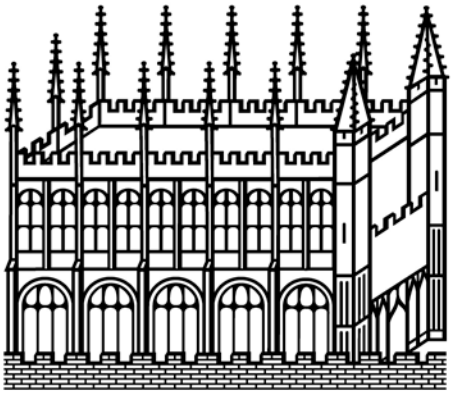

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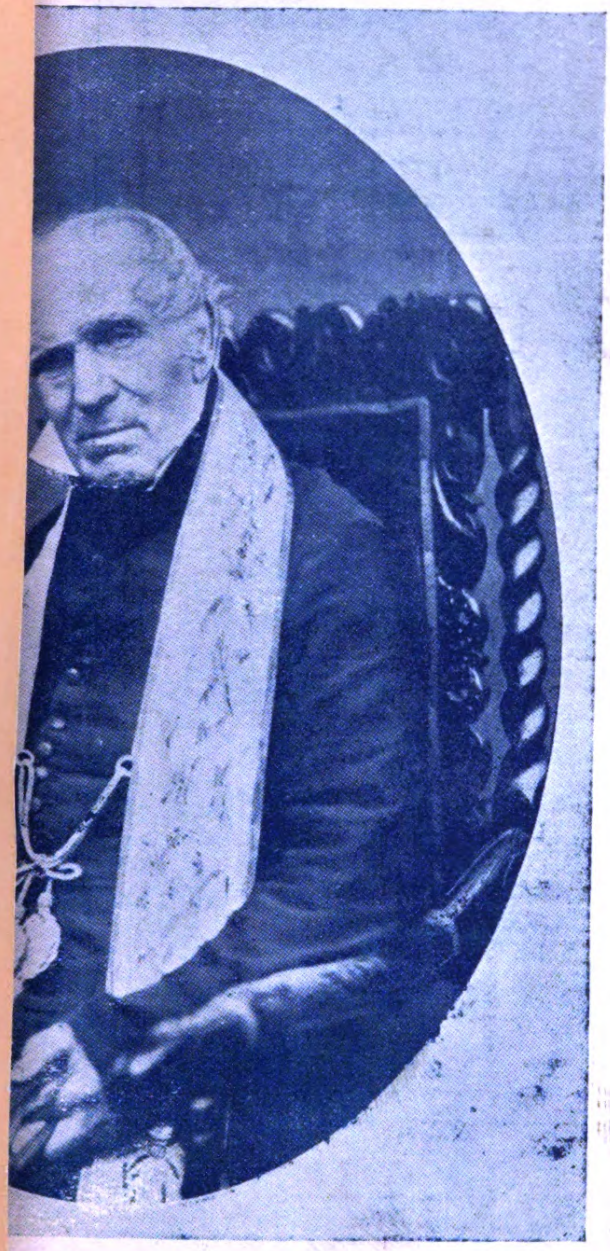

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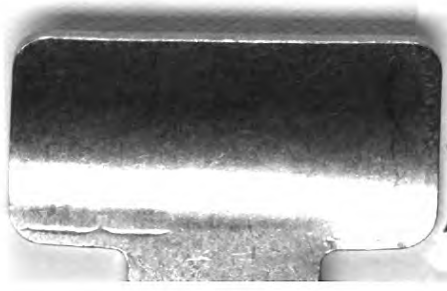

