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CURIOUS AND LITTLE KNOWN WORK BY AN UNEDUCATED HIGHLANDER.

"A Description of the Beauties of Edinample and Lochearnhead. By Angus M'Diarmid. 'There is but one step betwixt the sublime and the ridiculous.'—*Napoleon Bonaparte*. Aberfeldy: Published by D. Cameron, Printer and Bookseller, 1841."

Southey, in his *Life of Cowper*, repeatedly speaks of Hayley as "a man of incoherent transactions;" and the odd felicity of the phrase has, I doubt not, struck many of his readers, and served as a compendious, and in the main accurate summary, of the character and habits of Cowper's versatile and eccentric, but generous friend. Whence Southey had derived the bizarre expression with which he has labelled the author of the *Essay on Old Maids*, he tells us in the following note:—

"... But Hayley was a person 'of incoherent transactions'... to borrow an appropriate expression from Angus M'Diarmid, 'Ground Officer on the Earl of Breadalbane's estate of Edinample.'—*Life of Cowper*, 1st edition, vol. iii. p. 163.

From the character of this reference, Southey would seem to have thought that the publication from which he quoted was pretty well known; and, as will afterwards appear, it must at one time have attracted the attention of persons interested in literary matters both in England and Scotland. But it seems to have fallen into entire

oblivion, except in the author's native district; and to be quite unknown to the general reader, or even the literary antiquary. I met with it when on a visit, a few years ago, to the pleasant village of Aberfeldy, in Perthshire. The adjacent falls of Moness, and the lovely ravine through which the water dashes along, fringed with delicate pensile birch woods—beautiful still, as when Burns sang "The Birks of Aberfeldy," furnished objects of never-failing interest. Had the weather continued to be fair, or even moderately rainy, I and thou—O gentle reader!—might have remained for ever strangers to *The Beauties of Edinample*; but a day came, such as that to which Geoffrey Crayon and English readers owe their acquaintance with "The Stout Gentleman;" and that day of Highland rain introduced me to Angus M'Diarmid, but only in some such similarly imperfect and tantalising way. During a lull in the tempest, I sallied forth to the shop of the village bookseller in quest of something to beguile the tedium of my imprisonment; but his stock was neither extensive nor interesting, and, seeing my disappointment, he bethought himself of Angus M'Diarmid's pamphlet, and put it into my hands. I soon found I had fallen in with a curiosity of no ordinary kind; and after many delays, I now fulfil a long-cherished purpose in making it known to the readers of "N. & Q."

It consists of twenty-seven pages, demy 8vo; inclusive of five pages occupied by title, publisher's preface, original editor's preface, and dedication by Angus himself to the Earl of Breadalbane, dated "Cartran, near Lochearnhead, May, 1815." The typography is in happy unison with the piebald style of the composition, the size of the types being *thrice* changed within the compass of twenty-two pages. The publisher's preface, dated "Aberfeldy, January, 1841," shows, what is not anywhere expressly stated, that the edition now described is the second.

Angus cannot be better re-introduced to the literary world than in the well-written preface by the original editor; and we, therefore, subjoin the greater part of it:—

"PREFACE.

"The present publication of these singular Sketches may be ascribed to one of those happy accidents to which the world is often indebted for the most important benefits. . . . About the beginning of last Autumn, a gentleman, who had gone to spend a few days at Lochearn to enjoy the sport of grouse-shooting, was introduced of course to Angus M'Diarmid, whom he made his companion in all his excursions. He soon discovered that skill and attention in conducting him to the haunts of the muirfowl was the least valuable qualification of his new acquaintance. The pleasure which he took in pointing out whatever was remarkable in the country which they traversed—the rapture with which he dwelt on the wild and magnificent scenery which was ever varying to their view—and the amazing pomp of expression in which he clothed his enthusiastic descriptions,

rendered Angus himself not the least interesting and romantic object in these 'Alpine solitudes.' Some compliments on his powers of delineation encouraged him to speak of his manuscripts. Little persuasion was necessary to induce him to recite some of the most choice passages, which he did in a manner admirably harmonising with the matter. As his confidence increased, he began to hint his intentions of publication; and, at last, in the fulness of his heart, he offered, as a mark of peculiar attachment and regard, to intrust the stranger with the manuscripts, on condition that he would send them to the press.

"To give its full value to this mark of confidence, it was accompanied with the assurance that he knew no other person whom he could have trusted so far. 'It was impossible,' he said, 'to divine what advantage a designing person might take of such a trust.' . . . To save him from all such anxiety in future, and to discharge at the same time an important duty to the public, they have been sent to the press with all convenient speed. With a due tenderness for the Author's reputation, not a word nor a letter has been altered from his manuscripts; and we trust it is not too sanguine to hope, that they will excite in every reader an interest similar to that which we feel in ushering them into the world.

