

CHAPTER IX

PERSONAGES AND PERSONALITIES

WHILE summering at Glenfalloch, we had changed our winter quarters, sold No. 6 Eton Terrace, and bought No. 1 Royal Terrace, at the other end of Edinburgh.

The house being in process of erection at the time of the purchase, my father had it finished to suit his own requirements, which comprised two bathrooms, then an almost unprecedented luxury! It also had an inner as well as an outer hall, so that his little collection of British birds, beasts, and fishes could be well accommodated.

In other respects the Royal Terrace house was not nearly so large as its predecessor; but our family was now lessened, and it was big enough. We did not miss, or rather missed pleasantly, two extra flights of stairs, and it was indeed a relief for us younger ones not to have to toil up to the top of these to our bedrooms.

Royal Terrace was not then, and is not now, a fashionable quarter; but this, I suspect, was not reckoned any disadvantage by our parents, as the whole of Edinburgh being on such a small scale as compared with other cities, it neither prevented our going anywhere nor having anyone come to us, while yet one could go out and in without meeting an acquaintance at every step. Shy people, and both my father and mother were shy, appreciate such freedom.

The former, nevertheless, was reminded that he could not even at that end of the town always escape encounters,

and his retort was characteristic: "Hoots, there are only the Milne-Homes, and I never mind *them*; I can always find something to say to *them*. They have queer birds down at their place on the Tweed." I might add that, though doubtless cemented by the birds, the friendship with their owners then begun has been carried down to this present day.

Our Royal Terrace house, to be sure, faced the north—a drawback—though there was a fine view of the Firth of Forth from the upper windows; but, on the other hand, there were sunny rooms at the back opening into a little garden, which again opened into larger and beautifully kept gardens above, and the Calton Hill sheltered the whole in a kind and comfortable way. This house still remains in the family.

One of my early impressions of it was the following. We girls were busy one day with our various avocations, when our pleasant morning-room, which was made over to us entirely, was suddenly invaded by a younger brother, crying in high excitement, "Who's for the first sight of the Channel Fleet?"

He then hurried us off, such as would go, to a high bank in the upper gardens, commanding an extensive prospect; and we had scarcely established ourselves there, and fixed our eyes on the blue horizon, when its smooth, straight line began to exhibit a curious undulation. We were all gifted with long sight, and cried, "There—there!" at the same moment.

The undulation quickly resolved itself into seven distinct specks—hardly even dark specks, so far off were they; but they were at regular distances from each other, and never for an instant was it to be imagined that they could be anything else than the seven men-of-war expected that day to cast anchor in the Firth of Forth.

We were right. A slight breeze just rippled the sea, just sufficed to fill the sails, and on they came, the grand three-deckers of old—a sight never to be forgotten by any who beheld it.

By noon all were duly ranged between Inchkeith and the mainland, and the next thing was a ring of our doorbell, and the announcement that Lieutenant Wilson was in the drawing-room. There had been some mistake, and no one had told us that this sailor cousin was on board one of the Fleet vessels (as First Lieutenant of the *Warrior*), and we had never met him, though his mother was a Fuller-Maitland—a sister of our mother—so that it was a complete surprise and proportionate pleasure to find ourselves thus promptly sought out.

Nor shall I be deterred by fear of offending the modesty of a certain grey-haired admiral from saying that we were charmed with our kinsman, and more than charmed to accept the invitation to an afternoon dance on board his ship, with which he came charged.

For one glorious moment it seemed as if we were all to be allowed to go. Our cousin would hear of no refusals; he saw three sisters, all to him much of an age, and he did not understand the etiquette of being “out” and “not out.” But, alas! I was “not out”; I was on the verge—the worst place possible; and with a sinking heart I heard my doom pronounced: the *Warrior* dance was not for me.

And now comes the point of the tale. It might be supposed that poor Cinderella, thus left behind when the gay party started forth on the following afternoon, would weep and wail in secret. She did nothing of the kind. She had a consolation little dreamed of by others, and, the first pang of disappointment over, found it—as it has proved many a time in after life—sufficient. She had begun to write.

Four years had passed since *Macgregor*; or, *Our Chieftain*,

had found an early grave in the wastepaper basket at Garth, and he had had no successor up to the present time. But shortly before the Channel Fleet's appearance in the Forth, various discursive efforts had been the result of a something—I could not tell what—which burned within my breast, and with one of them on a larger scale than the rest, though modest as compared with the dare-devil *Macgregor*, I was now busy.