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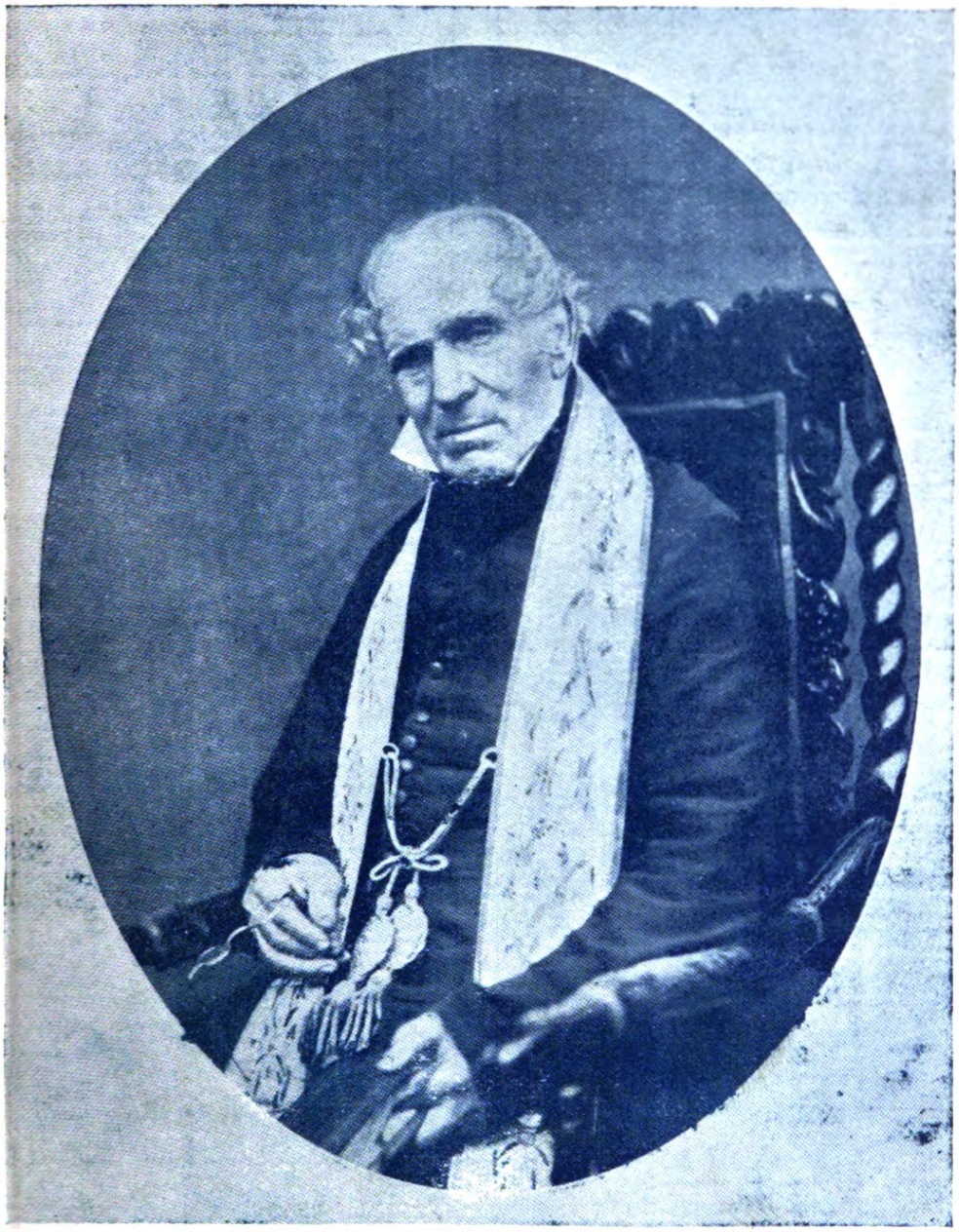


