enchanted*. When you stand upon that stone, no sound, no matter how close or how loud, can reach your ears."

"Really?" says the tourist, gaping.

"A thunderstorm might burst just above your head, and you would never hear it," added Donald, who saw that his bait was beginning to take.

"Prodigious!" cried the Londoner. "How shall I know the stone? Do tell me."

"Not easily," insinuated Donald slyly; "it is scarcely known except to guides. However, I will try to describe its position to you."

Here the Scot entered into explanations which threw the Cockney's brain into a complete muddle.

"I had better take you, after all, I think," said the bewildered tourist. "Come along."

I need not tell you that they were soon at the wonderful stone.

The Londoner took up his position on it, and begged the guide to stand a few steps off and to shout at the top of his voice.

Out Scot fell to making all sorts of contortions, placing his hands to his mouth as if to carry the sound; but not a murmur reached the ears of the tourist.

"Take a rest," he said to Donald; "you will make yourself hoarse... It is a fact that I have not heard a sound. It is prodigious! Now you go and stand on the stone, and I will shout."

They changed places.

The Cockney began to rave with all his might.

Donald did not move a muscle.

The dear Londoner made the hills ring with the sound of his voice, but his guide gazed at him as calmly as Nature that

surrounded them.

"Don't you hear anything?" cried the poor tourist.

Donald was not so silly as to fall into the trap. He feigned not to hear, and kept up his impassive expression.

The Cockney continued to howl.

"Shout louder," cried Donald; "I can hear nothing."

"It's wonderful; it is enough to take one's breath away. I never saw anything so remarkable in my life!"

And putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out a golden coin, and slipped it into Donald's hand.

This done, they left the marvel behind, and climbed to the summit of the Goatfell, the clever guide carefully picking out all the roughest paths, and doing his best to give his patient plenty of dangers for his money.

That night, after having made a note of all his day's adventures, the proud tourist added, as a future caution to his friends:

"Be sure and take a guide for the Goatfell!"

CHAPTER V

Resemblance of Donald to the Norman. – Donald marketing. – Bearding a Barber. – Norman Replies. – Cant. – Why the Whisky was not marked on the Hotel Bill. – New Use for the Old and New Testaments. – You should love your Enemies and not swallow them. – A modest Wish.

Friend Donald resembles the Norman very closely.

Like him, he is cunning and circumspect, with the composed exterior of Puss taking a doze.

We say in France, "Answering like a Norman." That means, "to give an evasive, ambiguous answer – neither *yes* nor *no*."

They might say in England, "Answering like a Scot," to express the same idea.

Look at Donald, with the corners of his mouth drawn back, and his eyes twinkling as he nods at you and answers *Ay*, or shakes his head as he says *Na, na*; and you will be convinced that he is compromised neither by the one nor the other.

At market the resemblance is perfect.

He strolls into the stall as if he did not want anything more than a look round. He examines the goods with a most indifferent eye, turns them over and over, and finds fault with them. He seems to say to the stall-keeper:

"You certainly could not have the impudence to ask a good price for such stuff as this."

If he buys, he pays with a protest.

When he pockets cash, on the contrary, admire the rapidity of the proceeding.

I one day heard a Norman, who had just been profiting by being in town on market-day to get shaved, say to the barber, with the most innocent air in the world:

"My word, I'm very sorry not to have a penny to give you, but my wife and I have spent all our money; I have only a halfpenny left... I will owe you till next time."

Compare this Norman with the hero of the following little anecdote which the Scotch tell.

A Scot, who sold brooms, went into a Glasgow barber's shop to get shaved.

The barber bought a broom of Donald, and, after having shaved him, asked what he owed him for the broom.

"Two pence," said Donald.

"No, no," said the barber; "it's too dear. I will give you a penny, and if you are not satisfied, you can take your broom again."

Donald pocketed the penny, and asked what he had to pay for being shaved.

"A penny," replied the barber.

"Na, na," said Donald; "I will give ye a bawbee, an' if ye are no satisfied, ye can pit my beard back again."

This is Norman to the life.

The Scot pays when he has given his signature, or when there is no help for it.

It has been said that the farthing was introduced to allow the Scotch to be generous. This is calumny; for the Scot is charitable; but if collections in Scotch churches were made in bags, there might be rather a run on the small copper coin.

If you would see still another point of resemblance between the Scot and the Norman, look at them as they indulge in their little pet transgression.

When Donald orders his glass of whisky, he is always careful to say:

"Waiter, a *small* whisky."

The Irishman asks for a "strong whisky," straight out, like a man.

Donald is modest, he asks for his *small*. That is the allowance of sober folks, and the dear fellow is one of them. But just add up at the end of the evening the number of *wee draps* that he has on his conscience, and you will find they make a very respectable total.

Now look at the Norman taking his cups of *café tricolore* after dinner.

