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### A French lady in Scotland

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A FRENCH LADY IN SCOTLAND.<sup>1</sup>

No better account of a Scottish tour has been presented to the reading public than that contributed by Mme. Marie-Anne de Bovet to *Le Tour du Monde* during the past three years. It is not merely gracefully written, but bears evidence of careful study. It is not only graphic in its style, but it is invariably sympathetic in its treatment of the country which was so long the faithful ally of *la belle France*. Besides all this, it is illustrated by a splendid series of engravings, some from original drawings by that admirable artist and *litterateur* Gaston Vuillier, some from well-selected photographs, but all tending to render the publication one of the most attractive which has yet appeared, and one which it is to be hoped will be issued in an English form.

Mme. de Bovet's tour commences with Melrose and the district rendered classic by the residence of Sir Walter Scott. She recounts the history of Melrose Abbey with general accuracy, but errs, in common with most strangers, in attributing its ruined condition to "les fureurs de la Réforme." The fact is that it was the English King Henry VIII., who, enraged at the failure of his "rough wooing" of the youthful Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, for his son (afterwards Edward VI.), sent, in 1545, Lord Hertford (afterwards Duke of Somerset) with an army (composed of English, Spanish, and Italian soldiers), which laid waste not merely Melrose Abbey, but also the abbeys of Kelso and Dryburgh. A contemporary account of this savage and altogether indefensible raid was discovered by the late Dr. David Laing, and published by him in 1855.<sup>2</sup>

Again, there seems to be no reason why Mme. de Bovet should refer to the Parisian architect of Melrose Abbey as a "Normand sans doute," for the tablet in the south transept, erected by himself, states:—"John Morow sumtym callit was I, and born in Parysse certainly." Whilst the architect's name is spelt both "Morow" and "Morvo" in two contemporary inscriptions on the Abbey, we note that Mme. de Bovet styles him "Jean Morreau," which was probably his original name; for the contention of a recent Scottish writer that "Morow" is a corruption of "Murray" is scarcely tenable. With true French disregard, however, for the spelling of British names, our authoress refers to "Lockardt" as the son-in-law of Scott.

After Melrose and Abbotsford have been explored, Mme. de Bovet proceeds to Edinburgh. She found the New Town to be "very regular, very clean, and very commonplace," but considered the Old Town to be "pittoresque et décorative." Her description of the Castle Rock as "cet énorme bloc de granit noir" is geologically incorrect, however, as the rock is trap. The minute character of her observation is shown by her inquiry into the composition of the Highland regiment which then garrisoned the Castle, and which she found contained more Englishmen

<sup>1</sup> *En Écosse*, par Mme. Marie-Anne de Bovet. *Le Tour du Monde*, 1895-96-97. (Hachette et Cie., Paris.)

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. i. p. 271.

and Irishmen than Scotsmen in its ranks. We are glad to think that all our Highland regiments are not open to Mme. de Bovet's sarcastic allusion to "Cockneys enrôlés sous les couleurs des Highlanders."

The White Horse Close and the Cowgate appear to have interested our French visitor much more than Princes Street. Indeed, she says the "White Horse" recalled to her mind the "Albergo dell' Orso" at Rome, where the room once occupied by Montaigne used to be exhibited. The over-zealous sanitary authorities of Rome have, to her regret, demolished that ancient hostelry. But she seems to have been misinformed as to that celebrated Edinburgh man Henry Brougham, Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, and founder of fashionable Cannes. He was not born in the Cowgate, but at 21 St. Andrew Square,<sup>1</sup> and he did not die mad.

Visiting Holyrood Palace, Mme. de Bovet touchingly refers to "la princesse charmante dont le nom est crié par ces pierres." She observes that a bed said to have been used by Charles II. ought not to have been introduced into the audience-chamber of Mary Stuart. "C'est un mauvais tour joué aux visiteurs impressionables, qui sortent trop tôt leur émotion." The bed in question, however (that of Charles I., not Charles II.), was that on which Mary's chivalrous descendant Prince Charles Edward Stuart slept in 1745, so that it has a romance of its own.