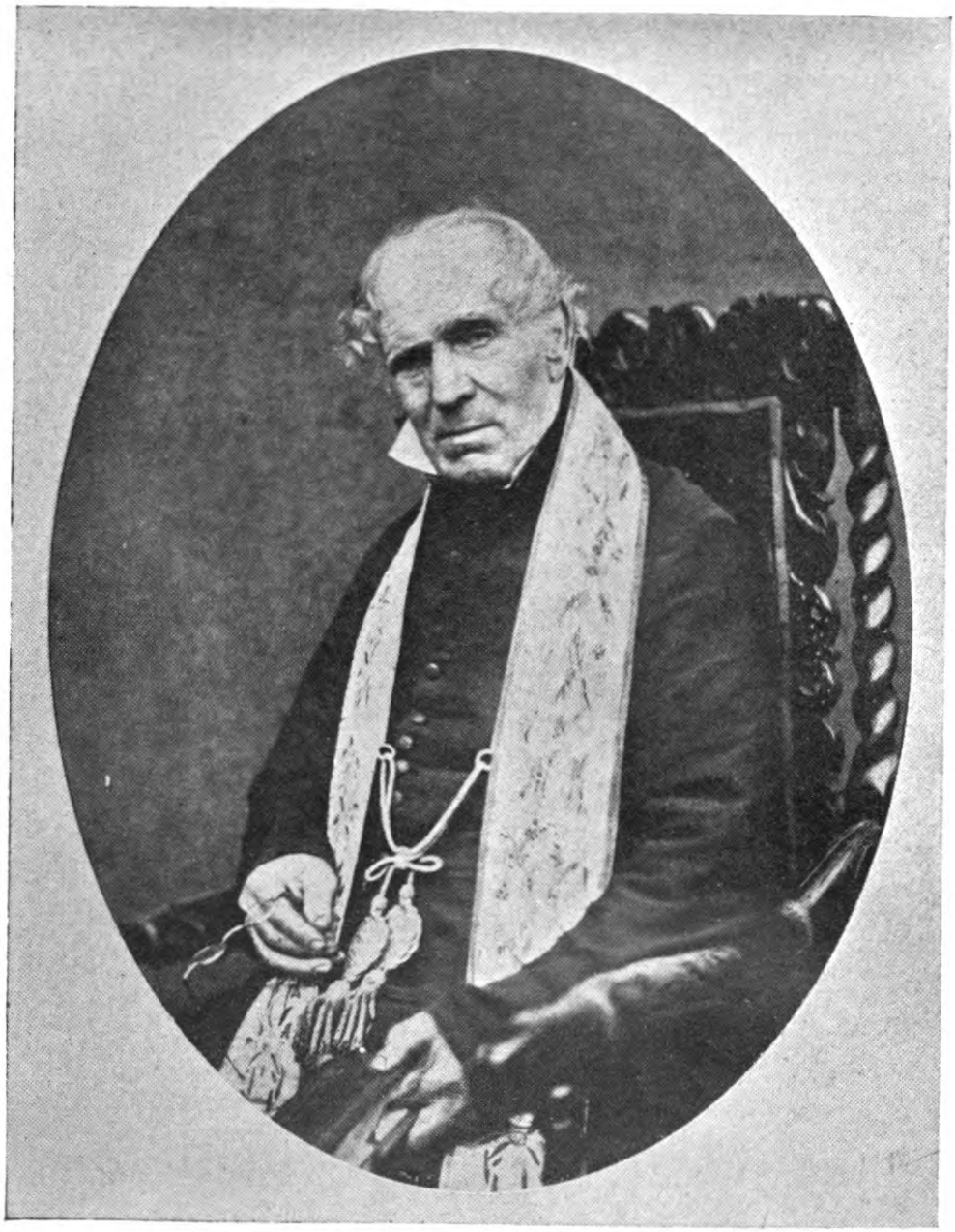
By

JAMES STARK, D.D.

ABERDEEN: D. WYLLIE & SON

PRIEST GORDON

OF ABERDEEN



REV. CHARLES GORDON.

PRIEST GORDON
OF ABERDEEN

By

JAMES STARK, D.D.

Author of "John Murker of Banff," "Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen,"
"The Lights of the North," etc.

ABERDEEN
D. WYLLIE & SON
1909

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I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK:
A TRIBUTE TO A MAN OF THE NORTH
WHO LOVED AND LIVED FOR
HIS FELLOWS

Preface

Preface

THERE must be many persons in Aberdeen who, on walking down to the Bathing Station upon the Beach, by Constitution Street, have noticed in front of the Roman Catholic schools the granite statue of a priest in a devotional attitude. My object is to set forth, in a way that dumb stone cannot do, the worth and work of the man which led to the erection of that monument two generations ago.