It absorbed me ; I heard the dressing and fussing preparatory to the start for the *Warrior* without emotion, nay with indifference, and directly the front-door shut, locked myself into the empty bedroom wherein all the débris lay about, and thought only of the luxury of having it to myself. Not a sigh did I waste upon the revel of the quarter-deck.

Yet of this second literary attempt, all-engrossing as it was, I have again no record, and am glad to think I thus recognised as before its lack of all merit except the bare fact of existence. "Sir," said the mighty Johnson of a dog walking on its hind legs, "it is not that it is well done, but that it is done at all, which is remarkable." Whether "Remarkable" should be applied to a crude effort on the part of a girl of seventeen may be questioned, but let that pass.

The tale was named *The Moderator's Breakfast* ; and to those for whom the words have no meaning I would explain that during the month in which it was written the Church of Scotland was holding its yearly "General Assembly," presided over by its "Moderator" (a clerical "Speaker"—annually elected by his brethren from among themselves). This congress is held in Edinburgh, and every day during the fortnight in which it takes place, the Moderator entertains a party of several hundred people to breakfast at his hotel.

Of course, most of my readers know all about this ; but some may not, and may never have realised what festive

scenes take place during the merry month of May in the old Scottish capital.

Princes Street is gay with black coats—if such a thing may be. Holyrood, with a Lord High Commissioner in residence, is red with soldiers. At night black and red fuse ; and the grim old walls echo with music and dancing.

Dinner-parties and supper-parties are everywhere ; and the gardens, blossoming in their spring beauty, and the crags, hanging with early green, which separate the Old Town from the New, are alive day and night with flying feet, either hurrying up to the Assembly Hall to attend the sittings there, or hurrying back to fulfil social engagements.

All of this I had seen from my youth, and though, naturally, I had not participated, imagination had been at work. Mentally I pictured this Paradise to ministers' daughters, perhaps brought from the ends of the (Scottish) earth ; I used to note their happy faces, their new frocks and bonnets, and their special air if a young blackcoat—or any coat—were in attendance.

It did not follow that this last was a cleric. He might be anything. A laird, or the eldest son of a laird, was frequently an elder of his parish church, and as such, would represent it at the General Assembly. Young Scotchmen rather liked this distinction.

The regiments, too, as I have stated before, at all times supplied Auld Reekie with a rather unusual amount of the sterner sex, and these were joyously ready to make hay while the sun shone in the flirting line,—so that opportunities on every side were promptly responded to, and all went merry as a marriage-bell.

For the main theme of my tale, then, I chose a love-story based on these lines. I depicted a lovely daughter of the manse, all innocent of the world and its arbitrary distinctions of class, meeting her fate in the shape of a too attractive

young nobleman and elder of the kirk, who loved and rode away, leaving her to watch in vain from her far home in the wilds, to which she had had perforce to return when her dream of bliss was over.

He not only never followed her there, he had never meant to follow her—and in *that*, to my mind, lay the pathos of it.

In piling up the agony I revelled ; but it was not altogether badly done agony—it could not have been, since the tears streamed down my face as I wrote. Our dark-eyed sailor and the *Warrior* dance were very far away at such a moment.

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Although this new attempt at authorship shared the fate of its predecessor, it was not destined to be followed, as before, by a cessation of further efforts.

I had tasted something of the joy of creation—but a taste, yet how divine the flavour !—and was soon again at work.

This time, however, I was off on a new tack, and came down from my high horse with a run. Surely it was a leap from a Scottish romance to a *Parable from Nature* in the style of Mrs Gatty,—yet, strange to say, the parable lived, while the romance left not even its ashes.

The parable was a quaint little performance, obviously an imitation, both in conception and construction ; but it was at least unpretending, and treated of things within my youthful range. I printed it carefully out in a brown morocco album, and with an eye firmly fixed on Mrs Gatty proceeded to illustrate it as she did hers. Others of its kind followed, and soon the album was full—whereupon I bought another.

In the second was a story, *The Merchant's Sermon*, which marked a new departure ; it was virginal ; it had no Mrs Gatty in it. Indeed, I never afterwards reverted to the

methods of that delightful writer, unique in her own way, but followed my own bent, with the result that more and more my leisure hours became absorbed and preoccupied.

Luckily for me, those were the days of albums and manuscript books. We transcribed music, poetry, passages from favourite authors. Little, ladylike compositions of our own in prose and verse were also common enough—sometimes in the shape of riddles, or such trifles as arose out of “Cross Questions and Crooked Answers” and games of like nature; so that although my rough drafts were often hurriedly scrawled in the bathroom, of all places, kneeling by the edge of the bath!—I could make a fair copy of them without provoking ill-timed curiosity. Thus I continued to write *sub rosa* and by fits and starts for the remainder of my life before marriage.

