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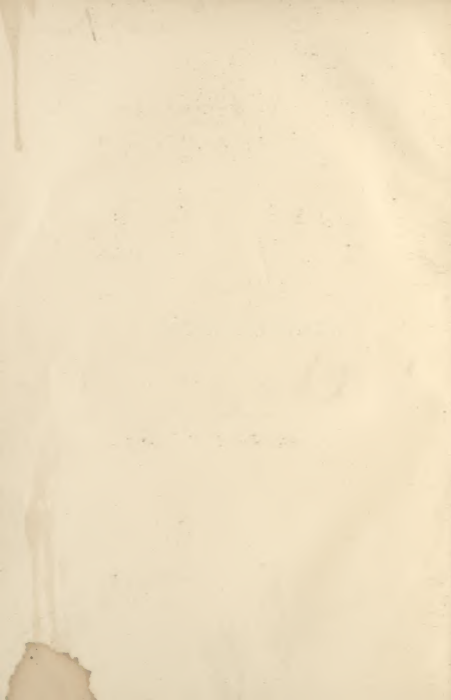
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REMINISCENCES.



REMINISCENCES.

of
Colonel Campbell

22 York Place
Edinburgh

'MY UNCLE! MY UNCLE!'

PRIVATELY PRINTED.

1869.

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TO THE SURVIVING MEMBERS

OF THE

' CABINET COUNCIL '

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DAYS THAT WERE.

REMINISCENCES.

'A FINE old gentleman,' and 'of the olden time.' Such my uncle, more properly speaking my great-uncle, was,—a gentleman in the true sense; honourable, high-minded, hospitable, generous, yet with much of the character and manner of the old Scottish gentry, on which a residence in India of 'only a quarter of a century' (as he once answered the question whether he had been long in India) had engrafted some well-remembered peculiarities.

My great-uncle was a fine specimen of a good old military officer who had seen much service. 'A fine old Scoto-Indian gentleman,' if you will, 'all of the olden time.' Yes; 'of the olden time.' For it may well be said of him in more ways than one—

'He was a man that, take him all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again.'

He died in 1836, having almost outlived

his 84th year. My recollections of him are therefore only as an elderly gentleman. His generation has long passed away, and the next,—almost the next again. For those of us who remember him, I need not recall his still familiar appearance—as he walked home in the afternoon from the New Club, then in St. Andrew's Square, leaning on the arm of his faithful servant,—the two portly figures moving slowly along, with something of the gait ascribed by Homer to Hephæstus,¹ and occupying no small portion of the York Place *trottoir*. Or again, as he was wont to sit in his square black-leather easy-chair, with back to the window, face to the fire, in the parlour at No. 22 York Place: the well-cared-for venerable white hair, the large person, the spotless brown coat, the grey trousers, with gaiters of the same colour neatly fitting over the well-polished shoes. Or the welcome, in half-feigned surprise, with which he used to receive us as we went in to make our call: 'Oh! Mr. John Tait, your most obedient!'

Nor have any of us forgotten 22 York

¹ Ὡς Ἴσον Ἠφαιστον διὰ δώματα ποικνύοντα.

Place itself and its other inmates—such at least as appeared *apud superos*. The dark, portly butler, Glasgow, a *protégé* of the Garscube family from his boyhood—to whom the soubriquet of Buff (the origin of which I have not been able to trace), had been irreverently given in the earlier and humbler days of his service—a good trusty man, of large figure and most respectable appearance, with a voice studiously toned down to softness, which, along with a certain nervous twitching of the fingers in speaking to his superiors, seemed scarcely in keeping with the robust frame. Then the neat dapper Andrew, with his claret livery-coat, yellow waistcoat, shorts, and spotless white stockings; for such a modern innovation as a footman in trousers at any time when on duty, would not for a moment have been tolerated in my 'uncle's' establishment.

Nor will those who ever drove out with my uncle in his 'airings' in his comfortable chariot forget the postillion. He was trained, upon the front window being let down with a slam, to pull up and look round for orders. Then, without a word spoken, on a rapid gyration

of my uncle's forefinger, he would touch his hat, put the chariot about, and return by the way he came.

