VICTUALS IN SCOTLAND IN THE OLDEN TIMES.

An Interesting Historical Study.

In these days when we read and hear so much about free trade and fair trade it may not be uninteresting to take a look back to the olden times and see how things were managed then. Our "rude forefathers" were not always a semi-savage or barbarous race, for as early as the times of David I.—more than seven hundred years ago—they had a considerable commerce with other nations, and the trade among themselves was regulated by a carefully drawn-up code of laws. Nor was their food always of a humble kind. They had not only the necessaries of life, but they also enjoyed many of its luxuries. The burghs had special privileges granted to them by royal charter. The magistrates were bound to see that the traders acted according to the laws, and those failing to do so were fined by the chamberlain at his ayre. Traders were not allowed to interfere with one another's liberties; and the chamberlain had to make a strict examination of all weights and measures. Sellers were to sell to all comers, and were not to keep more than fourpence-worth for their own use during the night.

The prices of the various commodities were fixed by the good men of the town. Besides gray or brown bread, there was the wheat "white and well bolted." Bakers who did not show their bread in their windows or in the market were fined, and their bread dealt out to the poor folk. Those who had a proper oven could have no more than four servants in their bakehouse—namely, the "master, twa servandis, and a knave" (that is apprentice). The lord of the oven received each time for his oven, one halfpenny; the master, one halfpenny; the two servants, one penny; and the "knave," one farthing. It was also ordained that bakers and other tradesmen were to sell on credit. Fleshers were to keep good flesh—beef, mutton or pork, and to expose it at their windows, so as to be seen of all men. They were to give their services to the burgesses at killing time—when the latter were in the habit of salting their meat for prolonged use—during which time they were to board with the servants of the burgesses. A butcher was not allowed to be a pastry cook; and among other matters that the lord chamberlain had to inquire into was whether the cooks prepared their food in a state fit for human use. The sale of fish was subject to the most stringent laws. As to ale, it was ordained that any woman who would brew ale for sale was required to have a sign put up in front of her house; she was to brew it all the year through according to the custom of the town; the ale had to be of good quality; and if she made "evil" ale and be "convykkyt," she had to pay a fine of eight shillings, or "thole the laugh of the toune," and the ale given to the poor folk and to the brethern of the hospital. No magistrate was allowed to brew ale during his term of office. By a tenure under the monks of Kelso the brewer was bound to furnish the abbot with beer at a halfpenny a gallon, being half the price charged to other people.

The great monasteries throughout the country possessed large tracts of land, either under cultivation or used for pastoral purposes, and by them were reared cereal and fruit crops of much value, besides numerous flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. The barons paid less attention to agriculture than did their ecclesiastical brethern; but they lived in splendid style in their baronial halls, and entertained visitors in the most sumptuous manner. In short, Scotland was at that time in a prosperous condition, and continued to be so until the unfortunate death of Alexander III., when the country was plunged into the disastrous war of Independence, and "Oure gold was changyd into lede." The blot upon the prosperity of those times was, that the greater portion of the agricultural workers were not free men or women, but slaves. They were bought and sold, sometimes as families, sometimes as individuals, but most frequently they passed from owner to owner with the estates to which they belonged. After the war of Independence slavery had greatly decreased in rural Scotland.

In olden times, as now, supply and demand had a good deal to do in fixing the prices of the various commodities for sale; but the legislature paid much attention to the subject. Knowing the aptness of human nature to make the best of any special occasion, the legislature enacted in 1424 that victuals were not to be sold at higher prices during the king's stay at any place than they had been sold at for ten days previously.

Victuals were "richt scaunt" in 1473; importation was encouraged, and importers were to be "honourably receivit." Another season of great distress afterwards came; there was great want of victuals and other merchandise, arising partly from the circumstance that a large amount of counterfeit money was in circulation, and that it was impossible to know the good from the bad. In 1496 barons, magistrates and "hostellers" were appointed to fix the price of victuals, ale, and other necessaries, and the workmen who took exorbitant prices were to be punished. Notwithstanding this, we find that some years afterwards prices of craftmen's work had doubled and trebled in consequence of the neglect of magistrates to control the deacons of craft who raised the prices. Reasonable prices were now to be fixed, and hostellers were to charge a reasonable price for dinner and supper. But during this and the following century there were seasons of dearth, and persons buying and holding victuals until there was a dearth were to be punished. A prohibition was made against storing corn until harvest and old stacks were not to be kept longer than Christmas. Later still, all corn was to be thrashed out before the end of May! no victual was to be held in the "girnel" more than was necessary for the support of the owner's household until Michaelmas, the rest to be sold at the market; all extra had to be sold within nine days, and searchers were appointed. No oxen or sheep were to be sold out of the realm.