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But life on the surface was a very different affair. Although there was now no school-room proper in our house, my sisters and I continued to have masters for various accomplishments, and to pursue them with an ardour which was then very much in vogue. We had Garcia for singing, Lichtenstein for playing, Ferrier for water-colour drawing, and last but not least, Mr Thomas M'Glashen for dancing.

Mr M'Glashen was not merely *facile princeps* as a teacher of Scottish dances in Edinburgh, but a *character*; and we used to think he could not but amuse our young princes and princesses at Windsor Castle, whither he was annually summoned, as much as he did us. My father, in particular, would often stay in the room during our lessons for the sheer pleasure of a talk with him, while we rested between one “figure” and another. His shrewdness and sagacity, as well as his wonderful tact, would

be commented on afterwards. He was a past master in the art of bringing his pupils on, whether by spur or pat on the back—they learned to dance somehow, one hardly knew how.

Once after skipping, fiddle in hand, before his little class, to the tune of "Loudon's Bonny Banks and Braes," which he played with equal delicacy and spirit, he paused for breath, (and to furtively mop his forehead, for he had the figure of a barrel, though wonderfully light upon his feet), and signed to us to follow his example.

The little class obeyed. It consisted of a sister and me and our youngest brother, who at the close looked hopefully into his teacher's face; but we girls, who had seen him hopping about, feared.

M'Glashen, however, rose to the occasion. Slapping his thigh with the bow of his fiddle, he had all the air of paying a compliment, and his whole face beamed as he pronounced, "Two ladies quite right; one gentleman—*nearly so*."

One day my father put the inquiry, "Does Mr So-and-so dance well?"

"No, sir; he dances like a dancing-master."

"What?" cries my father. "What? You to say that, Mr M'Glashen! It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest, you know."

But the sturdy Terpsichorean was not to be daunted. "I will tell you what I mean, sir. It is necessary for a teacher to *overdo* the part, for if he does not, a pupil will *underdo* it. *We* have got to dance like dancing-masters, but a *gentleman* never should."

"Only a clever man would have thought of that, and only a candid one would have acknowledged it," quoth my father afterwards.

One winter M'Glashen instituted a series of small and select gatherings for the purpose of practising reels and

strathspeys. We went in for various recondite forms of these, and there were experts among us. One, a very young and pretty one, was a favourite pupil, and to the surprise of her master, he saw her one evening standing motionless, while the "Hoolichan" was in full swing.

"Miss Ina, what is the matter? Why are you not dancing?"

She replied that she could not think of a step.

A step? and she knew twenty!

Perhaps a charming duchess of to-day will say this was not true—but at any rate it was so reputed, and M'Glashen loved to tell the tale.

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Our dear little drawing-master, Mr James Ferrier, whose landscapes were the delight of lovers of Scottish scenery, was of another sort. Having a large family to provide for, he supplemented his income by teaching, and his lessons were eagerly sought for.

His method was his own. He never spoke; he sat at an impromptu easel, and we clustered round and watched. When he had finished for the day, he produced his watch, murmured, "Good morning, ladies," and was off. By that day week, each member of the class produced more or less faithfully a copy of what had been done before her eyes; but even then, I think, he hardly passed a comment; he simply went on with his own work.

In the end an exquisite little picture would be presented to the pupil who had best deserved it (or from whose crude sketch it had been produced), and thus at the close of the annual course we possessed two or three of these, any one of which was a gem. I have since thought—though I am sure neither he nor we considered it in that light at the time—that we ought not to have accepted such valuable

gifts. We had, however, an opportunity of showing our gratitude later on, when sickness and trouble overtook our friend. He had a stroke of paralysis, and was laid aside for years; it was thought that he would never handle the brush again—but, behold! there suddenly appeared exhibits as beautiful as ever. James Ferrier had learned to paint with his left hand.

Of our other teachers, Herr Lichtenstein, the Hungarian, will still be remembered by Edinburgh people, and his pupils owed him much; but it was always with a mamma, or elder person in the room, that he gave his music lessons. He was altogether too personable, too agreeable; it was known that he had been in the army, and it was whispered (as I write of so long ago, there can hardly be any indiscretion in recording this) that he had been obliged to fly his country. In plain terms, he had been a spy. Be that as it may, he took very kindly to Edinburgh, had himself naturalised, lived in comfort, died respected and regretted, and we never learned if the “spy” story were true or not.

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Let me mention a few of our friends of those days.