"Those who are fond of literary *curiosities*, will doubtless account themselves fortunate in having an opportunity of perusing these truly curious delineations of the grand and picturesque scenery around Loch-Earn; and they will probably be inclined to wonder that an untaught Highlander, whose thoughts have seldom wandered beyond his native mountains, should have been able to express himself in terms of such unparalleled sublimity. So strange indeed does this fact appear, that some may be disposed to doubt whether this Angus M'Diarmid be not altogether a fictitious person; and did we choose to be mysterious, it were easy to involve the matter in as much uncertainty as Mr. Macpherson has thrown over the divine poems of Ossian, and thus to encircle ourselves with that radiance of renown which should beam in its full brightness around the fortunate author. Let it be our fame (*nobis magna satis*) to have withstood so powerful a temptation.—Whoever will take the trouble to visit Loch-Earn, a trouble which the scenery will amply repay, may satisfy himself of the real existence of Angus M'Diarmid, and of his being the real author of these Delineations.

"If any who have not access to the same mode of conviction should be disposed to be sceptical, let them reflect, that the mind inevitably catches its tone and character from the scenery and local circumstances with which it is most conversant. Hence the elevation of the Highland character; the lofty spirit of the mountain hero; the towering sublimity of the mountain bard. In men of genius and sensibility, this sympathy between mind and external nature is particularly powerful; and hence the peculiarities of our Author's manner. . . . His speech, bold, rugged, and abrupt, as the rocks which defy all access but to the wing of the eagle and the vulture, bids equal defiance to those who would scan his meaning by the regular steps of criticism. Like the torrents shooting impetuously from crag to crag, his sentences, instead of flowing in a smooth and even tenor, overlap with noble freedom the mounds and impediments of grammar, verbs, conjugations, and adverbs, which give tameness and regularity to ordinary compositions. . . ."

It is now time the readers of "N. & Q." should have an opportunity of forming their own judgment of the worthy Highlander's production. For this purpose we give several extracts: the

opening paragraph, a passage in which occurs the expression which so caught Southey's fancy, and two others towards the close of the pamphlet:—

Sketch of the Scenery at Loch-Earn.

"Of the different remarkable curiosity flowing from the excellencies of the cataract at Edinample, which partly perspicuously to the view of the beholders; its finitude confined between high wild rocks of asperity aspect, similar to a tract of solitude or savageness; its force emphatically overflowing three divisions; but in the season of the water dropping from the clouds, its force increases so potently, that these divisions, almost undiscovered, at which its incremental exorbitance transcended various objects of inquisitiveness, peradventure in manuscript, in such eminent measure, that its homogeneously could not be recognis'd at the interim, except existing in emblem to the waves of the ocean in tempestuous season. One remarkable astonishment, arising from the nativity of the abovementioned cataract, in worthiness of observation, that its noise so loud antedates, that it will sound in the ears of the weary travellers at a great distant, which is antecedently token of the venit season: The effect of its force carving such elegant circle in the rocks, on the verge of its limited bounds, that it will mighty exceed the most cunning hewers."

"A moor, situated above the foresaid cataract, of which a rising part abounded with concavities, existing, in resemblance to oblong clefts in face of a rock. But whether this convulsion was antedeluvian, or impress since by the earthquake, it pass the most ingenious idea. But it might be of old a lurking place to a man of incoherent transactions; but partly now filled up with earth and fogs, annihilating them from appearing to external view, comparatively to their primary characteristic, notwithstanding their forms is not out of existence to gratify the desire of the beholders."

"Sketch of an Ancient History deserves to be Inserted.

"In the longeris of the above delineation, that a rapacious crowd of people arrived from north to the vicinity, to take away the inhabitants' cattle there, would be in sight to their cruel eyes, according to ancient prediction of old men; the said ravished crowd was convicted or discovered on a brae-face near Killin, called Scronachlachan; of which the inhabitants obtained the unacceptable tidings, that the sudden perplexity seized their minds in uproar of the highest bustle, confusion, and tumult, at their assembling to resist the ravishers. A gallant gentleman resided at Glenlarig, near Killin at that time, whose surname was Menzie, had a nickname, Major Roy of the Hens; a valiant hand, stout, personally puissant. He projected a plan to them for the detriment of the ravishers, which he incited to adopt,—that they should take quietly around the hill, on which its face the ravishers were discovered, to descend rapidly on them as an aid to recess them; otherwise, if they were to ascend to them from below, that was giving advantage to the ravishers to cut them down like fawn, to be salvated of their blood. But the inhabitants were in such uproar, throwing to confusion and harass on their apprehension, that all their beasts of pasture at the point of being seized with violence, and snatched away by these devouring plunderers, that the said plan was overthrown by them, proceeded to them from them from below where they meet in conflict manner. The commander of the ravishers were ambitiously to obtain a sight of the said gallant gentleman joined the inhabitants, in consequence of his hearing that he was a man eminently for bravery, to have his hand imbrued in his blood. In prosecution of his atrocious search for that

