

SANDY M'TARTAN'S VISIT TO THE SHOWS.
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SANDY M'TARTAN, and his loving spouse, Kirsty, paid a visit to the "Shows" last year, and turned oot twa o' the greatest curiosities to be seen there.

Arriving at the spot, they very soon found themselves part and parcel of the densely-packed crowd, and, like other sight-seers, were jostled and hustled hither and thither with ceaseless repetition.

To avoid separation, Kirsty "cleekit" Sandy, and hung upon his arm like a firmly glued and dove-tailed fixture. M'Tartan observed to Kirsty that the crowd was a mixed one, as they struggled through it, but Kirsty, with outspoken humour, flatly declared that there was "nae mixtures aboot it, for it was entirely made up o' Gleska keelies."

"Weel, then, Kirsty, let's get inside some 'Show' to be clear o' them."

"Na, na, guidman; that wad be jumpin' oot o' the fryin' pan into the fire. We'll keep in the air—ootside."

So they wandered hither and thither with the swaying crowd, and got glimpses of pictorial advertisements of many wonderful and curious pennyworths to be witnessed inside. Irish giants who could light the streets of Dublin without the help of a ladder; and Yankee tall men who, for a challenge of £100, could for height "flop" all creation. Wherever a giant was on exhibition, a dwarf, by way of contrast, was invariably the second feature of the establishment. Then, there were also to be seen people with two heads, and women with full-grown beards; animals with too many legs, and animals with too few; acting monkeys, and speaking fish; intelligent and calculating ponies, and star mammoth pigs; knock-me-out Sallys, and knock-me-down nine-pins; merry-go-rounds driven by engines, and organs going by

steam; stands covered with icebergs of ice-cream, and tables smoking with "blows of hot peas;" ascending London boxes, and high-flying swings; tents of pantomime fun, and booths of bleeding tragedy; waxworks, sparring booths, circuses, menageries, wizards' tents and hobgoblinsopes, with almost every other conceivable and inconceivable incongruity. Each booth had a great front of highly-coloured picture-canvas, illustrative of the scenes and wonders to be seen inside. The menageries especially were rich in pictorial display. At the stair-way of one of the largest "collections" a crier stood, who, with the aid of a good voice and a long tapered stick, with a tassel made of strips of coloured cotton adorning the top end of it, called frequent attention to a tremendous-looking picture of—

"The great Hafrican lion, Nero, the pride hov the forest! —the huntameable monarch hov the Hafrican wilds, gen'l'men, as has heaten and swallered six h-alive keepers within the past four years! To be seen h-alive, gen'l'men, to be seen h-alive! No waiting! no delay!"

With the expiry of each half-dozen words, the "crier" flopped the canvas picture with his stiek, said picture representing the "pride hov the Hafrican forest" in the act of swallowing an "h-alive keeper."

"Supposing we gang in and see the African 'monarch o' the wuds,' Kirsty, eh?"

"Na, na, guidman; I'll e'en dae naething o' the kind; the fearsome britt nicht tak' a fancy for you or me for supper. Let's move roond wi' the crood."

"Weel, let's try the 'acting monkeys,' Kirsty; they'll no eat us alive, surely. They ha'e a born genius for crackin' a nit, but I never heard o' yin o' them takin' waur liberties wi' a man-body than chowin' the button aff his coat."

"Gae awa' wi' you an' yer monkeys," retorted Kirsty; "nesty, itchy britts; I hate the vera sicht o' them!"

"Weel, try a gless o' ice-cream," insisted M'Tartan.

"It wad raise the tuithache in my three auld stumps."

"Try a bowl o' het pease, then."

"It wad develop the win' on the stamnack."

"Here, then," said M'Tartan, excitedly, "haud oot yer haun'. There's a penny; get on the back o' a hobby-horse for five minutes, while I try a roond wi' the gloves," and before Kirsty had time to wink, M'Tartan had darted inside of a sparring booth, where some Birmingham men were showing how human eyes may be successfully discoloured, and noses scientifically put out of shape.

Kirsty was paralysed with astonishment. She looked up at the announcement of the performance on the canvas over the door, and saw that each entertainment wound-up with a regular "set-to" between the "Birmingham Cock" and the "Belfast Chicken," these being the professional sobriquets of the two leading men of the sparring establishment.