Priest Gordon belonged to Aberdeen as well as to the Roman Catholic Church, and his fellow-citizens, Protestant and Catholic, of that day gave him a warm place in their hearts. The great mass of the inhabitants of the city were outside the pale of his Church and did not sit at his feet as he expounded its doctrine; but they were so much impressed with

the man and the Christian in the priest, that even in those days of sectarian bitterness, and while he did not hide his beliefs nor compromise his ecclesiastical position, he was held in highest honour.

It is difficult at first sight and by a mere enumeration of his personal qualities to account for the fact that his name became a household word in Aberdeen like that of Dr. Kidd. He was far removed from that stalwart Irishman, who was naturalised in Aberdeen. Charles Gordon was not endowed with brilliant intellectual gifts which showed themselves in the easy acquisition of extensive learning, and no one dreams of ranking him amongst the eminent scholars of his Church. He wrote no book which brought him fame and still keeps his memory alive. He was no pulpit orator, and in that respect was far outshone by men of his order in Aberdeen, whose names are almost, if not altogether, forgotten. There was little in him of the many-sidedness and towering mag-

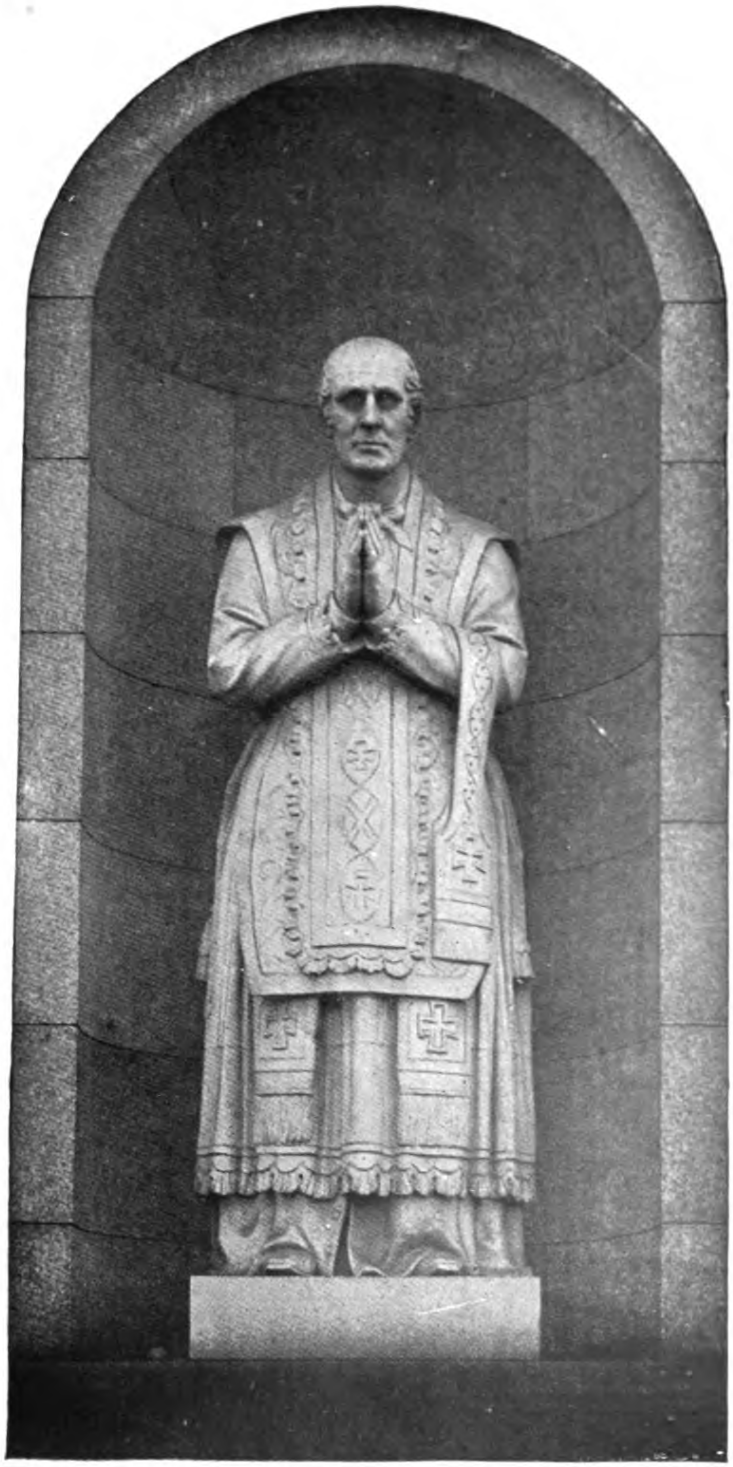
nificence of Dr. Kidd, and yet his name will remain linked with that of the eccentric and popular Presbyterian divine —the two outstanding men of their period in our local ecclesiastical history.