In the sixteenth century it was ordained that, to prevent dearth, no white fish were to be "packed or peeted" until the country was supplied; and later on, the exportation of fish was prohibited. Prelates, barons, and gentlemen were to be served in the sale of wine and salt before others. But while some had difficulty in procuring the food necessary for their sustenance, there were others who, like the rich man, seem to have fared sumptuously every day. Hence the legislature considering that the superfluous cheer partaken of both by small and great men was hurtful not only to their own bodies, but also to the commonwealth, enacted that an archbishop, bishop, or earl was to have at his "mess" but eight dishes of meat; an abbot, a prior or dean, six dishes; a baron or freeholder, four; and a burgess or other 'substantious" man, either spiritual or temporal, three; and but one kind of meat in each dish. This Act, however, was not to strike at Yule, Pasch, patron-days, nor banquets to foreigners; such banquets to be given only by archbishops, bishops, earls, abbots, deans barons, and provosts and magistrates of burghs. No lambs were to be killed for three years, except in nobles' and great barons' houses; and none were to kill young rabbits or partridges except gentlemen and nobles with hawks. The dearth increased, and another law was passed regarding the killing of lambs, but on this occasion there was no exception as to the nobles or gentlemen. Keepers of taverns were not to mix old and new wine, nor mix water with their wine; and ale-tasters were sworn to do their duty. Justices were ordered to see that good wholesome beer and ale were brewed; no salt was to be used in the brewery nor in washing of brewers' vessels. There was still an increase of the dearth of victuals, and flesh and tallow were not to be exported; but bread, ale, and aqua vitæ might be exported to the isles for barter. No one was to keep stacks after the 10th day of July, under pain of confiscation. Flesh was to be eaten four days in the week only; but the magistrates had the power to grant it to the sick who could not eat fish.

In 1574 the circulation of bad money again caused a dearth, in consequence of which victuals were witheld. Five years afterwards victuals were again "skant;" and as great quantities of malt were consumed in making aqua vitæ, it was ordered that none be made from the first day of December till the first day of October following, except earls, barons, or gentlemen of sic degree to make it from their own malt within their own house for themselves and friends. It was found that one cause of the dearth was the keeping of horses at hard meat (corn) all the year through by persons of mean estate. This was prohibited; and only earls, prelates, lords, great barons, members of privy-council, lords of Session, or landed gentry that might spend of their own one thousand marks of yearly rent, all charges deducted, were excepted.

In the beginning of the seventh century there was an enactment by the Scottish Privy Council to check "the grit wastrie of wyne drukin in tavernis be a number of common artisans and rascal multitude;" and the price of wine in Edinburgh was fixed at six shillings per pint. About this time the common table in College of Glassgow had two dietaries, one for the "upper table at which the principal and the four regents were served," the other for the "lower table" of the eight bursars. At the upper table there were for breakfast "ane quhyte breid of ane pund wecht in a sowpe, with the remains of a piece of bief or mutton resting of the former day, with thair pynt of aill amanges them;" and for dinner, white bread "with ane dische of brose and ane uther of skink or kaill," boiled beef or mutton, a roast of veal or mutton, with a fuwl or rabbit, pigeons or chickens as a second roast, and five choppins of better ale than that commonly sold in the town. The supper was "siclyke" as the dinner. The bursars had less variety, but a liberal supply, and were allowed a quart of ale among four both at dinner and supper.

In 1644, victuals having become so very scarce that they could not be had except at extraordinary prices, Sir Andrew Hepburn treasurer of the army, brought the matter before the Estates, and asked for some persons to advise with him as to how victuals were to be procured for the forces. This request was granted. Three years after, the price of victuals become so much reduced that exportation was permitted; but two years more and a sad change took place. There was a supplication by the Commissioners of the General Assembly as to the condition of the mean and poor people; and in consideration of this, exportation was again prohibited. For several years there was a great scarcity, and in 1698 a national fast was was ordered. The harvest of that year became altogether disastrous; there were great winds, rains, and snowstorms, and a great part of the corn could not be cut down, so that in consequence of the want of food people died in the streets and highways, and in some parishes some of the inhabitants perished.

Such were some of the experiences of the people in the "good old times;" and although, within comparatively recent years, there have been periods of depression and scarcity, there can be no doubt that we enjoy in respect to the necessaries and luxuries of life many blessings which our fathers never enjoyed.

A living, lovable Christian is the best reply to infidelity—the most powerful argument for the Gospel.

REVENGE.

