

THE BRITISH PREMIER.

INTERESTING STORIES OF HIS EARLY LIFE AT MONTROSE.

Always Had His Way—A Parliamentarian
From His Childhood—Anecdote of His Father and the Fishwife—His Scotch Blood Annoys the Tories

There cannot now be many people roundabout Montrose who remember Mr. Gladstone's years of boyhood spent there, but the whole district remains thickly encrusted with legends of the period. Perhaps, in truth, they multiply among themselves as time goes on, after the fashion of legends. Some of the stories told on Ecksie about those far away days when "Mester Wallie" was a "bit laddie" bear a remarkable family likeness to tales told of the boyhood of other great men in quite other climes. I picked out one, though, from a budget of these anecdotes related the other evening by a Montrose man, which is characteristic, and perhaps has never before found its way into print. One never can be quite sure of these things, especially since I find that the very "No 1" of our own Chauncey's published series of original and popular stories, that of the widow who saw eel-pot possibilities in her drowned husband, was printed in the "Ingoldsby Legends" before he was born. But in Forfarshire, at least, they think this particular story of Mr. Gladstone's youth has not gone abroad.

There could be much that is entertaining told of the father as well, old John Gladstone, who with the money he made in business at Liverpool kept up the considerable estate of Fasque, near Montrose, when the century was in its teens, and, I believe, for some time afterwards. In those days, before the rise in the price of wool and the spreading of railways combined to change the character of agriculture in Scotland and Ireland alike, there was still a large rural population on Ecksie, and Montrose was still on market days the centre of a busy and picturesque local life. Old Mr. Gladstone had little to do with the country gentry, or rather, because he has been in trade, they had little to do with him. Accordingly, he came often to Montrose for the diversion of company and an exchange of wit with the fishwives on the quay and the hucksters in the market place. Many of his sayings and doings survive in the town memory, though to be fair to the Montrose people they seem to remember even better the smart things they said to him in retort. There is one special tale in which they have a peculiar satisfaction. The old gentleman was, it seems, freer with his tongue than his "siller," and was regarded by the fishwives in particular as a thrifty body. One of them planned a trick upon him, and as he was driving into town one day met him on the road, going up the hill, with a cod in the basket on her arm. The master of Fasque stopped her, praised the fish and offered her a shilling for it—which was only a penny or so under its value. The woman shook her head and said she was taking it up to the house of a country laird whom Gladstone specially hated. Upon this he offered two shillings. No, she replied, the laird was giving a great dinner the night and "mann hae his fush," or else everything would go wrong. This only inflamed the other's desire to have the fish at any price, and on the strength of this Meg ran the price up to 7s. 6d. Then she reluctantly consented, took the money and raced wildly back into Montrose to spread the story of her achievement. Old Mr. Gladstone, they say, avoided the fish market for weeks after that.

He had great notions about the bringing up of his children. One of these was that they should from the first be trained to orderly and intelligent usages of self-management. He encouraged them to discuss and deal themselves with all manner of personal questions as they arose, and drew up rules by which they debated these things in the nursery-Parliament assembled. Out of this grew the story I spoke of. One day there arrived at Fasque two pictures designated for the walls of the nursery, and the children went formally to work to thrash out the problem of where they should be hung—the butler standing by meanwhile with hammer, nails and cord to execute the decision when it was reached. The present Premier—it lays a tax on the mind to think of him as a little fair-faced lad in knee breeches and with long curling hair—had very clear views as to where the picture should be placed and maintained them at extreme length in numerous speeches. The others were against him and finally voted him down, directing the butler to hang the pictures as the majority wished. Returning a little later, they found this done, but they found also that other nails had been driven in the wall at the places favored by Master William. They heckled the butler on this, and he made reply: "Driving nails is no my work, and I just made the one job of it. You're bound in time to come around to Master Wallie's opinion or you'll never know peace of mind again."

This early characteristic of pertinacity is recalled by stories of the boyhood of many other great men. Almost all the big leaders of peoples and movements must have begun very early in life to have their own way among those about them. What differentiates Mr. Gladstone from the others is the curious manner in which he has managed to combine this apparent dogged and tireless fixity of purpose with seemingly the most astonishing openness of mind to new ideas and altered conditions. One must use these qualifying expressions because the experiences of his public career are of such enormous bulk and magnitude, cover such an unparalleled stretch of time and involve such a bewildering variety of subjects and issues, that comment on any one phase of it all has long since ceased to stand on its own legs. To understand even relatively anything which Mr. Gladstone says or does it is essential to understand some 50 other things which, somewhere, at sometime, he has said or done. The task has grown too big for even the clearest-headed of those who watch him and write about him day by day. Now and again the newer and more eager critics think they have caught him tripping, and they quote against him his words in 1837 to prove their jubilant charge of self-contradiction. Upon the instant he hurls back his remarks in 1851, his conclusions of 1844, and the inferences he publicly drew in 1852, demonstrates with overwhelming force the line of continuity connecting all the opinions of all these dates, and covers the scorners with confusion by proving that logically this line leads straight to his present position. As I

have said, the store of things he has behind him has now become so vast that outsiders no longer attempt to keep abreast of the catalogue, much less pretend to have mastered their correlative meanings and values. Yet he has every item of the whole huge mass quite at his fingers' ends. He knows everything that he has ever said on every subject under the sun, and has it docketed in its place in those marvelous mental pigeon holes ready for production at call.

