

Impressions of Student Life in Scotland.

WHAT better place could be chosen than this, the Modern-Athens, for obtaining correct impressions of Student Life in Scotland! To form proper views upon such a subject, it is needful to study not only the student, but also the various influences which are brought to bear upon him. The student in Edinburgh, as elsewhere, is a very plastic sort of individual, and while upon certain occasions he may assert his individuality so strongly as to cause discomfort to his neighbour, and bring upon himself the vengeance of the *Bailie*, yet at the same time he is the creature of circumstances and surroundings. Upon the surface, there is nothing that would distinguish him from the student in our American colleges; but upon a more intimate acquaintance you may observe some characteristics peculiar to the Scottish student alone. While many have been brought up in cities, the majority of Scottish students come from the better class of the peasantry, and the early influences of home life have had much to do in making them what they are. It cannot be doubted for a moment, that the Church in Scotland has been a powerful agent in forming the literary as well as in moulding the religious life of the nation. This is easily accounted for from its distinctive type of teaching, which, whatever may be said of it now, has in the past done much to stimulate thought, especially among the humbler classes.

Although the intellectual activity of Scotland has been varied in its nature, and though in its results the tendencies have often been evil; yet the fact that Scotland has produced great men in Theology, Philosophy, Literature and Science is due to the influences of her church life. The youth has often had his first glimpse into the regions of thought as he sat upon the primitive form of some gloomy church in a Scottish glen, and there the fires have been kindled in his young breast, which smouldered on through years of student toil, until, like a volcano, they have burst forth from a heart inflamed with the fervour of a Chalmers, a McLeod or a Guthrie. The ecclesiastical history of the nation is so intertwined with the political that it appears upon every page, and in both there is much to quicken and inspire the reader.

The Scottish student does not surpass in quickness of perception, or in scholarship those of any other country, yet he has a phase of education which the students of our younger country cannot enjoy. Imagine the first experience of University life in the city of Edinburgh to a young student from his peasant home. Everything is new to him. One saturated with the traditions of Scottish history can day after day revel, as he wanders through the streets and environs of the city, where the chief scenes in the great drama of a nation's history were played. He walks among associations which are full of interest and carry him back to the great struggles of early centuries. In short, the student enjoys what is characteristically

described by Prof. Blackie as "Studying history on the spot." He can from some eminence gaze upon the Ochil hills in Fifeshire, the Braid Hills, with their memories of Marmion, the Pentlands, Arthur's Seat, Calton Hill, with its monuments to the great in Philosophy and War, Holyrood, with its memories of the beautiful but unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, the spire and towers of old St. Giles, fragrant with the memories of John Knox, and many other objects fitted to stir the heart of any, if he retains a spark of love for his church or his nation. In Scottish Universities, no provision is made for the residence of students. The student chooses his own lodgings, as well as his companions and his habits of study, no control being exercised by the authorities beyond class hours. The results of this system depend upon the character and disposition of the student being in some cases beneficial, while in the case of many it proves ruinous.

In the class rooms, all meet upon a common level, the sons of peer and peasant, and the monotony of the classes is broken by the various forms of amusement—foot-ball, golf, and botanizing and geologizing excursions. Thus the benefits of University life are not confined to attendance upon classes, and in many instances, I have no doubt, the associations with fellow students are more powerful in making the man than his intercourse with professors. Men studying for the various professions meet upon common ground and associate together, which tends to breadth of sympathy and culture. The most striking thing to a foreigner is the variety of dialects among the students, which are often carried in all their strength through long years of study. In many cases these are accompanied with a peculiar monotone or intonation in public speaking, and is very common in the Scotch pulpit. It may also be heard at times in our Canadian pulpits, and by Canadians themselves is more or less indulged in. It originally arose from the desire to give a tone of solemnity to the service, as among the Anglicans, but when carried to extremes it becomes ludicrous. The odium of carrying it out to its present intensified form rests with the Free Church, hence it is called the "Free Church Whine." Whatever its origin it is not by any means confined to them, and wherever heard does not add either to the solemnity or power of a service, for in the pulpit, as upon the stage or the platform, the maxim fitly applies, *Be natural*.

The students in the Universities and Divinity Halls at the present time, are, I have no doubt, quite equal in every respect to those who have preceded them, and will, as they have done in the past, continue to mould Scottish life and character. If inspired themselves and inspiring others to shun whatever may have been unworthy, and to excel in all the virtues of their ancestors, I have no doubt the students of the present will do much to make the future history of Scotland, if less chivalrous, at least brighter and better than that of the past. J. R.