On climbing Arthur's Seat, our French lady again found "blocs de granit noir," which ought, of course, to be basalt. She also inspected "Samson's Ribs"; but it was not here but at "The Duke's Walk," to the east of Holyrood, that the gentlemen of Edinburgh were accustomed to decide affairs of honour.<sup>2</sup> Like the ordinary English tourist, our French visitor calls the Calton Hill "Carlton Hill."

Mme. de Bovet criticises with much intelligence the architecture of Rosslyn Chapel, and is of opinion that the design of the famous "'Prentice's Pillar" was probably brought by the master from Rome, as it resembles those marble "cierges pascals" which are seen in several churches there, except that at Rosslyn the stone, "matière plus ingrate," does not lend itself, like marble, to the same delicacy of carving.

Then she proceeds to St. Andrews, describing on her way the Forth Bridge, Dunfermline, Loch Leven, and Falkland. At St. Andrews she devotes herself first to the study of *Golf*, and although she wrongs that manly sport by styling it an "espèce de croquet plus sérieux," she points out its advantages, and chides those of her compatriots who laugh at "la passion de la race anglo-saxonne pour les exercices." After this she describes St. Andrews, "un fantôme de ville," which she says remains the same as it was a century ago, "sauf que les moutons n'y viennent plus paître dans les rues." Everything of architectural interest is passed under review, down to even the Martyrs' Monument, which, however, does not commemorate "les martyrs covenantaires," but four Protestant Reformers, who suffered death by fire at St. Andrews between the years 1528 and 1558.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Autobiography*. The *Dictionary of National Biography* (1886) makes the same mistake.

<sup>2</sup> *Provincial Antiquities*. By Sir W. Scott (1826), ii. 122.

Again, Mme. de Bovet's strictures on the Covenanters are unfounded so far as the destruction of buildings at St. Andrews is concerned. She says:—"Tous les fanatismes se valent. Seulement quiconque a le goût du beau et le sentiment des vieilles pierres nourrit contre les Covenanters un implacable grief: c'est d'avoir blasphémé l'art et fait œuvre de Visigoths." Now, it was the "rascal multitude," to use the words of John Knox (although a sermon he preached inflamed it), who, in 1559, wrecked the glorious old ecclesiastical buildings of St. Andrews. The "Covenanters" came on the scene long afterwards.

Mme. de Bovet next visited Perth, and on beholding the splendid Tay could not, like Sir Walter Scott, comprehend how the Roman soldiers could compare it to the yellow Tiber. She laments the destruction of the old Parliament House, and the erection on its site of "un abominable temple circulaire pseudo-grec—pourquoi, ô Apollon! sous ce ciel brumeux et mouillé?" in which a museum, library, "et quelques fort méchantes peintures" are lodged. Then she proceeded to Birnam, and was delighted with its scenery and Shakspearean associations. M. Vuillier contributes a fine design of an oak in the "wood of Birnam."

Owing to the illness of the authoress, the publication of *En Écosse* was suspended for several months, and was not re-commenced till May 1896. We find her at Birnam, in the midst of a gathering of local Volunteers, who furnish subjects for some excellent illustrations by M. Vuillier. Mme. de Bovet attended church parade with the Volunteers, but was not impressed with the Presbyterian service. "Prière, hymne, psaume, hymne, psaume, prière, et ainsi de suite jusqu'au sermon." She complains that there is no mystic character about the service, and that to Latins and Roman Catholics like herself, a religious ceremony lacking mystic character is worthless. However, she admits that the Volunteers seemed edified, and were thus of a totally different race from hers. "Their fine faces, all seemingly cut out of the same piece of wood, like heads of pipes, were lit up with an expression of beatitude. A splendid sergeant, with Afghan and Egyptian medals, close shaved, very red, with flaming moustache, seemed illuminated with grace. He looked like one of Cromwell's Ironsides who, covered with the powder and blood of the battle, praised the Lord by paraphrasing the Scriptures before his squadron."