My uncle's body-servant, to whom Glasgow succeeded, was an obese puffy Welshman of the name of Evans. Poor Evans died after a very short illness—I think at Garscube. Some one had condoled with my uncle on the occasion, 'Poor Evans! he will be a great loss to you, Colonel?' 'He was only a servant,' was the reply; 'I can get another to-morrow.' Not that my uncle was unfeeling—far from it, he was very kind-hearted,—nor that he really cared little for having lost his old servant. But it was not according to his Indian and military notions of etiquette to seem to feel much for the loss of a servant. I have heard that he used to say, 'I never spoke to Evans all the way to London;' though the two fat gentlemen sat side by side in the Colonel's carriage for probably five days successively: such was his idea of etiquette.

It was my lot to spend a considerable part of my school-days during each year under my uncle's roof. At a quarter-past eight

every morning an ample breakfast was laid for me in the parlour, and I always dined with my uncle. Shall I ever forget the first day I dined *tête-à-tête* with him! It so happened that a bottle of walnut ketchup had been sent from home with me, the external use of which was recommended for a skin eruption. When I had been helped to fish, conceive my horror when Glasgow handed the bottle to me, saying with his most 'dulcet breath,' 'This is the "saase" (sauce) you brought with you, sir.' What a precocious epicure he must have thought me! I being then about twelve years old. My uncle looked up, but I managed to get the 'saase' conveyed away before he saw it.

I was always treated with the greatest kindness and attention during my stay with my uncle. Once I was laid up by a quinsy for some time. My uncle visited me regularly; I remember his commiseration being especially excited by the low diet on which I was kept:—

'They allow him nothing but some miserable stuff they call "bread-berry"' (accent on the penultima).

At this time we sometimes were a trio at dinner,—the Colonel, myself, and my cousin and schoolfellow, nearly two years older than myself. On one of these days there was, I recollect, a dish of sweetbreads for dinner. My uncle called for them.

‘Here, Glasgow, bring me the “*Kernels*.”’

Seeing a twinkle in our eyes at the suggestive word, he continued—

‘Mr. Archibald,’ addressing the now Most Reverend Prelate,—‘Mr. Archibald, will you have some of the “*Kernels*?”’

‘Thank you.’

‘Mr. Ramsay, will you take some of the “*Kernels*?”’ This was a very characteristic reproof.

Another time the butler was removing, without orders to do so, a dish of beef which no one had eaten of. This was contrary to my uncle’s ideas of what was correct—

‘Here, *don’t* take away the beef; perhaps somebody will take some.—Mr. Archibald, *will you* take some of the beef?’

‘No, I thank you.’

‘Mr. Ramsay, will *you* take some of the beef?’

‘No, thank you.’

‘*Here*, I’ll take some myself,’ thus reproving Glasgow’s over-haste.

It must have been somewhere about this time that, the intention of my cousin to go into the Church (as taking orders was then commonly called) having been mentioned, my uncle, supposing it to be the Scotch Church, and no doubt associating it with Daddy M’Morrine, evidently appeared to think it derogatory to the family ; but on its being explained that it was the Church of England, he said, ‘Ay, that’s different ;’ and added,—‘with something of prophetic strain,’—‘A very good line the Church of England!’—an opinion in which, in the case in question at least, he proved not far wrong.

I used generally to prepare my lessons for school with my tutor, the said ‘Daddy M’Morrine,’ in the evening in the dining-room. Soon after I first came to my uncle’s there was a dinner-party, for which, of course, the dining-room was required. I well remember my uncle informing me of the fact, and telling me on that account to ‘CARRY Mr. M’Morrine up-stairs’ to my room. Nevertheless, even

while a boy, I was admitted to the reunions round my uncle's hospitable board,—the greater and more formal, as well as the smaller and more intimate. The former, the dinner-parties, were composed in about equal proportions of immediate relations and personal friends and acquaintances, chiefly 'gentlemen that had been in India,' as my uncle was careful to define the class; when once asked if some one mentioned was not an Indian? 'No,' he said, 'he is a gentleman that has been in India.'