Do not imagine that he is going to take up the three bottles of brandy, rum, and kirschwasser, and pour himself out some of their contents. No, no; he would be too much afraid of exceeding the dose. He measures it into his spoon, which he holds horizontally; and, to see the precautions he takes, you would think he was a chemist preparing a doctor's prescription.

"A teaspoonful of each," he says to you; "that is my quantity."

But how they brim over, those spoonfuls! When the overflow has fallen into the cup, he shows you the full spoon, with the remark:

"One of each kind, no more."

Scotch shrewdness expresses itself in a phraseology all its own, and of which Donald alone possesses the secret. He handles the English language with the talent of the most wily diplomatist. He has a happy knack of combining irony and humour, as the following story shows:

An English author had sent his latest production to several men of letters, requesting them to kindly give him their opinion of his book. A Scotchman replied:

"Many thanks for the book which you did me the honour to send me. I will lose no time in reading it."

Quite a Norman response, only more delicate.

Scotch shrewdness has occasionally a certain smack of mild hypocrisy, which, however, does no harm to anyone.

Here are two examples of it that rather diverted me:

I was in the smoking-room of the Grand Hotel at Glasgow one evening.

Near me, sitting at a little table, were two gentlemen – unmistakably Scotch, as their accent proclaimed.

One of them calls the waiter, and orders a glass of whisky.

"What is the number of your room, sir?" asks the waiter, having put the whisky and water-jug on the table.

"No matter, waiter; don't put it on the bill. Here is the money."

"Very clever, that Caledonian," said I to myself, as I noted the wink to the waiter and the glance thrown to the other occupant of the table.

True it is, *Scripta manent!*

If his wife accidentally puts her hand on his hotel bill in the pocket of his coat, there is no harm done – no sign of any but the most innocent articles.

Another time I was in a Scotchman's library.

While waiting for my host, who was to rejoin me there, I had a look at his books, most of which treated of theology.

Two volumes, admirably bound, attracted my gaze. They were marked on the back – one, *Old Testament*, the other, *New Testament*. I tried to take down the first volume; but, to my surprise, the second moved with it. Were the two volumes fixed together? or were they stuck by accident? Not suspecting any mystery, I pulled hard. The Old Testament and the New Testament were in one, and came together. The handsome binding was nothing but the cover of a box of cigars. No more Testament than there is on the palm of my hand: cigars – first-rate cigars – nothing but cigars, placed there under the protection of the holy patriarchs.

I had time to put all in place again before my host came; but I was not at my ease. I was quite innocent, of course; but – I don't know why – when one has discovered a secret, one feels guilty of having taken something that belongs to another.

At last my host entered, closed the door, and, rubbing his

hands, said:

"Now I am at your service. Excuse me for leaving you alone a few moments. I have settled my business, and we will have a cigar together, if you like."

So saying, he opened the door of a small cupboard made in the wall, and cleverly hidden by a picture of "John Knox imploring Mary Stuart to abjure the Catholic faith." It was, as you see, rather a mysterious library. From this cupboard he took some glasses – and something to fill them agreeably withal. Then, without betraying the slightest embarrassment, without a smile or a glance, he brought the twin volumes which had so astonished me, and laid them on the table. I had the pleasure of making closer acquaintance with the cigars, that seemed to bring a recommendation from Moses and the prophets.

An anecdote on the ready wit of Donald:

He meets his pastor, who remonstrates with him upon the subject of his intemperate habits.

"You are too fond of whisky, Donald; you ought to know very well that whisky is your enemy."

"But, minister, have you not often told us that we ought to love our enemies?" says Donald, slyly.

"Yes, Donald; but I never told you that you should swallow them," replies the pastor, who was as witty as his parishioner.

What anecdotes I heard in Scotland on the subject of whisky, to be sure!

Here is a good one for the last. I owe it to a learned professor

of the Aberdeen University.

Donald feels the approach of death.

The minister of his village is at his bedside, preparing him by pious exhortations for the great journey.

"Have you anything on your mind, Donald? Is there any question you would like to ask me?" And the minister bent down to listen to the dying man's reply.

"Na, meenister, I'm na afeard... I wad like to ken whether there'll be whisky in heaven?"

Upon his spiritual counsellor remonstrating with him upon such a thought at such a moment, he hastened to add, with a knowing look:

"Oh! it's no that I mind, meenister; I only thocht I'd like to see it on the table!"

CHAPTER VI

Democratic Spirit in Scotland. – One Scot as good as another. – Amiable Beggars. – Familiarity of Servants. – Shout all together! – A Scotchman who does not admire his Wife. – Donald's Pride. – The Queen and her Scotch People. – Little Presents keep alive Friendship.