She was introduced to a Volunteer officer, the Marquis of Breadalbane, and lunched at the officers' mess, "avec quarante officiers en jupon," a sufficiently daring thing for a Frenchwoman to do. Placed under the care of an adjutant, she was subsequently accommodated with an easy-chair on the field of inspection, from which she saw the Volunteers inspected by a Major-General from Perth.

"Lord Breadalbane," she remarks, "est le Marquis de Carabas du comté de Perth." "In visiting the district of Loch Tay," she continues, "we find at every step proofs of the interest he takes in the country which the accident of birth has placed under his patronage." Loch Tay seemed to her to possess a "grave and melancholy beauty, with that undefinable charm which pervades Scotland, and which, if it does not carry the heart by assault, insinuates itself gently, and finally

masters it. Between the scarped and wooded hills which surround the loch, we observe those narrow, deep, solitary valleys, always the same and yet always differing, like the sea, those *glens* which constitute the characteristic feature of Scotland."

Our authoress was much pleased with Taymouth Castle, which she informs us is built of a remarkable stone, "as soft as butter in the quarry, and which the atmosphere hardens to the solidity of granite." An adventure with her hotel-keeper at Dunkeld makes her remark that Scotland could give Switzerland hints as how best to fleece tourists. However, she, a Parisienne, proved too much for this Scotsman; and she takes credit for avenging in person the many complaints tourists make against the "exploiteurs de cet immense caravansérail qu'est le royaume de Robert Bruce."

As she goes along, Mme. de Bovet disabuses her compatriots' minds of errors and prejudices into which they had fallen. For example, she says that the majority of French people imagine that the hereditary nobility of the United Kingdom exercise feudal privileges of an extraordinary character, whereas, beyond sitting in the House of Lords, British Peers enjoy no greater privileges than do their own farm-tenants. Again, she explodes the idea that the climate of Scotland is never warm, for she found the heat at Birnam excessive, and pitied the Volunteers manœuvring under such a grilling sun.

Our French lady was bored with the information gratuitously communicated by the drivers of the Highland public coaches. One of them mentioned the names and heights of all the mountains which they saw, a practice on which she comments: "What does it add to the wild poetry of those blue and violet lines to be told that they are called Cairn Gorm, or Cairn Bannoch, Ben Mheadain, or Ben Muich Dhui, and so on, names forgotten as soon as heard, and unintelligible even to the English themselves?" At the same time, Mme. de Bovet pays a high compliment to the English tourists whom she met in Scotland, when she says that the disagreeable qualities with which her compatriots often credit them were entirely absent, and that she found nothing but "obligance, bonne grace, et sociabilité de la part de tous ces inconnus frôlés au hasard de la rencontre."

From Dunkeld she drove to Braemar, which she contrasts with Continental health resorts. "Instead of drinking malodorous water as a pretext for curing vague illnesses, we breathe here, what is much better, air of a remarkable quality, impregnated with the scent of forests of pines, whilst we live sheltered by lofty mountains from high winds from the west and north. We gain strength here in the midst of delicious peace." Then she proceeded to Ballater, passing Balmoral, which, however, she did not enter although armed with authority from the Lord Chamberlain, for she did not think it possessed the interest of many small country-houses rich in the souvenirs of centuries. Again we must congratulate M. Vuillier upon his fine sketches entitled "Lochnagar" and the "Mountain of Mist."