Whenever my father was present at either of these reunions, he filled the place and occupied the post of honour next my uncle, and was treated with marked respect as the head of the family, and specially as the 'eldest son of your grandfather, my brother, Sir Islay Campbell,' according to the Colonel's minute specification. 'Succoth' enjoyed an entire immunity from the corrections and snubs which the rest of us, if we in any way laid ourselves open to them, were sure to receive.

To return, however, to the regular dinner-parties. On these occasions the tall figure

and somewhat stern and empurpled face of C——, an *Indian* officer (*pace dixerim*, as the circumlocution would be difficult), was seldom missing ; nor at one time the somewhat unprepossessing person, and not very edifying conversation, of Wicked Saunders, as Dr. C. was sometimes called. Without inquiring how far the epithet was deserved, he must at least have been a tolerably free-liver, from a confidential communication he once made to me : ‘ Ramsay, man, I’ve drunk as much claret in my day as would float a seventy-four.’

This gentleman’s ‘ room,’ however, I am glad on many accounts to say, in my uncle’s latter days, was more acceptable to him than his company.

One other figure will be remembered as a constant attendant (in a technical sense) at these higher festivities—a waiter, of hollow voice, tall, thin, gaunt figure, with a face strangely resembling a ‘ Death’s head,’ clad in rusty black suit, and white tie, going through his part with immoveable gravity in strange contrast with the abundant fare, and wine of undeniable quality that circulated so freely, yet with no excess.

It was not, however, on these greater occasions that my uncle's most characteristic utterances came out so freely as at the smaller meetings, confined to immediate relatives, familiarly known among us as 'Cabinet Councils,' or dinners, held sometimes in the dining-room proper, latterly, when small, in the back parlour. It was there chiefly, '*postquam prima quies epulis,*' and after my uncle had given the never-failing toast on the removal of the cloth,—'All our friends,—that most of the sayings which still linger in the memory of the surviving members of 'the cabinet' were given forth. It was, if not exactly at one of the 'cabinet councils,' yet at one of the somewhat large dinners, to which, so to say, the 'members of the ministry without seats in the cabinet' were also invited, that one of these, in going down-stairs to dinner, taking one of the cabinet-proper by the arm, said to him,—'John, I am not the least hungry, but I'll do none the worse at dinner for that,'—a remarkable gastronomic, or perhaps rather digestive, idiosyncrasy. For however 'the hungry edge of appetite' might in its eagerness prevent the delicate and

scientific appreciation of the skill of the *chef*, still, 'to do none the worse' at table when not 'the least hungry' is somewhat incomprehensible to ordinary stomachs. The part sustained by my uncle in the conversation at these *petits dîners* may not inaptly be described as that of 'controller-general.' Nothing was allowed to pass which was not according to his somewhat rigorous ideas of etiquette and propriety ; for with all his kindness of heart he was very peremptory. He well knew how to put down any one who took what he considered a liberty. And living, as we saw him, among his nephews and great-nephews, it was his principle never to admit the supposition that he could be in the wrong. These remarks furnish the key to many of his sayings.

One evening the 'cream' for the 'strawberries and cream' was very strong of the milk. The eldest member of the cabinet, of an older generation than myself, sitting next to my uncle ventured to say, 'Colonel, I think we must ask our housekeeper to tell yours where we get our cream.'

My uncle, 'Umph!'¹

'I was saying, I think we must get our housekeeper to tell yours who supplies us with cream.'

'Umph!' reiterated—no further answer.

'Why, Colonel, this is *milk*.'

'To be sure it is milk.'

In the face of this snub it would have been difficult to tender any further advice.

It happened once that a boy, one of his great-nephews, threw a pellet of bread at another. 'Stay, stay,' cried the Colonel, 'do you know what you are doing? Peter Campbell lost his eye in that way.' No one knew for certain who 'Peter Campbell' was.