Miss Walker of Dalry or, as she was more often called, “Miss Helen Walker” belonged to the type of old Scottish lady which has now almost entirely passed away. She did what she chose, lived as she chose, dressed as she chose, and said—in old high-class Scotch—very much indeed what she chose.

Her sayings were always flying about, like the curls of her “front”—and both were of the corkscrew order. But it served nobody’s turn to take offence, seeing that the little old lady stood secure on her feet, and, although by no means ill-natured, cared not a jot for sensibilities that clashed with her own. If she liked you, well and good; if not, you were

outside her pale—and somehow people did not wish to be outside her pale.

Miss Helen was *the fashion* ; she entertained continuously, though one could hardly say largely, for her small house (in Lynedoch Place) was *very* small ; and yet it would be frequented by guests whom many of her richer neighbours tried in vain to allure within their doors. Her form of invitation, like herself, was arbitrary and unconventional—a pencil scrawl on a dingy visiting-card, which looked as if it had been dug out of a pocket stuffed full of other things—but the recipient of that “Come on such-and-such an evening, at such-and-such an hour” invariably went.

Women were careful, moreover, to wear smart clothes : Miss Helen would have pounced ruthlessly on any fancied disrespect ; and once I caught an aside in the cloak-room : “No, I am not going on to a ball, but I simply did not dare to come shabby,” which summed up the situation. Shabby the old lady might be herself, like a rag-bag, if you chose ; but it was noted that her sister, Lady Hall of Dunglass, whose visits were always occasions for parties, would be magnificent—at the other end of the dress scale. It was obvious that “Leddy Hall” knew what pleased the queer, little, old hostess.

And she would stand by her side too, woman of the world as she was, and never turn a hair whatever Miss Helen said or did, though the latter’s remarks were often of a kind to raise a titter, and once at least her ladyship must have been sorely tried. I can see that scene now.

These primitive little assemblies were “small and early,” and if the giver did not name their limitation as to hours, it was only because she forgot it. Most people, however, knew to be punctual and were so.

But a certain young hunting laird, very pink, very smart, and terribly ill at ease, as a young man from the country is

apt to be when off his own beat, came tip-toeing up the stairs an hour after the time appointed, and the hostess had left her place. She wheeled round as he was announced ; she transfixed him with her eye, and she almost spat with contempt : “ Weel, Tōm Christie ! Weel, here ye are ! ” Then, snorting rapidly : “ Ye’re very fine, and ye’re very fash’nable, *but ye’ll have to go away at eleven o’clock all the same.* ”

Needless to say, long before the fateful hour the unfortunate “ Tōm ” was nowhere to be seen, nor did he ever thereafter reappear at Miss Helen Walker’s parties.

One word more about Miss Helen. She was a rabid teetotaler, and, to the grief and mortification of her highly respectable old manservant, would not permit wine or spirits on her table, whoever might be her guests. On one occasion he was at the end of his patience—but revenged himself.

His mistress was entertaining two elderly bachelors of position, Mr Ferguson of Kilkerran and another whose name I forget. For their benefit she had laid in *four bottles of soda-water*, to which indignity they had perforce to submit ; but as their coats were being helped on in the hall previous to departure, a sardonic whisper, we will hope, consoled them : “ Ye’ll hae nae headaches the morn frae *yon* ! ”

Could Miss Helen have heard her faithful retainer, she would soon have reduced his grin of scorn to one of penitence ; but the two maltreated men chuckled as they walked away.

Another old lady of the same order, vigorous, eccentric and masterful, was Lady Ruthven. She had been a beauty in her youth, and even when I remember her was handsome, with a fine Roman nose, and curved chin—the latter denoting her character. She ordered about everybody ; but as her warmth of heart and general excellence were acknowledged, her whims were submitted to, and she was very well liked.

Over her household she ruled with a rod of iron, and as those were the days when old ladies—including even my pious and society-hating grandmother at Park Place—personally inspected the legs of prospective footmen, and had their calves measured, her ladyship was not perhaps singular in keeping her Donald of that ilk well under her thumb.

Donald dared not call his soul his own, let alone his wardrobe. His mistress supplied him with but one suit of livery—he had himself to supplement it with other garments—and only wear it when she ordained. But there came a day when he had forgotten to take her orders or she had forgotten to give them anent this—and there was a dinner-party in prospect, and the afternoon was waning. The old lady was engaged with visitors, when the door opened and an agitated head was thrust in: “Is’t ma ain breeks, or yer leddyship’s breeks, I’m to pit on the nicht?” Report had it that her leddyship, without the alteration of a muscle, decided in favour of *her* breeks.

Lady Ruthven was extremely deaf—a fact of which she took no account when herself speaking,—and as she had a very deep and powerful voice, which she never dreamed of modulating, the results were occasionally disastrous.