By Pitlochry, Killiecrankie, and Blair-Atholl, Mme. de Bovet journeyed to Inverness, admiring as she went the "vast undulating plateaus,

carpeted with heather and broom, bilberry and myrtle, ravaged by torrents, and absolutely deserted except for scattered flocks, and here and there stations apparently of little use, the line crossing successive mountains whose colouring, at once powerful and soft, passes from the deepest purple to the faintest violet, with glimpses of wild lochs and desolate glens." Scenes such as these, worthy of Turner and Doré, have been the despair of artists, and she thinks that the Scottish painters have succeeded best, so much does the peculiarly strange character of these Scottish scenes demand protracted admiration and study.

Culloden and its associations naturally fill a good many pages of our French lady's journal; but in arguing that, as Prince Charlie's rebellion was a "Scottish war of independence," Scottish Presbyterians willingly supported a Popish prince, she forgets that the majority of Scotsmen, and most of the Presbyterians, were on the side of King George. However, she considers that Scotland, by committing to oblivion the atrocities then perpetrated by English soldiers, furnished to Ireland a splendid example of common-sense and political wisdom.

Most tourists go no farther north than Inverness, but our enterprising traveller wanted to see the full length of Scotland, so pushed on to Thurso, and from thence sailed to Orkney, where she declares she already felt the mysterious attraction of the Boreal regions. M. Vuillier, assisted by the engraver Devos, here furnishes some admirable illustrations, a full-page one representing the "Old Man of Hoy." Catching the Leith steamer at Kirkwall, Mme. de Bovet had a stormy voyage to Lerwick. Has ever Parisienne visited "Ultima Thule" before? Even Scottish tourists seldom penetrate so far.

Our visitor being a Roman Catholic, she probably regarded with only superficial interest the many religious sects in Scotland, but her description of the churches in Lerwick is amusing. "Lerwick possesses seven churches for 4000 souls,—Established Presbyterians (Church of Scotland); United Presbyterians, so named because they disunited themselves from the others; Free Presbyterians; Episcopalians (Church of England); Wesleyan Methodists; Congregationalists; and Baptists."

Returning to the mainland, she visited Wick, which she found "very dirty, and reeking of tar and the seashore." She then travelled by rail to Stromeferry, and sailed to Portree. A series of remarkable sketches of the scenery and natives of the Isle of Skye is contributed by M. Vuillier, whose representation of cloud effects is particularly fine. Our indefatigable lady "did" all the sights of Skye, and, after sailing across to the Gareloch, exclaims: "How delightful to sail during a calm evening over a smooth sea on which the mysterious blue light of nightfall casts its pearly reflections—a sea which, slumbering peacefully amid all these headlands, seems almost to be a lagoon."

Hard as, she says, Scottish beds are, she declares that harder still was rising at 5.30 to catch the steamer from Inverness along the Caledonian Canal, the great fault of which voyage was the wind, which rushes down the Great Glen and necessitates wearing "that woollen cap which in Scotland has no sex, the *Tam o' Shanter*." Ben Nevis did not appeal to her sense of picturesqueness. "Crowned by neither

peak nor pinnacles, it resembles a gigantic plum-pudding irregularly kneaded."

She considered Oban particularly favourable for the development of the microbe of travel. "Several steamers lie at the bustling quay, which is really lazy, and only active in appearance, whilst a beautifully white and clean city of pleasure occupies an amphitheatre formed by a rugged and verdant cliff. A superfluity of caravansaries, more or less elegant, stretch, like a row of onions, along the shore, whilst on a height is the lugubrious skeleton of a Hydropathic which, Heaven be thanked! remains unfinished for want of funds."

Of course, Mme. de Bovet visited and moralised over Glencoe, out of which, she says, Macaulay and all the Whig historians will never be able to wash the stain of blood. M. Vuillier contributes several splendid sky scenes, besides a fine sketch of Fingal's Cave, which our traveller next visited, passing the Island of Mull, where she observed several "modern and most magnificent castles, built in the feudal style, and among them that of the great publisher Black, of Edinburgh." She is, however, mistaken as to the name of the proprietor.

