

its only excuse. And if this old place of petty durance had had a tongue, it might have told many a tale both grave and gay. It is said that at odd times even a Senator of the Court of Session, or a "douce" and responsible family lawyer, homeward bound from the "Crochallans" found a night's repose here, and awoke in consternation in the morning to find what strange bed fellows misfortune had sent him.

And now we have reached old Saint Giles, and the Luckenbooths. This was much the most congested part of the city. The houses were piled and heaped together, the closes were narrower and steeper than elsewhere, and packed with a population so dense as to be almost inconceivable. It is no exaggeration to say that each stair in this part of the High Street was a street set up on its end. To make matters worse, a huge pile of masonry, so high that the magnificent open crown of St. Giles Church could hardly be seen over the roof of it, was built right out into the street. The space between the Church and the Luckenbooths was narrow enough in all conscience, but it was still further encroached on by "The Krames," which was the gem of the High Street, and the delight of the children.

This veritable rabbit-warren of little shops, devoted to the sale of sweetmeats, toys, and minor haberdashery, was plastered against the buttresses of the ancient Church and almost entirely blocked the passage between it and the Luckenbooths. It was a dream out of the "Arabian Nights," a feast of unreason and absurdity. The building which you rear o' nights when you have partaken of toasted cheese and crab pie, is architectural purity and sobriety compared with the Krames. It was a child's paradise, where it could be made happy by being given a penny to spend, and could wear out the hours of the livelong day in spending it.

Rubbing shoulders with the Church of St. Giles stood the Tolbooth. It, too, stood out in the middle of the street and occupied half its width. Closely adjoining the Tolbooth stood—stands still—the Old Parliament House. This was naturally the quarter frequented by the lawyers. Advocates Close, Writer's Close, and Parliament Close, were their headquarters. I find in the first edition of the "Edinburgh Directory," published within a few years of the time we are now dealing with, out of about 500 members of the legal profession whose names appear there, nearly 400 lived in these three closes. That means nearly 400 families; perhaps that one fact will enable you to realize the huddlement of Edinburgh. Of course Scott knew these closes as he knew his clothes; and, as you know, his novels are peopled by the characters he met in them and in Parliament House. To anyone who stood at mid-day on the pavement opposite St. Giles, and watched the pageant of city life surging through the confined space which it had to condense its mass into—with a tumult and noise like that of a mountain torrent chafing its way through a rocky gorge—and watched the closes swallowing up and disgorging streams of men, women and children, it must have been clear how difficult the detection of crime was in the old city; and such a one would also sympathize with the terror with which an Edinburgh mob was regarded by those responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Many a lost cause after being hunted or hoisted off the opener highways of the world, crept into these narrow closes to find shelter and to recrudescence in sporadic outbursts of activity long after everyone thought they had been finally disposed of. In this way Jacobitism lingered on in Edinburgh as a last refuge. Most of the citizens then alive had seen the glories of a Court revived in Holyrood during Prince Charlie's brief occupancy of the city; and the memory of the fascinating and unfortunate scion of the Stuarts lingered about the city like the odour of musk in the folds of an old Court dress. Many of the

citizens, too, had been personally involved in the affair of the '45 or were harbouring friends who were so involved. They were nominally secured by indemnity against any consequences of their partisanship with the Stuarts, long before this; but still the Government kept a sleepless watch, for the Edinburgh wynds and closes offered unmatched opportunities for the nursing of plots, cabals and conspiracies, and could swallow up all trace of the conspirators like the maw of a volcano.

But our imagined stranger came to town for pleasure; and as evening is approaching I shall carry him off to the Assembly Rooms. There are two Assembly Rooms in the city; the one most in vogue is in Bell's Wynd, the more exclusive one is in Buccleuch Place. It was in Bell's Wynd rooms that Burns met his Clarinda. Here, also, he met the fair unknown who inspired his exquisite song, "Mary Morrison." You dare hardly venture down Bell's Wynd to-day, even by daylight. The constable from whom you ask your directions will probably warn you that it is the chosen haunt of the most dangerous characters of the city. Does Clarinda ever revisit the glimpses of the moon in the ancient rooms in this thieves alley? Does Mary Morrison ever trip a minute there o' nights? If to have inspired some of the most impassioned lyrics in the language, in the breast of one of the greatest poets of our race, gives to any mortal a perpetual mortgage on their meeting place—then surely these two women hold Bell's Wynd for all time in fee simple!

Were women ever so superbly complimented, so gracefully praised, so passionately, and, in all honesty I must add so simultaneously adored?

"Yestreen when to the tremblin' string,
The dance gaed through the lichted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard or saw;
Tho' this was fair and that was braw,
And yon the toast of the town,
I sighed and said among them a
'Ye aren't Mary Morrison!'"

I should like to have the opportunity of canvassing the opinion of the first ten pretty women you could introduce me to, as to whether they would rather have inspired these lines in the breast of Burns, or founded the Empire of Elizabeth. I have a fair idea of what their answer would be. For the Empire of Elizabeth will pass some day, as all human things pass; but Mary Morrison, and what she stands for, will last—

"Till the sun grows cold, and the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold."

Leaving the classic region of Bell's Wynd, I take my London stranger to the select and exclusive region of Buccleuch Place, where in finer and more spacious rooms, the—pardon the word, but there is no other which quite expresses the idea which lies waiting for expression—"genteel" denizens of George Square, Bristol, Brown Square, and Nicolson Square, conduct a rival set of Assemblies, which completely eclipses the gaieties of Bell's Wynd.

Here gentility reigns supreme, and conducts herself with a frosty propriety which I can hardly describe to you without laughing. It seems to me that the dance in Buccleuch Place must have suffered from an excess of discipline. There was just a suspicion of want of spontaneity. No couple could dance unless each partner were provided with a ticket bearing identical double numbers describing their precise place in the precise dance. If there were no ticket, the lady or gentleman was dealt with as an intruder, and turned out of the dance. Woe to the poor girl whose ticket numbered 3.8 was found dancing with a partner whose ticket bore the mystic symbols 6.4. I don't know how they managed the supper room and conservatory; those places which, in my dancing days, had a weird fascination. Was it held to be illegal flirting if 7.5 fanned 6.3 under a palm; or if 4.2