How gleefully the birds sang that morning as they flattered in their gilded cages hanging in the sunny room little Jack called her "private parlor." How bright the skies were, and the fragrant geraniums blossoming in the windows seemed more beautiful than ever. On the rug, in the sunshine, the two pet kittens, Spitfire and Spanker, purred, and curled up in one corner of the sofa, her soft eyes shining and her cheeks glowing redly, little Jack herself thought that the beauty of the scene without, and the gay carol of the birds within, could only be the reflection of her own happiness. She could hardly believe it, but the glittering ring on the forefinger of her left hand was evidence enough to convince that it must be so, and that, of all women, she was preferred by Donald Holland, and selected by him to be his wife.

"And I always thought he fancied cousin Jane," mused Jack, turning the ring round the dainty finger, "with her stately ways and long words, when it was I, after all. Ah, how glad I am."

The door swung softly open and a lady entered, a tall, elegant woman, robed in trailing folds of silk. Jack looked up smilingly.

"Down so soon, Jennie? I was not expecting you for an hour yet." Miss Marchmount bowed quietly.

"I have been walking for an hour and a half in the acacia garden," she said in a clear metallic voice that somehow sent a shiver over her listener.

Jack's brows contracted for an instant, then she laughed softly and held up to view the shimmering ring.

"See, cousin mine. Do you not wish me joy?"

Miss Marchmont's eyes blazed, and a dull, red spot glowed for a brief second in each sallow cheek; but, conquering herself, she asked in a voice husky from emotion:

"It is Mr. Holland's ring, is it not?"

A rosy tide flooded Jack's neck and face. "Yes," she replied, "we are engaged."

"He was here this morning?"

"He was. It has not been half an hour since he went away." The red spots on Miss Marchmont's cheeks faded away, and the face grew ashen; but she kissed Jack's lips and wished her joy, and then, with slow steps, left the room. Out in the acacia walk she swept her silken skirts up and down, back and forth, until it seemed that the restless feet must stop from sheer exhaustion. At the extreme end of the walk stood beneath two great palmetto trees a tiny bower where she often spent hours and hours over her books and embroidery, or where, with her cushions, she took many an afternoon siesta; for Miss Marchmont was an East Indian by birth, and inherited all the love of ease and luxury common to the race of oriental devotees.

"So he will marry her," she muttered between her set teeth. "She, the little petted darling of everyone. My God! my heart will break!" She sank down on her knees, her body shaking with convulsive sobs. "It cannot—it must not be," she cried, wildly, "I who love him so, who would have endured so much, should be the one."

The smoldering gray eyes grew intensely black; the long, almond-shaped lids expanded, and a white, deadly line encircled her mouth. "Were it not for her he would take me. I must—I will put her out of the way."

A faint, sickening perfume crept upon the air, and a low hiss reached her ears. She started suddenly to her feet. Too well she knew the import of the sound to linger, and she sprang quickly from the arbor. But she was too late to escape. Halt suspended from a far reaching branch directly before her, with forked tongue and glistening eyes, a young cobra looked down upon its victim. But Jane Marchmont was made of brave material, and drawing the long poniard she always carried, she waited courageously for the great greenish head to descend.

It came slowly down. The white fangs looked keen and sharp, and the hideous mouth yawned like the mouth of some terrible cavern.

Jane felt the edge of the poniard; it would have split a hair. And grasping the handle tightly, she waited for the last quick dart which the serpent would make at his victim, and when it came she raised the dagger high in the air and gave the cobra one deadly blow. It was dealt with her whole strength, and the blood spurted great red drops on her clothes, while the body slowly unwound itself from the limb and fell upon the greensward by the severed head. Miss Marchmont eyed the dead serpent fixedly, and a fiendish thought entered her head.

Unwinding the crimson scarf from her neck and shoulders she wiped her dagger. Then, with the aid of the scarf, she drew the dead body into the arbor and covered it carefully with leaves.

Half an hour later she entered the dining-room as composedly as though she had but come from a quiet slumber, and embracing her cousin, teased her playfully. Late in the afternoon Jack complained of a headache, and with the gentlest touch in the world Miss Marchmount bathed it in cologne, and advised her to walk down to the arbor and have a quiet nap.

"If I sleep too long you must call me, for Donald is to come at 5 o'clock," she said, as she stood on the threshold of the door. Nanette, the maid, was brushing the hall and heard the low tones, as Jack stepped off the veranda.

Miss Marchmont promised, and a queer, inexplicable smile played around her mouth as Jack disappeared down the walk.