'What, Colonel,' some one ventured to ask, 'lost his eye by a piece of bread being thrown at him?'

'Yes; just by a piece of bread *or something else* chucked into his eye.'

There was certainly a considerable latitude in 'or something else,' but no retractation. Some of the party had an idea that 'Peter Campbell' had been a soldier. Yet, however

¹ A guttural sound, half interrogative half indicative of displeasure, peculiar to my uncle.

the more sceptical might surmise that the 'something else' might have been a musket bullet or a bayonet-point, to the simple-minded the fate of the mysterious 'Peter Campbell' remained *ingens documentum* of the peril of chucking bread.

One of my uncle's great-nephews, who had been guilty of what was in his eyes something between a personal affront and a grave delinquency,—*i.e.*, being married, he had declined to go to India with his regiment—happened once to be mentioned at one of these reunions. His very name drew down the indignant apostrophe,—'*He* has played the fool most confoundedly!' I think it was in reference to him too that the Cabinet Council was once electrified by the *effatum*, 'I consider marriage *an immoral act*.' After a pause, the shock to our sense of right and wrong was turned off by the important qualification that the utterance referred to cases where means were wanting to maintain a family in its proper social position.

Another time, some one, in course of conversation, happened to mention Baillie of Mellerstain. One of the younger members

of the party, a lad at college, innocently asked, 'Who is Baillie of Mellerstain?'

'You don't know Baillie of Mellerstain?' cries my uncle.

'No, Colonel, I do not know who he is.'

'You don't know Baillie of Mellerstain! *Never* let me hear you say that again.'

There was something grand in the indignation and scorn which would not condescend to enlighten the gross darkness of one who 'did not know Baillie of Mellerstain.' I think it was the recipient of this snub who, on an occasion where the sympathy of the party had been expressed for a criminal who had been condemned to death for the murder of his wife, under circumstances of great provocation—on one of the party, himself a jurisconsult, saying, 'He was not a murderer by profession like Burke,'—added with charming *naïveté*, 'Oh no, not at all; *he was a street-porter.*'

'My uncle' was a very punctual man. Some of the 'cabinet' were not famous for this virtue, even at the cabinet dinners, where it was expected. After the old-fashioned gold watch had been pulled out once

or twice, if the defaulter still arrived before dinner was served, we remember how he was greeted with a good-humoured 'Oh, Mr. — you very nearly lost your *broth*.'¹ It once happened that one of his nephews, my uncle's professional adviser, a constant attendant at the cabinet dinners, was absent in the country for a longer time than he had intended. Every day the question was asked, 'Any word of Mr. Archibald Connell?' At last, at one of the cabinet dinners, when my uncle again asked, 'Nothing heard yet of Mr. Archibald Connell?' some one said jocularly, 'I think he must have lost his heart, Colonel.'

'Lost his heart!' exclaimed my indignant uncle, 'he must have lost his senses.'

The prolonged absence was only for a few days beyond the expected time.

In his latter days my uncle's health failed

¹ This reminds me of another instance of *merosis*, or 'part for the whole,' in the same kind, which will, no doubt, be remembered by the other invited guest on the occasion. We were once asked, by a relative who had chambers in the Inner Temple, to come on such a day and take a chop at his chambers. The 'chop,' beginning with turtle, red-mullet, etc., was in fact the most *recherché* of dinners, with the best of wines in the greatest abundance.

very much, and he suffered at times from an affection of one eye. At this period my brother James was frequently an inmate of his house. With a good deal that was unlike, they had many points of character in common. Neither of them was what is expressively called 'a granter of propositions,' and each was very positive in his own way. Nevertheless they got on very well together. My brother had a large acquaintance, and was often away from Edinburgh. On his return on one occasion, after shaking hands, the following dialogue took place:—

'Well, Colonel, I hope you are pretty well?'

'*Well!* You know I am never well.'

'No. But you are no worse?' in a tone of kind inquiry.

'There was no need to be worse.'

'Oh but, Colonel, there is nothing the matter except your eye?'