This quality, or sublimated aggregation of qualities, is strictly Scotch. There is a certain pathos in the shock with which the English people wake up every now and again to a renewed consciousness that the greatest of living Englishmen is not English at all, but belongs, beyond the border. It was his intrusion of those words about the completeness of his Scottish origin, in his letter to Maj. Douglas Campbell, which lent so wide a public interest to the discussion still going on over the latter's book, "The Puritan in Holland, England and America."

That one phrase caught the universal eye. Of course, the fact was as old as the hills; everybody was entirely familiar with it; yet, all the same, England visibly winced at its restatement. The Tory and Unionist papers in England—led, as usual, by the Times—talked quite as if the venerable Prime Minister had behaved badly in speaking of his descent. All through their diatribes ran a tone of condemnation, as of one who had hurtled out something which should never be mentioned publicly. One would have gathered from their talk that they held the remark to be unpatriotic.

The reviving self-consciousness of Scotland—enormously helped as it is now seen to have been by this past decade of Irish agitation—has taken full note of this episode you may be sure. It seems now quite on the cards that the coming session of Parliament may see Dr. Hunter's old plan for the reference of all strictly Scotch legislation to the Scotch members, sitting and debating as a grand committee, put into working operation. From this to an arrangement by which this committee should meet in Edinburgh instead of London would not be a long or difficult step. Sanguine men are indeed already building up visions of such a thing coming about while the Grand Old Man is still with us, and of seeing him in person attending, as member for Midlothian, the inauguration of this great change at the old Parliament House in the Scottish capital. Enough would be said then, it can be foreseen, concerning the fact of Gladstone's Scotch parentage to make a permanent and vivid impression on the English mind.—London Cor. New York Times.

Experiments With Oxygen.

In some interesting experiments made by Prof. Dewar of England with oxygen, attempts were recently made by him to determine what effect a temperature of 180° C. below zero would have upon that gas in the magnetic field. Having previously ascertained that liquid oxygen does not moisten or adhere to rock crystal, and consequently maintains in contact with that substance a perfect spheroidal condition, Prof. Dewar poured the liquefied gas into a shallow saucer of rock crystal, and placed it between the poles of a powerful electro-magnet, the result looked for was the total or partial arrest, under magnetic stress, of the violent agitation caused by ebullition of the spheroidal mass, but, on the contrary, on the magnet being excited, the whole mass of liquid oxygen was literally lifted through the air and remained adherent to the poles until dissipated by the heat of the metal; briefly, the feeble magnetism of oxygen at ordinary temperature had become a force to which no solution of a magnetic metal offers any parallel. Thus, in a word, was strikingly and beautifully exemplified the relation between magnetism and heat, of which the entire loss of magnetic qualities suffered by iron at a red heat is a familiar illustration.

The Farmer's Better Half.

"The gray mare is often the better horse." The following, from the correspondent of a western paper, credit forgotten, is a case in point: About February, 1892, my wife said to me, "I want a pig. I am feeding three or four worthless dogs for you and the boys and I would much rather feed a pig for myself." I tried to impress upon her the idea that the pig would be a source of more annoyance than profit. I thought as she made no reply, that she had abandoned the idea of keeping a pig. I knew, however, that she had a peculiar knack of carrying her point, and was not surprised a few days later, on discovering in the back yard a diminutive pig in a chicken coop. I said nothing, but kept an eye on the pig. It soon outgrew its narrow limits and I built it a comfortable sty. Though my wife never called on me for more than one bushel of corn, that pig by December, turned the scales at 300 pounds. The worthless dogs are no longer on the farm, but there are three pigs in the sty that will pay out eight hundred or a thousand pounds of pork, besides lard and sausage galore.

Portrait Plates.

The china-decorator of all families that boast such a genius may now get out her paints and the photographs of the good-looking members of the household, for tea plates with the faces of the family smiling from their centre are now considered a desirable thing. The fact that in the course of time wear and tear will obliterate one eye of the father, hot water wash away part of the baby's curls, leaving him prematurely bald, and scrapings scratch the cheek of a mother, giving her the appearance of a prize-fighter, does not matter at all. They are now considered a most delicate and complimentary thing to place before a guest.

Electrical Notes.

A new electric switch has been designed for use in connection with the lock of a door, so that when a key is turned in the lock lights inside are turned on.

A Boston man has just been granted a patent for an electrical device designed to play automatically banjos, mandolins, guitars and harps.

A submarine electrical lamp recently tested at a depth of 20 feet under water proved a great attraction for fish. It caused the water to be illuminated within a radius of 100 feet.

The Study of Science.

The scientific department of American colleges are growing more rapidly than the academic department. That of Yale, for instance, represents an increase of fifteen per cent in number of students, while the academic increase is only nine per cent.

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