How was he able to take such a hold of the community? What was the secret of his power? It lay, in the first place, in his unique and quietly picturesque individuality. The little man of pleasant ruddy countenance—made still less by a slight stoop—with long loose coat and low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, and black walking-stick in hand, as he passed slowly along the streets of the east end of the city and descended into its lanes and closes, bent on errands of beneficence, captured the imagination as well as the heart of Aberdeen.

His intense Christian humanity, which knew no distinctions of sect or party, and which was ever open to any call for succour that he was able to meet, was his great crowning merit. Piquancy also was given to his life by his mother-wit,

pawky shrewdness, plain, familiar ways, and quaint homely speech, which, to the end, kept to the undiluted vernacular of his youth. Beneath all was his simple, upright, transparent character, which made him an epistle known, read, and beloved of all men.

Perhaps I should explain why I undertook to write this memoir. The author of "The Gay Gordons," in a communication to an Aberdeen newspaper two years ago, expressed his regret that there was no adequate memorial of the character and work of that member of the renowned clan—Priest Gordon, whose name was fondly familiar to the older people of Aberdeen, the place in which he had laboured so long. My friend suggested that as I had delineated the career of the celebrated Dr. Kidd, I should address myself, Protestant though I was, to the task, before it was too late —for traditions die as well as men—of putting upon permanent record all that could still be gleaned regarding one who



STATUE OF REV. CHARLES GORDON IN FRONT OF CONSTITUTION STREET SCHOOLS.

is worthy of a place among our local men of distinction.

The general impression of friends whom I consulted seemed to be that there was not material, in such a simple, uneventful life, for a book. But when I was placed in circumstances of leisure, and my mind was free to brood upon the subject, the desire to be the limner of the old worthy grew upon me. I never saw him in the flesh, but I think I am able to discern his spirit, and I am in fullest sympathy with it.

As was to be expected, my standpoint in writing this book is different from what would have been taken by a member of Charles Gordon's own Church; but while that may mean a loss in some respects, the arrangement is not without some obvious advantages. I look at him solely in the light of his Christian citizenship, and his honest worth as a man.

Thanks are due, and cordially rendered, to clergymen and other members of the

Roman Catholic Church in the north of Scotland for their readiness and courtesy in supplying me with information. But most of all am I indebted to John Craigen, Esq., solicitor, Aberdeen, without whose co-operation the book could not have been written. I have to acknowledge also the liberal use I have made of Dr. Gordon's "Scottish Chronicle" —a good index would make it still more valuable—which is a mine of wealth to all who wish to make themselves acquainted with the period and persons I try to delineate.

Introduction

Introduction

AS background and atmosphere for the picture I have to present, it is desirable that the reader should have, in some degree, a clear and vivid apprehension of the state of the Roman Catholic Church and its priesthood in Scotland, more particularly the northern part of it, at the time Charles Gordon appeared upon the scene. The times have much to do in making the man and shaping his career. There are allusions in the biography which would lose much of their point and significance if we did not grasp the whole ecclesiastical situation as it was in Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries. From various works, but more especially from the pages of the "Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland"—an authoritative source of information regarding the history

of the Roman Catholic Church at that time—I glean a few passages which, in fragmentary way, yet with succinct and picturesque effect, give us glimpses of the general conditions that followed the overturning of 1560. A detailed and consecutive narrative would not, perhaps, enlist the interest of the ordinary reader so much as the following graphic strokes. In "Historical Memoirs of English, Irish, and Scotch Catholics 1822," we read that "after the Reformation, the Holy See from time to time sent Irish Franciscan friars to Scotland. But the greater part were driven from it by the inclemency of the climate, particularly in the northern parts of the island where the cold makes life a burden, so that they remained a short time in the Mission."