One of my sisters, when a guest at Winton, had an experience of this. It was on a Sunday morning, and she had accompanied her hostess to the parish church, where the service was long and dreary. When one remembers that the Presbyterian form of worship is writ in no book, but depends both for its length and strength on the minister who conducts it, one can sympathise with a deaf member of the congregation who loses patience if it is carried on beyond due limits; but no one was prepared for what followed a period of uneasy fidgeting on her ladyship’s part.

Suddenly she leaned forward, and in stentorian tones,

distinctly audible to all round, demanded, "*Is he near done yet?*" shooting out her trumpet for the response as she spoke. At the same moment the deerhound who always accompanied his mistress to church and lay at her feet, started up; auditors on every side stared and tittered, and the sermon without more ado stopped short. The 'he' referred to never afterwards occupied the pulpit at Winton.

A still more embarrassing frankness occurred in an Edinburgh drawing-room.

A musical reception was in process, and the old lady, who, despite her infirmity, could enjoy and appreciate good music, was seated in the front row of chairs, where she applauded heartily as long as it pleased her. But presently a young gentleman of her acquaintance (and of nearly everyone else's acquaintance present) began to sing, and the scene changed. Oblivious of the proximity of Mr H.'s relations, she "glowered," she muttered, she waxed more and more wroth, till at length as the performance continued—and songs were lengthy in those days—she caught a young friend by the skirts, exclaiming loudly, "Miss Makgill-Crichton—Miss Makgill-Crichton?" But the singer sang on, and Miss Makgill-Crichton affected not to hear.

It was no use; the next moment came the tap of a huge fan followed by the well-known, bassoon-like voice: "Miss Makgill-Crichton, my dear? Do sing again! Do give us that song again! What? Oh, you must!" Then, with ringing emphasis: "*Anything* to stop that bawling."

The Misses Makgill-Crichton—afterwards respectively Mrs Fletcher and Mrs Chetham-Strode—were lovely singers, quite the leading amateurs of the Edinburgh musical world, and everyone was delighted that the above despotic command should be obeyed; but the young lady herself afterwards alleged that between mirth at the very uncomplimentary form it took and terror lest a worse

thing should befall her if she hesitated, she could hardly bring forth a note.

Lady Ruthven, however, beamed, and then and thereafter was serenely unconscious of having done anything beyond breathe a hint of her wishes in her young friend's ear.

Another familiar personality of old Edinburgh days was Mr William (afterwards Sir William) Fraser, the antiquary. His genealogical lore was great, and there was scarcely a charter-chest in Scotland he had not at some time or other rummaged for muniments, when compiling his histories of ancient families. These tomes, handsomely printed and illustrated, comprised, among others, *The Red Book of Menteith*, *The Scotts of Buccleuch*, *The Earls of Cromartie*, *The Book of Calaverock*, and *The Douglas Book*. There were about twenty in all, and I presume that each, like our own *Chiefs of Colquhoun*, was limited to an edition of one hundred and fifty copies, and printed for private circulation only. Hence they soon became valuable, and if one ever came into the market, it was snapped up at a high price.

But Mr Fraser, as I recall him, had other aspirations beyond being known as a scholar and antiquarian. He was a middle-aged bachelor and, though plain and badly marked with small-pox, still fancied himself something of a beau.

As this was occasionally inconvenient, not to say annoying, I fear that a shock to his vanity which took place at our house one day, did not meet with the sympathy it should have done.

My mother had an afternoon party—the first, I think, I had attended as a “grown-up”—and I was officiously proffering tea and coffee to the guests as they entered the dining-room before going upstairs, when in came Mr Fraser. I had rather hoped he would pass the door, but he did not.

He began to make himself agreeable. I offered him

iced coffee; the weather was warm, the iced coffee good—I was not prepared for what followed. One mouthful the poor man took, then emitted a screech which made every head turn round, and rushed from the room! The icy mixture had found out a tooth wherein a raw nerve lay; and what, as he afterwards explained, he had mistakenly supposed to be “nice” coffee, caused a blending of surprise and agony unendurable.

And although the victim of this unintentional practical jest subsequently endeavoured to laugh it off, it was clear that he never forgot such an exposure of his infirmities, especially of his lack of self-control in emitting the screech. He assumed a fresh attitude towards young people, left off philandering, and relegated himself to the shelf. We all liked him infinitely better so, and he remained our very good friend to the end of his days.

