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# Steer Brothers

## Thistledown Frae Scotland.

(Contributed).  
**SCREEDS O' TARTAN.**  
Differing from the Lowland Scotch in personal appearance, in language, in style of dress, and in other respects, the Highlander's humour also presents characteristics which are distinctly local. Though often rich, for example, it is never boisterous, never sparkling—is rarely spontaneous—but is nearly always slow, sly, severe, and insinuating. For slow in muscular action, Duncan is slow in mental action also. He has to be stimulated or induced to physical ac-

tivity, and naturally of a serious cast of mind, his humour in its richest ore comes out nearly always as the result of provocation. But rouse his Highland blood by insult—and a word will do it sometimes or awaken his drowsy wits by banter, then get out of reach of both his arms and his tongue instantly, for his hand is heavy, his eye is sure, and his speech is a hurricane. Much of what passes for Highland humour, as everybody knows, arises from the difference which exists between the Gaelic and the English and the Scottish idiom: and from the efforts of the semi-educated or non-educated Gaelic-speaking Highlander to express himself in English, or in the colloquial

tongue of the Lowland Scot. Synonyms equally vex the spirit of the Scottish Highlander. Thus Donald Roy McKean, when interrogated in regard to the quality of his potato crop, provided amusement to the Lowlanders around him by replying: "They are just ferry good, indeed, but ferry seldom whatever."

There are some choice specimens of Donald's English extant, and, before passing on to the richer ore of his natural humour, it will be worth while to glance at a few. First, there is the famous Inveraray proclamation. It is a unique production, but is said to have actually been delivered at the Market Cross of Inveraray towards the close of the last century. Here it is: "Ta-hoy!—a tither ta-hoy!—three times ta-hoy!—and ta-hoy! Wheesh!!" By Command of Her Majesty King George and Her Grace the Duke O' Argyll! Any persons found fishing about ta loch or below ta loch, afore ta loch or abent ta loch, in ta loch, roun ta loch or abent ta loch, will be persecuted with three persecutions—First she'll be troon'd, and syne she'll be hang'd, and ten she'll be prunt; and if she'll come back any more she'll be persecuted with a far worse persecution tan all that. Got save the King and Her Grace the Duke O' Argyll. If we admit the above to be bona fide, we can

scarcely doubt the genuineness of the following prayer, which is said to have emanated from a contemporary of the Inveraray bellman: "Gracious Providence! Bless all ta Macdonalds, and ta Macdonalda children, tere sons' sons and tere daughters' daughters for a thousand years langyne. Be gracious to send us mountains of snuff and tobacco, and send us oceans of whiskey—ta very finest whiskey! Oh, yes, and send us hills of potatoes and breads and cheeses as big as all ta Hoves of Strathmore. And, moreover, likewise, send us floods of water, tat tere may be grass for plenty to man and beast, and some to spare to ta poor of ta parish. Send us guns and pistols as more as ta sea and ta sand-shore, and swords, too, likewise, to kill all ta giants and ta Macphersons for evermore. Bless ta wee strick, and mak' him a big Coe, before Martinmas. Bless ta wee Soo, too, and mak' him a big bear likewise. Oh, yes, put the strength of Samson into Donald's arms, and send us parley, kill and corn prodigious. Bless all ta palms—Duncan and Rory and Flora, and you, Donald, and you Lachie, and you Peter—and glorious Yours for evermore."

I do not ask anyone to swallow the above, inasmuch as the proverbial "grain of salt." I like to take it that way myself. And yet there are well-authenticated instances and occasions revealing deliverances quite as ludicrous and absurd. Witness the following fragments of a pulpit homily which appears in Hugh Boyd's admittedly veracious Reminiscences of Fifty Years, and which the recorder appears to have heard himself, or received on highly credible authority:—"Ah, my friends," exclaimed the preacher, "what causes have we for gratitude! Oh, yes! for the deepest gratitude. Look at the place of our habitation. How grateful should we be that we do not live in the far North. Oh, no! amid the frost and the snow, and the cold and the west. Oh, no! that we do not gang shivering about in skins. Oh, no! snookin' among the snow like mowdiewarts. Oh, no, no! and how grateful should we be that we do not live in the far South, beneath the equator, and the sun aye burnin', burnin', where the sky's het, ah, yes, and the earth's het, and the water's het, and ye're burnt black as a sniddy. Ah, yes! where there's tigers. Oh, yes! and lions. Oh, yes! and crocodiles. Oh, yes, and fearsome beasts growlin' and girnin', at ye among the woods. Where the very air is a fever, like the burnin' breath o' a fiery dragon; that we do not live in these places—Oh, no, no, no, no. But that we levee in this blessed island of ours, call't Great Britain. Oh, yes, yes! and in that part of it 'neel Scotland, that looks up at Ben Nevis. Oh, yes, yes, yes, where's the peether frost, nor cauld, nor wind, nor west, nor hail, nor rain, nor teegurs, nor lions, nor burnin' suns, nor hurricanes, nor," "Here," says the narrative, "a tremendous burst of wind and rain from Ben Nevis blew in the windows of the Kirk, and brought the preacher's eloquence to an abrupt conclusion."

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