"She has gone to her death," she hissed, "for the living cobra will as surely follow the trail of its dead mate as the sun shines. It is there by this time and woe to you, Jaqueline Kame! Your lover's eyes will see you a loathsome bloated thing, when next they rest upon you; and, as you die, so may perish all who stand between my love and me."

The moments crept on, and the hand on the dial pointed to the hour of 5. Miss Marchmont walked back and forth, her rustling silk trailing in heavy folds on the soft carpet, and her hands locked tightly together. Unable to endure the suspense, she threw open the low French window, and went slowly down the walk.

A horrible sight met her eyes.

Jack lay sleeping on the settee, her hands crossed lightly on her breast, and her long, loose hair falling in a glittering mass over the crimson cushion. Above her, with slow, undulating motion, a living snake was swaying to and fro, while the air was heavy with a dull, sickening smell.

For a moment her heart failed her, but only for a moment. Setting her teeth firmly together, she prepared to see the cobra give the death-blow to the unconscious sleeper.

Lower it swung and lower; more subtle still grew that dangerous scent. The great, green head bent farther down, and the terrible mouth opened to its widest capacity.

Miss Marchmont crouched low in the path.

"Die!" she gasped. "Die Jaqueline Kame, I would not turn my hand to save you from a thousand deaths." Her hands were tightly clenched and her face was covered with perspiration, but her heart was brave with its murderous purpose.

The snake now ceased its undulatory motion and with its horrible eyes fastened on its victim raised its head for the final blow. Up it came the jaws distended, the cruel fangs shining, the forked tongue darting toward the sleeping girl—then—a crunching sound of heels on the graveled walk, the sharp report of a pistol, and Jack lay senseless, but saved, in Donald's arms, while the cobra, mutilated, bleeding, and dead, fell on the arbor floor.

Miss Marchmont stood for a single instant, as if transfixed. "You are a murderess," said Holland, pointing to the body of the serpent that was covered with her scarf. "Thank heaven! I came in time to save my poor Jaqueline."

Miss Marchmont turned slowly, stepped backward, and fell prone upon the earth, the point of the poniard piercing her very heart.

"I die," she said, turning her glazing eyes upon him, "for death is pleasanter than life without you. But I would have killed her if I could. You have saved her from the fate I prepared for her, and be happy if you can, knowing that my dying curse shall follow you both."

The death rattle sounded in her throat and her head fell back on the ground.

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Months after Donald lead his bride to the altar and to day there is not a happier pair in the Palmetto state than Mr. and Mrs. Holland. Out in the arbor is a solitary grave, and often Jack takes her children there and tells them the story of her marvelous deliverance and points to them the lowly resting place of the unhappy-fated Jane Marchmont.

How Gordon Got to Khartoum.

It was in the summer of 1881 that the Mahdi first called the faithful to arms. Raout Pasha, Governor of Khartoum, ordered him to come to him, and as he refused sent a battalion to enforce his commands. These the Prophet cut to pieces and two other armies besides. Then he seized El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan, while his Lieutenant, Osma Digna, fomented the troubles on the shores of the Red Sea, and Arabi Pasha did his best to help. Finally the Madhi's power threatened Egypt, and the English had to take active measures to quell the rebellion. General Gordon, known as Gordon Pasha, had ruled the Soudan from 1874 to 1879, and was said to have a project of establishing himself there as an independent ruler. This might not have been absolutely distasteful to the English, as the Soudan took a great deal of manufactured goods from them. At any rate they resolved to abandon it themselves as entailing to much expense to the Egyptian treasury, and Gordon was entrusted with the task of withdrawing the Egyptian garrisons, and of restoring the deposed Sultans, a sum of £40,000 being allowed him for expenses, with £60,000 more in prospect. Gordon, on his arrival at Khartoum, the capital of the Soudan, destroyed all the records of unpaid taxes, the whips and rods which had maintained Egyptian supremacy, but this humane act he offset with a proclamation restoring domestic slavery. But the chief thing was to conciliate the Mahdi, and to him he offered the Emirate of Kordofan. The bribe was refused by the wily prophet, who sent his armies to beleaguer the city. Gordon's means of escape were abundant. He had several steamers by which he obtained supplies in addition to the already large quantities stored in Khartoum; he could also use them from the time of the rise of the Nile, about the first of June, till its subsidence about the fifteenth of September, to withdraw his soldiers southward to Gondoroko, and Uganda, then westward down the Congo into the territory of the International Society. In spite of these facilities Gen. Gordon persisted in remaining in Khartoum, although he had failed in his mission there, and the inference drawn has been that he probably thought it possible to establish himself an independent sovereign.

The promoters of the Manchester ship canal have deposited nearly £300,000 for another trial of length of purse and strength of argument with their opponents.