It pleases me also to record that at his death it was found he had bequeathed the whole of his savings, which were considerable, to found a Chair at the Edinburgh University for the benefit of students poor and struggling as he himself had been in his youth, and whom perchance a helping hand at the right moment might enable to rise as he had done.

Among others also with whom we had much pleasant intercourse were Sir Noel Paton and his charming wife. Both were extremely attractive-looking, and knew how to dress. My mother, who had a weakness for filling her rooms with ornamental people when she entertained, liked to see the Patons come in.

She would also bestir herself to visit them, though they lived far away in the Old Town—but not only were they worth in themselves a journey, but their quaint house in George Square was worth seeing. It was full of treasures,

especially of old armour, which the famous painter introduced into his pictures.

Sometimes he would tell us about them, describe how they grew in his mind, and take opinions as to their names. He was quite simple and frank. There was none of that silence on the subject, which, whether intentionally or not, relegates the ignorant and unlearned to such a distance. None of us knew anything about art, but we could talk quite happily with Sir Noel Paton.

One day he pointed to an old helmet, and observed with a smile, "You will see that fellow in the next Exhibition." Of course we begged to hear more, on which he told us that the evening before, as the setting sun was pouring its last beams into the "Armoury," he turned at a slight sound, to behold his little son (a lovely, fair-haired child) gazing into the depths of the helmet, which had been left by accident on the floor. The little boy's golden curls were all lit up—and as the *painter* awoke within the *father*, and he was contemplating the picture before him as a picture, he heard a soft, small voice pensively murmur, "I wonder who lived in there?"

That was enough. "I am at work on it now," subjoined Sir Noel, with his happiest look.

A few months later all the Scottish artistic world was saying, "*I wonder who lived in there?*"

Sir Noel was very desirous of having my eldest sister sit to him for his portrait of the angel in his famous picture *Mors Janua Vitæ*, but my parents, who shunned publicity in every shape, would not consent. Amazed indeed would they have been to see the almost universal change of sentiment in this respect to-day, while even then, no doubt, there were some who failed to comprehend such reticence. However, so it was, and the angel had to be sought for elsewhere.

flaring blue ribbon, & Chinese-
-worked turned up slippers -



"Here comes Mrs Colquhoun with
her beauties behind her -"

And one other recollection of our old friend stands out to memory. He had a house for the summer on Loch Long, and one day some of us found him alone far up on the hillside above. He was sitting on a wall, intently watching a flock of sheep, who were being herded down from the heights by a shepherd and his dogs. He rose and came towards us, and we saw that he had a Bible in his hand. "Oh, I'll go home with you now," he said cheerfully; "I have been here long enough; but I was just getting a picture." It was his picture of *The Good Shepherd*—one of his finest efforts.

I have already mentioned Professor Blackie, but am tempted to insert here a quotation from a letter of my own which has since been put into my hands by a married sister who had preserved it all these years.

After detailing that some of us had been making a round of calls with our mother, which "did not afford us any entertainment," I proceeded, "except one at Professor Blackie's, which indeed was enough to compensate for all. He was sitting with Mrs Blackie and Miss Wylde at tea, most comfortably attired in a blue-and-red dressing-gown, broad-brimmed straw hat with a flowing blue ribbon, and Chinese-worked, turned-up slippers."

A sketch of the Professor was appended, with his opening salutation, "Here comes Mrs Colquhoun, with her beauties behind her"—which is a specimen of the odd but kindly greeting we usually met with from our eccentric friend.

Quite recently I was laughing over the above with one who knew Old Edinburgh well, and she capped it with an experience of her own. "He was sitting in that very Chinese get-up when we went in one day. After a while he rose, went out, and returned attired as a sailor—loose

blouse, open neck, flapping pantaloons, and bare legs and feet! Not content with this transformation, he vanished again; and this time reappeared in the imposing garb of a Spanish grandee, a huge sombrero crowning his snow-white hair! Thus in the short space of half an hour, we were treated to three apparitions, each more extraordinary than the other."

Yet with all this gaiety and *daftness*, "Daft Blackie," as he loved to call himself, could be serious on occasion. He came to our house one evening in the gloaming, to find only two of us younger girls sitting by the fire, and immediately began in his usual merry vein.

But presently his mood changed. He gazed into the glowing coals with a new expression; we all fell to talking thoughtfully, and somehow, we knew not how, it seemed natural to talk of other things than the mere topics of the hour. Exactly what our visitor said I have long ago forgotten; but I know that he discovered a wonderful tact, that he did not intrude upon our inner feelings with any of that freedom which so shocks sensitive youth, that he asked no questions and excited no fears—that he just talked gently and easily of what constitutes true happiness in this world and the world to come—and at length that he went quietly away with a "God bless you, my dear girls," which left us solemnised and still. We had not been preached at, but we had been taken into a truly good man's confidence.