Arrived in Iona, she muses on its past history, and on its celebrated saint Columba, remarking: "The year Columba died was that in which the monk Augustine, coming from Rome, landed at Canterbury in order to convert the Saxons of the Heptarchy. The Church was already established in Ireland and Scotland upon a purely national basis. Is it not from this circumstance that the passion for religious independence was derived by the Scots? When Catholics, they submitted to the Pope's authority only so far as not to lapse into schism. When Protestants, they freely shed their blood to emancipate themselves from the supremacy of the English Church. Even Irish Papists are inclined to show themselves rebellious children, when the intervention of Papal authority as regards their politics is not to their minds." She might have added that the Christian Church in Wales was also pre-Augustinian.

From Oban she sailed to Glasgow, and she reproves those who leave the steamer at Greenock and do not sail up to the Western metropolis. "However little we may have to do with industry, the sail up the Clyde is full of interest. There we feel the throbbing of the pulse of that other Scotland, Lowland Scotland, manufacturing and commercial, and above all that of Great Britain, the Queen of the seas. The banks of the Clyde, as we all know, are the great European centre of shipbuilding. The annual tonnage of vessels launched there averages from 380,000 to 400,000 tons per annum, and comprises huge Transatlantic iron steamers, besides those for the Pacific and Indian oceans, and Chinese and Australasian seas, down to light wooden pleasure-yachts. Of course this industry has its occasional crisis, that eternal crisis which appears everywhere and renders prosperity insecure."

Our Glasgow readers will be amused with Mme. de Bovet's comments upon them. She says that the "speciality of Glasgow is that it contains the most religious population in Scotland, and that is saying a good deal! Do you know how many churches there are in Glasgow—not those traditional Roman churches which are rather monuments of



art than places of worship—but churches in vogue, churches in use, each, except the Cathedral, uglier than the other, in keeping with the morose spirit of Puritanism? There are three hundred and forty-six belonging to different denominations.”

Our visitor makes a *faux pas* when she declares that the city of Glasgow is so great that it despises administrative honours, and that the capital of its county is “the Royal Burgh of Renfrew, on the Clyde, which gives the Prince of Wales the title of Baron.”

But she correctly remarks that “Glasgow presents this curious feature that, although a Lowland city, it is largely populated by Highland immigrants. In 1605 it contained only six ‘Macs.’ Now they represent a tenth of the population.”

She designates the Cathedral “the only artistic monument in Glasgow, and one which fortunately escaped the destructive frenzy of the Reformation. Not that the citizens of Glasgow were suspected of Popery, but they were wisely conservative, and loved their old St. Mungo.”

“If the artisan districts of Glasgow are lamentable, those of the better classes are terribly dull.” She is particularly severe in her criticism of the statue of Sir Walter Scott in George Square, and as to the equestrian one of the Queen, she declares it is an “abomination committed by an Italian whom, out of charity, she will not name.”

A trip to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs completed Mme. de Bovet’s visit to Scotland. She was charmed with the picturesqueness of the scenery, and closes her graphic account of our country with the following word-picture. “Wonderful is that view from Stirling Castle over the rich plain, green with meadows, golden with corn, which stretches to the horizon darkened by the blue mountains of the Highlands, and through which flows now in curves, now in rings, now in infinitely twining links, the silvery Forth, the most capricious of streams. The sky was delightfully clear, the sun was gloriously warm, the atmosphere was exquisitely pure, although enveloped like a caress by some luminous vapour—it was, I say, a magnificent day when I bade a never-to-be-forgotten farewell to the lovely, the noble, the romantic soil of Scotland. In leaving it, I should reproach myself for having said too much, if I did not regret the omission of much which I had to say. I ask pardon both for my sins of commission and omission.”

Thus ends one of the most attractive accounts of a tour through Scotland ever published. Always graceful, and nearly always just, the criticisms of Mme. de Bovet should be welcomed by the Scottish people, if only to confirm the lines of their national poet:—

“O wad some Power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!  
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,  
And foolish notion.”

RALPH RICHARDSON..