Mrs. Parvenu would not allow her children to go to Mrs. Learned's party, because she was told Mr Learned was afflicted with the bibliomania, and she she didn't want her girls to catch it.

A Strange Story of Robbery.

A mysterious robbery is reported from Linz. Last week Herr Peszle, Postmaster of Neuzeug, had to take a sum of 4 000 florins, together with some papers of value, to the town of Steyr. In the train he entered into conversation with a respectably dressed individual, who gave himself out as an insurance broker, and was evidently well acquainted with Steyr. They travelled together as far as Linz, when the stranger, announcing his intention of putting up at the same hotel as his companion, suggested that they should drive thither from the station together. They both got into a two-horse closed conveyance that was waiting outside.

Shortly after starting the insurance broker offered the Postmaster his snuff box, and no sooner had Herr Peszl partaken of its contents than he lost consciousness. When he began to recover his senses he was being driven at a furious speed across the open country. Herr Peszl asked his companion whither they were bound, but instead of replying the latter applied a damp cloth to Herr Peszl's face, causing the Postmaster to relapse into his former unconscious condition. In the morning he once more revived and found himself in a small open trap, seated next to a man he had never seen before. Another man in peasant's dress, was leading the horse.

Herr Peszl remarked that his bag of valuables had disappeared, together with his fur coat, which had been replaced by a thinner one made of a kind of Tyrolese homespun cloth. They were driving along a valley unknown to Herr Peszl. In the coarse of half an hour they stopped in front of a dilapidated peasant house, built of rough gray stone. The Postmaster was bidden to alight, and was conducted to a large, bare room on the ground floor, where he was kept prisoner for four days. Food was brought to him by the man dressed as a peasant.

Last Tuesday, toward three o'clock in the morning, Herr Peszl was roused from his sleep by the same individual, and, after dressing himself, was led about 200 paces from the house, where a sledge was waiting for them. It was snowing hard, and almost pitch dark. As they drove along Herr Peszl pressed his jailer with questions; but all the answer he could get was that he was being driven home. About an hour and a half from the time of their start they pulled up within forty yards of a small railway station.

On alighting Herr Peszl found himself face to face with the man who had travelled with him to Linz. That individual handed to Herr Peszl his fur coat and money bag, together with a ticket for Steyr, whither he urged him to return at once, as he was wanted by the police. All this was the work of a couple of minutes; the train was in the station and Herr Peszl had only just time to take his seat. On examining his money bag he found it empty. On reaching home he was shown the following telegram, received at the Neuzeug Post Office during his absence: "Thank God! I am alive, and hope to return in two days. Let them know in Steyr. A thousand greetings. Signed, Peszl."

Dog Meat as Medicine.

The use of dog meat to cure Bright's disease has come into notice in Illinois by the account of the restoration of the health of Samuel McGregor, a farmer of St. Clair county, who, after spending nearly all that he was worth upon physicians and patent medicines, was pronounced incurable, but now is as healthy a man as walks. He traces his present vitality to feeding upon the flesh of dogs, according to the advice of an old German woman who learned of his hopeless condition. She insisted that he should commence feeding on canine flesh and she would guarantee his complete recovery, or she would die in his stead. The idea of eating dog meat was most nauseating to McGregor, but, like a drowning man grasping at a straw, he resolved to diet on dog flesh as a last resort. He had become so fond of dog meat that he would hardly give up eating it, but the furor that had been produed in the locality among the people who were missing their dogs and the threats made against the party who was taking them, warned him that he must call a halt. In all he ate fifteen dogs. Mr. McGregor is firm in his faith that he cured his terrible disease solely by eating dog meat.

Dying on Her Wedding Night.

Recently, William Duffy, a merchant, of Minersville, Pa., was married to Miss Mary McCrystal. After the ceremony the newly married couple and their friends went to the bride's home, where a feast was served. The festivities were kept up till a late hour. Some of the guests who had departed to their own homes were hardly asleep when they were aroused by the startling intelligence that the bride was very ill and possibly at the point of death. At 5 o'clock the priest and Dr. McCrystal were summoned. The physician found the bride prostrated by a severe attack of heart disease. The most powerful remedies were powerless to afford even temporary relief. The priest anointed the dying bride and administered the last rites of the Church, and soon after five o'clock she died. The doctor pronounced the disease to be paralysis of the heart.

Joaquin Miller has gained thirty-six pounds since he quit writing poetry, cut his hair and married a woman of sense.

She—There is no danger of your failing, is there, dear? You have so many friends, and they are so warmly attached to you. He—Yes, but the deuce of it is, don't you know, that they will probably transfer their attachment to the house and furniture.