"Eh, me," quo' Kirsty to hersel', "and he's really in to see a cock-fecht! Fine wark for a Scotchman and a Christian!" and she resolved to stand by for a time, mentally determined that a second fecht between a certain domestic cock and hen would be openly instituted on his return.

Meantime M'Tartan had got himself well placed next the "ropes," and the audience having been invited to take a turn at the "gloves," M'Tartan boldly challenged the "Birmingham Cock" to a bout, the more so that the English pugilist had just knocked down a "kiltit sodger" twice his own weight, who had ventured to face him. The honour of Scotland was thus at stake, and our hero was prepared to vindicate it at all personal risk. M'Tartan, as may well be imagined, was a rare sight to see when he had laid aside his stick and coat and donned the formidable-looking "gloves."

"Noo, lead aff, my cockie," he remarked, "an' nae hittin' below the belt. I'll dust yer winkers, my man, an' that

afore twa ticks. There, tak' that!" and driving out his right fist at the Birmingham man, that "expert" smartly drew aside his head, and allowed M'Tartan's blow to waste its virtue on the unresisting air, complimenting him, at the same time, with a stiff one on the bread-basket, which sent Sandy outside the "ropes," and into the arms of the laughing spectators.

"'Odsake, the birkie can hit!" was M'Tartan's exclamation on being set up on his pins; "but if he has scored the first knock-doon blow, I'll draw the first bluid. Come on, my man; tippence for first bluid!"

Again M'Tartan shot out his hand, and again, quick as light, his *understandings* went uppermost, and he came down on the sawdust, this time on his bulky posterior.

A roar of laughter succeeded, which M'Tartan heeded not.

Rubbing the dust from his eyelids, he once more valiantly confronted his lithe and wary enemy.

Humorously warning him to "mind his left e'e, as he was gaun to illuminate that organ," M'Tartan tried a swinging side-blow at his opponent's right ear. The Birmingham man ducked cleverly, with a faint smile, and M'Tartan, amidst shouts of laughter, whirled three times round on his heel, and fell pop down on the saw-dust floor for the third time.

The audience laughed aloud, and, dropping his gloved hands by his side, so also did the "Birmingham Cock." But his triumph was of brief duration. A commotion was presently seen amongst the spectators, and a peculiar *skreigh* of excitement told M'Tartan that Kirsty was within the booth. Such was indeed the case; and a moment after the redoubtable Kirsty was inside the "ring," and had broken her auld umbrella over the Birmingham man's head.

"Ye wad knock doon ma guidman, ye vagabond that ye are!" she exclaimed, following him up all round the ring, amidst shouts of laughter. "Dod, an' I get ye, I'se thraw the neck o' ye, ye keelie-looking craitur that ye are!"

"Does the old 'missus' want a 'go'?" asked the Birmingham man, throwing himself into fighting position.

"Ay; haud ye there, fechtie, till I get at ye!" exclaimed Kirsty, uplifting her damaged umbrella menacingly for a second blow.

But "fechtie," perceiving the humour of the situation, dropped his fists, and precipitately retired from the ring. And thus, by an apparent paradox, the "cock" having fled the spot, Kirsty virtually became the hen of the walk.

"Kirsty!" cried M'Tartan, adjusting his deranged apparel, "this way, lass, afore ye affront me," and the heroic pair were presently outside the booth.

"What for did ye interfere?" resumed M'Tartan, as they made for the outside of the crowd; "twa minutes mair o't, an' I wad ha'e pother't the birkie's pow wi' some swankin' blows. As it is, I've sent the chiel hame wi' a sarkfu' o' sair banes, I'm thinkin'! The cock-a-doodle craw o' him was jist mair than I could stan'."

"Sair banes or no sair banes," answered Kirsty, "I'm confident the birkie has a gey sair heid the noo. But I'm clean vext for my guid auld umbrella—the handle's fairly broken in twa."

"Here, Kirsty!" suddenly exclaimed M'Tartan, "let's try a shot at the 'Lang Rifle Range' before we leave the grun'. I'm itchin' to 'pap' the bull's-eye."

"Pap yer wa's hamewards, guidman; ye're no safe to be left alane in a crood like this. See, here's the tram-car waitin' on us; in wi' ye." And ere M'Tartan had time to expostulate, the amusing pair were inside the car and whirling westwards towards home.

END OF FIRST SERIES.