The Scotch are an essentially democratic people. I take the word in its social, not its political, sense; although it might be asserted without hesitation, that if ever there was a nation formed for living under a republic, it is the Scotch – serious, calm, wise, law-abiding, and ever ready to respect the opinions of others. Yet the Scotch are perhaps the most devoted subjects of the English crown.

The English and Scotch are republicans, with democratic institutions, living under a monarchy.

When I say that the Scotch are a democratic people, I mean that in Scotland, still more than in England, one man is as good as another.

The Scot does not admit the existence of demigods. In his eyes, the robes of the priest or judge cover a man, not an oracle.

Always ready for a bit of argument, he criticises an order, a sermon, a verdict even.

Religious as he is, yet he will weigh every utterance of his pastor before accepting it. He respects the law; but if his bailie

inflicts on him a fine that he thinks unjust, he does not scruple to tell him a piece of his mind; and if ever you wish to be told your daily duty at home, you have but to engage a Scotch servant.

Donald knows how to accept social inferiority; he may perhaps envy his betters, but he does not hate them. He never abdicates his manhood's dignity: an obsequious Scotchman is unknown.

In Scotland, even a beggar has none of those abject manners that denote his class elsewhere. His look seems to say: —

"Come, my fine fellow, listen to me a minute: you have money and I have none; you might give me a penny."

I remember one in Edinburgh, who stopped me politely, yet without touching his cap, and said:

"You look as if you had had a good dinner, sir; won't you give me something to buy a meal with?"

I took him to a cook-shop and bought him a pork pie.

"If you don't mind," said he, "I'll have veal."

Why certainly! everyone to his taste, to be sure.

I acquiesced with alacrity. He was near shaking hands with me.

Donald is plain spoken with everyone. In Scotland, as in France, there are still to be found old servants whose familiarity would horrify an Englishman, but whom the *bonhomie* of Scotch masters tolerates without a murmur, in consideration of the fidelity and devotion of these honest servants.

Like every man who is conscious of his strength, the Scot is

good-humoured; he rarely loses his temper.

The familiarity of the servant and good-humour of the master, in Scotland, are delightfully illustrated in the two following anecdotes, which were told me in Scotland.

Donald is serving at table. Several guests claim his attention at once: one wants bread, another wine, another vegetables. Donald does not know which way to turn. Presently, losing patience, he apostrophises the company thus:

"That's it; cry a'together – that's the way to be served!"

A laird, in the county of Aberdeen, had a well-stocked fowl yard, but could never get any new-laid eggs for breakfast.

He wanted to penetrate the mystery. So he lay in ambush, and discovered that his gardener's wife went to the hen-roost every morning, filled her basket with the eggs, and made straight for the market to sell them.

The first time he met his gardener, he said to him:

"James, I like you very weel, for I think you serve me faithfully; but, between oursels, I canna say that I hae muckle admiration for your wife."

"I'm no surprised at that, laird," replied James, "for I dinna muckle admire her mysel!"

What could the poor laird say? This fresh union of sympathies united them only more closely.

"Proud as a Highlander" is a common saying. His gait tells you what he is. He walks with head thrown back, and shoulders squared; his step is firm and springy. It is a man who says to

himself twenty times a day:

"I am a Scotchman."

Such an exalted opinion has he of his race that when Queen Victoria gave Princess Louise to the Marquis of Lorne in marriage, the general feeling in the Highlands was, as everybody knows, "The Queen maun be a prood leddy the day!"

The English were astonished at the Queen's consenting to give her daughter to one of her subjects. They looked upon it as a *mésalliance*. The Scotch were not far from doing the same – a Campbell marry a simple Brunswick!

It is in the Highlands that this national pride is preserved intact. Mountainous countries always keep their characteristics longer than others.

Everyone knows that the Queen of England passes a great part of the year in her Castle of Balmoral, in the heart of the Highlands, among her worthy Scotch people, whom she appears to prefer to all her other subjects. She visits the humblest cottages, and sends delicacies to the sick and aged.

The good folk do not accept the bounty of their Queen without making her a return for it in kind. Yes – in kind. The women knit her a pair of stockings or a shawl, and the Queen delights them by accepting their presents.

CHAPTER VII

Scottish Perseverance. – Thomas Carlyle, David Livingstone, and General Gordon. – Literary Exploits of a Scotchman. – Scottish Students. – All the Students study. – A useful Library. – A Family of three. – Coming, sir, coming! – Killed in Action. – Scotchmen at Oxford. – Balliol College.

It is not in business alone that the Scotchman shows that obstinate perseverance which so characterises his nation. Thomas Carlyle would have passed a whole year searching out the exact date of the most insignificant incident. That is why his *Frederick the Great* is the finest historical monument of the century.

It is this same Scotch perseverance which makes Watts, Livingstones, and Gordons. Never were there brighter illustrations of what can be done by power of mind united to power of endurance.

I have seen them at work, those resolute, indomitable Scots. I have known some whose performances were nothing short of feats of valour.