sanguinary intent, the first man he interrogate for him, the same were the one he was in quest for. He asked at him, in proud expression, how he could have a view of the Major Roy of the Hens among his associal crowd? To which the Major's reply, that he was the very same man, instantly facing him. Whereupon they drew the swords, had but short duel, when the Major cut off his antagonist's head; which head run down with a steep part of the bill: To the amazement of the hearers the head uttered three times Hen; the word that was in the mouth at cutting the head's juncture. It is probably that the tongue remained partly in power to recapitulate her momentary expression as the head parted with his cement. The inhabitants and the ravishers engaged in the most hostile manner; which conflict was attended with such dreadful bloodshed, that a small brook descending from about the place where the bloody engagement was fought, running totally red, that days by the blood of the slains, emitting incopiously effluxion to it, for which horrible sight the said brook denominated in Gaelic *Auldnis Scroulach*, which probably signify in English, the Water of the Blood Streams. This brook displayed to view at the place adjoined to Killin. Who can harbour the deplorable case of the slains relictly friend by the discovery of the bloodshed partly gushing from their endearments amours. Reciprocal relations in the secular life, how their minds affected of bemoaning feeling; womens bewailing over the deprivation of their correlative husbands; mothers lamented the bereaving of their sons, finding some of them ex animato having no resemblance of life, others wallowed in their blood, parting with them at the emission of their breath. The dissocial was dreary, the valediction wearing the habit of sorrow, who was on the morning of that dies with their homoletical, without any conception or idea to occur any perturbate or violation of peace would interdict them from their families, charming social at the returning night, notwithstanding that they has the exhilarate frustion of social pleasure in the morning. The meeting of the returning evening was dismal and horrible. Many families sobbed with audible mournful noise, in the fatal consequence of the deprivation of their rulers, that its penetrate sense would impress the hearers to the greatest touching to their feeling."

"About the same time, the cattle of Glendochard inhabitants, has been taken away by violence or pillage, by barbarous men of incoherent transactions. At that depredation, a most excellent bull break out from the force of the ravisher; which bull shelter himself in a vacant hovel laying a distant from the rest of the houses; he was much troubled by one of the wolfs already mentioned, for which he was laying between the door posts holding his head out to fence with that animal,—the said combat has been observed by two men going that way. Upon some emergent occasion, the said men came on the day following with bows and arrows, and placed themselves on the house top where the said bull sheltered himself, waiting on the animal's coming. Upon his first discovery, the men persuaded that he was of greater stature or size than his usual circumference, they marked two of the wolfs close together with a cross stick in their mouth. When they arrive to the bull, they yoked together on him; the men drew their bows and killed him on the spot. When they descended off the house top to look at them, they found one of them blind. It was the purpose of the other to lead the blind one by the stick, to acquire his assistance to finish the said bull, being the one had practical accustomed of assaying to kill him himself.

"FINISH."

I must not trench further on the pages of "N. & Q." by offering any comments of my own

on the extraordinary production, specimens of which have now been given. It is unquestionably fitted to interest both the metaphysician and the linguist.

I should have mentioned that the publisher's preface throws no light whatever on Angus M'Diarmid's history, or the question who was the original editor. I hope some reader of "N. & Q." will be able to contribute some information on both these points.

J. D.

Edinburgh.

CHRISTMAS WAITS.*

Either Steele, or Addison (to whom the paper has also been attributed) says, in *The Tatler* of Sept. 9, 1710:—

"As the custom prevails at present, there is scarce a young man of any fashion in a corporation, who does not make love with the town-music. The Waits often help him through his courtship, and my friend Banister has told me he was proffered 500*l.* by a young fellow to play but one winter under the window of a lady that was a great fortune, but more cruel than ordinary. One would think they hoped to conquer their mistresses' hearts as people tame hawks and eagles, by keeping them awake, or breaking their sleep when they are fallen into it."

"The 'Hunt's up' or 'Good morrow' was especially expected by the fair one on her birthday, and the custom is not altogether obsolete, though the name seems to have been forgotten. When our present Princess Royal came of age, she was greeted with music from the royal band under her window in the morning, but the court newsman invented a new French name for it—"a Matinale!" In Davenant's *Unfortunate Lovers*, Rampuro says:

"The fiddlers do
So often waken me with their grating gridirons,
And Good Morrows, I cannot sleep for them,"

but this was the Christmas greeting preparatory to a demand upon his purse.

"Past three o'clock, and a cold frosty morning,
Past three o'clock, good morrow, Masters all,"

is a pretty air of the London Waits of the time of Charles II., which is included with other wait-tunes; such as the "Fa, la, la," by Jer. Savile, Chester Waits, and Colchester Waits in *Popular Music of the Olden Time*. To these several more specimens of their composition might have been added, such as *Workshop Waits*, *Warrington Waits*, *York Waits*, *Bristol Waits*, &c.; but the only names of wait-composers that have descended to us are those of John Ravenscroft, who was one of the waits of the Tower Hamlets, and who wrote many hornpipe tunes; and, more eminent far, Thomas Farmer, a London Wait, and composer of many excellent songs, among which may be particularised that lovely air to Tom Durfey's words, "She rose and let me in" (beginning "The

* Concluded from p. 489.