'Ay, *except.*'

The inquiry dropped.

It was about this time, I think, that Glasgow used to make attempts at times to put my uncle right, when he thought there was any mistake made—attempts how-

ever which, as might have been expected, were strenuously resisted. The following is an instance :—

SCENE—*Parlour after breakfast.*

My uncle. Here, Glasgow,—there will be five or six gentlemen dining here to-day.

Glasgow (blandly). I think, Colonel, there will not be so many gentlemen—only four, I think, Colonel.

Col. (with emphasis). Do you hear? There will be *six* gentlemen at dinner to-day.

Glasgow. I think, Colonel, if there are covers for four it will be enough.

Col. Do as you are desired, sir.

No more was said, but the table was laid for four.

It was a great step for Glasgow when, on one occasion as my uncle was going out to drive, he asked (as if it had been forgotten) for his hat. ‘Your hat is on your head, Colonel,’ was the reply, with a very slight downward pressure on the hat.

When my brother George returned from India, after thirteen years’ absence, his cousins naturally called to see him at my uncle’s

house, where he was staying. Of course the nephews were shown up to the Colonel, and George not being in, one unlucky nephew said on going, 'I called to see George Campbell.'

'What would you see at him?' was the tart interrogation.

The Colonel's sense of propriety was very great. Once I had been asked to a juvenile party, and went to it notwithstanding the death of an old lady upwards of 90, who was my great-aunt. The Colonel had retired to his bedroom when I came home. I found Glasgow, however, waiting for me on the staircase, who said softly, 'The Colonel wishes to see you, sir, in his room.' I went in innocently enough, fearing nothing.

'Good —, did you not know Mrs. Murray of Henderland is dead?'

I was rather taken aback ; however I said, *mal-à-propos* enough, 'But, Colonel, she was only a grand-aunt.'

'Only!'

There was no more to be said on either side.

* * * *

My uncle was well known for his liberality, and yet it was all conducted very

methodically. My cousin and myself were calling on him one day, before returning to Oxford after the long vacation. After some time he formally announced to us, 'I have resolved to give each of you Oxonian gentlemen twenty pounds.' Accordingly he threw himself back in his easy-chair, as was his wont in rising from it, took hold of both the arms, and shot himself forward with an effort out of the chair, then walked across the room to a drawer below the book-case, which he unlocked, and took out 'the twenty pounds each,' and gave the packet into the hands of each of us. I need not say the 'resolution' found great favour in our eyes, as it would with most 'Oxonian gentlemen.'

'My uncle,' as has been already noticed, was 'no granter of propositions.' On one occasion a question arose in conversation about some statistical fact, as far as I remember, relating to the City of Edinburgh. Two of the party stated their opinion, which agreed, on the matter in question. This, however, was instantly vetoed by my uncle with an emphatic 'No' (pronounced 'Naw'). We appealed to a book of reference (the

Edinburgh Almanack, I believe) on the subject, which was on my uncle's table. It was found to pronounce in our favour. The Colonel asked to see the book, looked at it for a moment, and then shut it up, and us too, with 'There is some mistake here.' It would not have been *selon les règles* in his eyes to admit that we, his nephews, were right, and he wrong.

This reminds me of a German professor who once astounded the Balliol Common Room (it was long, long ago) by winding up a discussion in which St. Paul's authority was appealed to, with the words, 'Ah! yes, Paulus was a very good man, but he was mistaken.'

I have mentioned my uncle's book-case. He had a good collection of books. Somebody once saying to him, 'You have a very good library, Colonel;' he answered, 'I have not got a large library, but I can say more than most men: I have read every book in it.'

He intended this no doubt to be taken with some latitude, seeing that the Encyclopædia Britannica and Scott's Bible were among the

books in his library. It is pleasant, however, to remember that the latter, as well as the Bible without the commentary, he did read daily in his latter years. And with this last reminiscence let us take leave of my uncle.

* * * *

POSTSCRIPT.