Dr Maxwell Nicholson, of the Tron Church, in the Old Town of Edinburgh, was of all our friends the most valued and intimate. He prepared us all for our first Communion, and held a footing in the house similar to that of the beloved "curé" in a French château. We flew to tell him whenever anything good or ill had happened, relying on his affection, sympathy, and counsel on all occasions; but as there is nothing to relate of one who, however great his

influence in his own sphere, always shrank from publicity, I will confine myself to telling of a very remarkable sight we once saw close by the Tron Church, to which we were proceeding one Sunday morning.

To begin with, we saw a crowd—what seemed a huge crowd in those days—and, following the direction of their eyes, beheld the ruined wall of a house fifteen stories high—one of the historic old tenements of Edinburgh—which had collapsed in the night !

The night had been calm and still—there was nothing to account for the catastrophe ; but the fact remained that without a moment's warning down came the entire building, burying sixty people beneath its ruins !

No one escaped ; not one was living when disentangled ; and there, on one of the topmost walls, a canary was singing in its cage, unharmed and rejoicing in the sunshine.

A number of clocks had stopped at a certain hour—about two in the morning, I think—which seemed to indicate that as the fatal moment. The whole was a sight never to be forgotten.

Of Dean Ramsay, Dr John Brown, and other Scottish notabilities who came and went at the Royal Terrace house, I have nothing new to say—so much has been said already by others ; but I may perhaps be permitted here to mention a star of another magnitude, who rose but for one brief moment on my horizon, yet who created an indelible impression.

A sister—the sister who was my invariable companion—and I were returning homewards one day from another part of Edinburgh, when we perceived a crowd collected in St Andrew Square, through which lay our route.

The crowd was in front of the Douglas Hotel ; and as we drew near, wondering what it meant, a lady stepped through an open window on the first floor, and stood in the balcony.

A deep-breathed murmur of "That's her—that's her!" ran through the assemblage, and then the cheering broke forth. We did not need to ask who "her" was; we were looking on the loveliest face we had ever seen!

In the year 1860 the Empress Eugénie, travelling as the "Countess of Pierrefonds," visited Scotland, that being the first time a royal lady of France had done so since the days of poor Queen Mary. She had undertaken the trip in an endeavour to recover her health and spirits after the death of her only and beloved sister, the Duchess of Alba, and her beauty was enhanced by the deep mourning in which she was clad.

The enthusiasm of the crowd below seemed to please her; she bowed and bowed with a wonderful, undulating grace of movement that nothing could surpass, while a smile played upon her lips. Finally a little fluttering handkerchief was waved with an enchanting gesture of dismissal, and the beautiful, dark figure withdrew—turning, however, more than once to wave as she went.

My next sight of the Empress Eugénie was among the woods of Cap Martin five-and-thirty years afterwards.

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Regimental balls in Edinburgh were exceptionally brilliant the year I came out—and this I do not say because of the glamour cast upon them by the eyes of eighteen, but by reason of a prosaic fact whose testimony is indisputable. Their sumptuousness and extravagance had reached a point to which the authorities demurred.

The cost to a young subaltern when his regiment, quartered at Piershill, or the Castle, or Leith Fort, proposed to return the hospitalities of Edinburgh people by a ball, was absurdly great, often out of all proportion to his means—though, of course, he would sooner have died than say so.

If my memory serves me right,—and I *think* it does—a ball given by the Scots Greys—of course the fine old “Greys” were determined to be second to none on their own ground—mulcted every host on the occasion no less a sum than forty pounds. We happened to have a distant cousin in command at the time, and my brothers, I suppose, got this out of him ; otherwise I do not see how we could have heard it—and of this I am sure, we did hear, and heard also of the fuss made at headquarters.

Headquarters pronounced the luxury supposed to be necessary for such affairs excessive, and instructed commanding officers in future to put it down with a high hand.

But it was not put down when I went to my first ball, given by the 72nd Highlanders, then stationed at Edinburgh Castle, which ball took place earlier in the season than that by the famous “Greys,” and in point of brilliancy and splendour there did not seem to be a pin’s point to choose between them.