Here is one that I have fresh in my memory.

A young Scotchman, on leaving Oxford, had been appointed master in one of the great public schools of England. He began with the elementary classes. At that time he intended to devote

himself to the study of science.

He told the head master of his intention, and asked his advice.

"If I were you," said the head master, "I would do nothing of the kind. I feel sure you have very special aptitude for Greek, and that if you will but direct your attention to that, you have a brilliant future before you. Let me trace you out a programme?"

This programme was enough to frighten the most enterprising of men. A Scotchman alone could undertake to carry it out.

Our young master accepted the task.

He took an apartment in the Temple, turned his back on his friends, and became an inaccessible hermit.

For three years he lived only for his books, consecrating to them that which, at his age, is generally consecrated to pleasure and comfort.

Nothing could turn him from the end he had in view.

One after another he read all the Greek authors. Nothing that had been written by poet, philosopher, historian, or grammarian, escaped him.

At the end of three years, he reappeared, wasted by the vigils and privations of this life of study; but the last touches had been put to the manuscript of a book, which, when it appeared three months later, was pronounced a masterpiece of scholarship, and made quite a revolution in the Greek world.

To-day this young Scotchman is one of the brightest lights in the higher walks of literature in Great Britain.

The students of the great Universities of Scotland offer,

perhaps, the most striking proofs of perseverance to be found.

At Oxford and Cambridge, you find all sorts of students, especially students who do not study.

In Scotland, all students study.

To be able to have the luxury of studying, or rather "residing" (such is the less pretentious name in use), at Oxford or Cambridge, you must be well-to-do.

In Scotland, as in Germany, Greece, Switzerland, and America, the poorest young men may aspire to university honours; but often at the cost of what privations!

Here are a few incidents of students' life in Scotland. They struck me as being very interesting, very touching. I borrow them, for the most part, from a writer who published them in a *Scotch Review* during my stay in Edinburgh.

He mentions one young man, of fine manners and aristocratic appearance, who dined but three times a week, and then upon a hot two-penny pie. On the other days he lived on dry bread.

Another had an ingenious way of turning his scanty resources to account. Spreading out his books where the hearthrug would naturally have been, he would lie there, learning his task by the light of a fire, made from the roots of decayed trees, which he had dug in a wood near Edinburgh, and carried to his lodgings.

Three Scotchmen, now occupying high positions, shared a room containing one bed; and for a year at least, while attending Aberdeen University, they had no other lodging. The bed was a very narrow one, and quite incapable of holding two persons at

once; so two worked while the other slept, and when they went to bed, he rose.

Two other students excited a great deal of curiosity for some time. One carried his books before him just as if they had been a tray, while he glided noiselessly to his place. This mystery was explained when it was learned that he had been a hotel waiter. During the winter he pursued his studies; and when summer returned, it found him, with serviette across his arm, earning the necessary fees for his next winter's course of study.

He never could quite throw off the waiter. If a professor called his name suddenly, he would start up and answer, "Coming, sir – coming!"

The other was more mysterious still. As soon as recitation was over, he would start away from the class-room and make for the environs of the town as fast as he could run. It was at last discovered that he kept a little book shop at some distance from the University, and, being too poor to hire an assistant, had to close his door to customers while he went to recite his lessons.

Professor Blackie tells of one young student, who lived for a whole session on red herrings and a barrel of potatoes, sent him from home. The poor fellow's health so gave way under this meagre diet, that he died before his course of study was finished.

The learned Professor mentions also another very touching case of a young student who fell a victim to his thirst for knowledge. The poor fellow had so weakened his stomach by privation, that he died from eating a good meal given him by a

kind friend.

I said just now that little work was done at the University of Oxford. Exception must, however, be made in the case of the famous Balliol College.

But whom do we find there?

This college is full of Scotch students, who succeed in keeping themselves at Oxford, thanks to their frugality and industry. It is not unfrequent to find them giving lessons to the undergraduates of other colleges!

And what lessons the Scotch can give the English!

CHAPTER VIII

Good old Times. – A Trick. – Untying Cravats. – Bible and Whisky. – Evenings in Scotland. – The Dining-room. – Scots of the Old School. – Departure of the Whisky and Arrival of the Bible. – The Nightcap in Scotland. – Five hours' Rest. – The Gong and its Effects. – Fresh as Larks. – Iron Stomachs.

Scotchmen still drink hard; but where are the joyous days when the Scotch host broke the glasses off at the stem, so that his guests should drink nothing but bumpers?

Scotchmen still drink hard; but where are the good old times, when it was thought a slight to your host to go to bed without the help of a couple of servants?

Scotchmen still drink hard; but where is the time when people recommended a *protégé*, who was a candidate for a vacant post, by adding at the foot of his petition, "He is a trustworthy man – capable, hard-working, and a fine drinker"?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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