I have said of my uncle that we shall not look upon his like again. There was another character of the olden time connected with our family in a different station, of whom the same may be said, still well remembered by us as 'Sandy Brown.' I seem still to see him, his grey close-cut hair, shrewd countenance, and bandy-legged figure coming in for orders, or riding to post on the grey pony, generally called 'Cumlodden,' but by Sandy, for some unknown reason, 'Strachee.' Sandy had been in the Garscube family beyond memory of man, at least of us juniors. He was a faithful, trustworthy creature, but with the too common Scotch failing for whisky—very irascible withal. He had the peculiar faculty of acquitting himself in delivering messages,

which was a part of his vocation, as well when the worse of liquor as when sober. And when reasoned with on the score of his unfortunate love of drink, he would cut short the remonstrance by confident appeal to the remonstrant, whether he had ever 'dune his wark the waur for that?' He was known by the name of the 'Governor.' The younger members of the family were his peculiar charge. It was his duty to valet 'the boys.' And those of us whom he attended have still a lively remembrance of the summary process of ejection by which he used to get us up in the morning—that is to say, coming into our room, 'the long whip,' as he called it, in hand, with a loud, 'Come, wha's here?' cracking the whip the while, and if that did not make us jump up, laying it roundly on.

Well I remember in later days, when I was at Oxford, and my brother James had returned from India, we were once in rooms opening into each other, at Levenside, on our way with my father to Argyllshire. Sandy, who was in charge of the ponies, waited upon us. As in earlier days, he came in with a 'Wha's here?' whip in hand. Those who

knew my brother will easily believe that he soon gave Sandy reason to understand in very emphatic terms that the days for these liberties were over. I think it was on this journey that in riding with Sandy for escort, in telling a story about some one, whether connected with the country we were going through or not, I forget, he said, 'We tried him at Inverary.' My father was at that time on the Scottish bench.

Once on a time 'the boys' had stayed out riding much beyond the regulation time. When we came back, my father, who was rather angry, said to Sandy, 'Alexander, take care the young gentlemen never get the ponies again.' 'Your orders shall be obeyed, my Lord,' Sandy answered with great alacrity. The ordinance did not continue long in force.

Poor Sandy's advice to my sister-in-law in regard to a gentleman who had come for the first time as tutor into the family, was well and pithily put—'Mrs. Campbell, mind dinna ye *crub* the tutor.'

It was between them the following dialogue once took place :—

‘Sandy, do you say your prayers and read a chapter in the morning?’

‘Dae ye?’

‘To be sure I do.’

‘Ay, before a gude fire at ten o’clock in the morning. I wonder how many chapters you’d read if you had three horses to clean before breakfast.’

Let us hope the day came when Sandy did find time to say his prayers.

* * * *

One more reminiscence—it is of one who filled an important office in the neighbouring county, and was a frequent guest at my father’s house. I select the following:—

One day he and his son, my old school-fellow and friend, were dining at Garscube. One of the party had been singing Scottish songs in her charming manner. My friend, who used to sing at times, was asked to sing after Lady H—t. On his excusing himself, his father addressed him thus: ‘The difference between you, sir, and Lady H—t is simply this: Lady H—t both can and will sing. You, sir, *can’t, and yet you won’t.*’

Whatever we may think of the logic, we

must at least admit that the force of antithesis could no further go.

But the grand *effatum*, which certainly ought not to perish, was his summing up of the character of a certain Glasgow notability of that day—a personage whose reputation did not stand very high:—‘I’ll tell you what he is, Sir, he is a clever creature, Sir; but, *cætera desunt*, morally and politically—he is an ugly vulgar brute.’

It was to the same worthy to whom this unprepossessing distinction of feature, moral, political, and physical, is thus affixed, that the following rebuff is said to have been administered by Miss G—— of G——; a clever and good woman, but certainly without personal attractions. Staying in her house on one occasion, B-r-l-h, the individual in question, assuming the great man, said, ‘Come, Miss G——, I will give you a toast: “Honest men and bonny lassies.”’

‘Very well, B-r-l-h,’ was the ready answer, ‘but that is neither you nor me.’

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