Many ballrooms have I seen since ; but I can honestly affirm that as a spectacle a regimental ball in the Edinburgh of forty years ago was not to be surpassed. The flowers, the music, the polished floors (into which a kind of yellow wax had been rubbed till they shone like gold), the rows of gorgeous chaperons, brave in diamonds, lining the walls,—the multiplicity of uniforms and bejewelled kilts (scarce a black coat to be seen)—most of all perhaps the gossamer-like attire of the girls, which had an ethereal elegance far above that of the present utilitarian dancing-frocks—(you may stare, my dear young ladies of to-day, but if we did get torn and ragged by the end of the evening, and if the floor were bestrewn by flowers from the garlands encircling our skirts, we were worth looking at, even in ruins)—all of the above combined to create a scene dazzling to behold, memorable to look back upon.

Hapless subalterns might have to pay the piper—or their share of the many pipers—but they enjoyed themselves hugely at the time, and casting vile care to the winds, proudly escorted their partners about to admire the banks of flowers (blazing as though it were June, not February), and to dip their handkerchiefs in fountains of eau-de-cologne rising and falling in silver-gilt basins, as though no such things as aftermaths of bills existed.

One adornment of the ball given by the 72nd was, I fancy, unique of its kind. At either end of every long supper-table (there were, I think, three) a peacock sat in state upon his own pie—no doubt incited thereto by old Sanderson, the bird-stuffer—with the tail spread. The peacock is the crest of the regiment. The effect was very fine.

As there were—I should say “are”—two dancing-rooms available on these occasions, with a corridor and abundance of sitting-out places between, it is possible to have music in both without any echoes of either band reaching the other. This was a source of special satisfaction to such of us girls as were prohibited from joining in the round dances looked askance upon by strict parents, for the custom was to have these in one room and “squares” or reels in the other, simultaneously and alternately. What I mean is that in the Music Hall a waltz would be going on, and in the Assembly Room a reel or lancers. At the close of these the waltz or polka would strike up in the latter, and the reel or lancers in the former; quadrilles were no longer to be seen anywhere, but we thought “lancers” quite modern. By these means we and such as we could dance on without intermission, and as it was of course only at such balls as commanded twin rooms so happily placed that we could do so, this may have been one reason why we found them so agreeable.

And shall I win any sympathy if I tell what befell a

sister and me on one sad occasion? Recollect that we did not go to a tithe of the entertainments we were asked to, that our parents were most terribly particular as to which we did attend—and then, only then, can you appreciate what follows.

It was a year later on, and the regiments at the Castle had been changed, the 74th Highlanders having succeeded the 72nd: and with the former had come a cousin of ours, belonging to the Stonefield family, of whom I have yet to speak.

One evening he gleefully informed us that he and his had agreed to give a dance—a dance, not a ball—and invited us to it then and there. Owing to some cause or other, we did not see him again in the short space of time which intervened; but that was nothing. We heard of others going to the dance, and confidently awaited our note of invitation, and—it never came. Every hour we looked for it; but the fateful day itself arrived, and still no orderly in uniform marched to the door, and no large, crested envelope was handed in.

Our parents, old-fashioned and self-respecting people, peremptorily forbade any move on our part, even to a mention of the affair, lest it should appear that we were being slighted; and we were powerless to do aught but watch and watch from the drawing-room window,—at which, I am bound to say, we spent most of those anxious, feverish hours.

Again and again we would exclaim “There—there!” as a kilted Highlander came into view—and naturally there were plenty of them about; so, albeit they usually came in pairs if bearing a message from the Castle, we were willing to believe in a solitary one, if only he would stop at our door—but alack and alas! he never did.

Our maid inquired if our ball paraphernalia was to be

laid out? We said "Yes" eagerly; we could not and would not give up hope. And we had our hair dressed—an elaborate process in those days—and congratulated ourselves on having done so whenever the door-bell rang.

But it was all to no purpose. At ten o'clock my father said, "I wouldn't take you now, whoever sent. *My* daughters don't fly in at the last minute to any open door"; and we ourselves felt proud and hurt, and sadly, sadly went to bed.

Next morning, of course, the mystery was cleared up, and a miserable, spiteful, little twopenny-halfpenny mystery it proved to be.

Our cousin called early. Why had we not come the night before?

Our retort was prompt: Why had he not sent our invitation?

Sent our invitation? He had *given* it. What was more, we had accepted it.

He then proceeded to explain. He was "most awfully sorry," but thought we knew that no other than verbal invitations had been issued, with a view to making the affair as smart and select as possible. Everybody who was anybody had been there; and the fact that it took place under the rose, as it were, and that the great bulk of undesirables had been weeded out by a trick, gave a special zest to the evening.

"I nearly came along to see what had become of you," appended my cousin. "But I had been away for the day, and was very late in getting to the rooms, when somebody told me you were there—or were coming. When I realised you weren't anywhere it was too late. I took it for granted something had happened."

It was long before we could bear to think of that evening.