The following extracts from Dr. Gordon's account of the Roman Catholic Mission in Scotland after the Reformation are given in the introduction to Volume IV. of his "Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland":—

Introduction

". . . After the Reformation the small number of the Roman Catholic Clergy who remained at their posts, perambulated the country in the discharge of their Religious duties. Between 1580 and 1600, members of the Jesuit, Benedictine, Franciscan, Lazarite, and Augustinian Orders planted themselves in different districts into which many of the refugee clergy had retired. The Jesuit stations in the north were Braemar, Glencairn, Strathglass, and Buchan.

To overcome the difficulties of the Roman Catholics in Scotland, Clement VIII., in 1600, founded the Scots College at Rome, a nursery for native missionaries.

Father Blackhal's narrative, from the Preface to which, by Mr. Stuart, all the above has been transferred, is amusing to peruse. He returned from Paris to Scotland in 1637, where he performed the duties of a missionary in the Counties of Aberdeen and Banff, and at the same time acted as Chaplain to the Lady Aboyne, at Aboyne Castle. His course as a missionary (he says, p. 68), 'was not very great, but only from the House of Aboyne to Aberdeen, two and twenty miles, where I did confess and communicate all the Catholics that were there. And from Aberdeen to Buchan, a matter of 19 or 20 miles, where I had but five Catholic houses to go to, *viz.*, Blair, 10 mile from Aberdeen; and Chives, 5 or 6 miles from Blair; and Gicht, as far from Chives; and Artrachy, 9 or 10 from Gicht; and

Cruden, 6 miles from Artrachy; and the distance between these houses obliged me to stay a night in each of them to say Messe, Confess, Communicate, and Exhort the Catholics by way of a short preaching. And from Buchan to Strathbogie, where I used to stay but 3 or 4 nights. The first in the Village, they call it the *Raws*, in Robert Rine, his house, an hostlery, where the poor Catholics convened; the second in Cairnborrow, where Newsely and his daughter did come to me, and sometimes I did go to Newsely, his house; the third nigh to Craigge, 6 miles from Cairnborrow, and Cairnborrow is 4 miles from Strathbogie. . . .

. . . On the extinction of the line of Roman Catholic Prelates in England by the death of Bp. Watson of Lincoln, 1584, it was deemed inexpedient to create any new Bishop at that time; and accordingly a Clergyman, with the title of Archpriest, enjoying Episcopal Jurisdiction, was set over the Roman Catholics in England. The first who enjoyed this office was the Rev. G. Blackwell, who was constituted Archpriest in 1598, and his authority also extended over the Mission in Scotland. It was not submitted to without the reluctance of the R. C. Scotch Clergy. In 1623 the Rev. Wm. Bishop was Consecrated Bishop of Chalcedon, and Vicar Apostolic in England, and the Scottish Clergy were again subjected to English Jurisdiction; but they struggled to throw off the yoke, and in consequence of repeated Memorials to the Roman

Court, Pope Gregory XV. ordered the Right Rev. Dr. Bishop to abstain from exercising Jurisdiction in Scotland.

In 1629 a proposal was for the first time made of erecting a Missionary Body in Scotland, under the Superintendence of a native Superior; and Pope Urban VIII. granted faculties to Father Wm. Ogilvy as Prefect of the Mission. But it was not till 1653 that, by a decree of Propaganda, the Scottish Secular Clergy, freed from the Jurisdiction of the English Prelates and Jesuit Superiorship, were incorporated into a Body Missionary, under the Superintendence of the Rev. Wm. Ballantyne, the *first* Prefect of the Mission. This appointment must have strengthened the hands of the Missionaries considerably, but the Regulars were not inclined to yield willing obedience to one who, although vested with extraordinary faculties, was by Ordination a simple Priest. And accordingly, it was found that the nomination of a Dignitary who should not merely deserve, but command the respect and obedience of the whole Clergy, both Regular and Secular, was yet wanting to make the System work harmoniously or usefully. The Missionaries were eager in supplicating the Court of Rome for the appointment of *a Bishop for all Scotland.*"

"Ever since the fall of the Hierarchy in Scotland, order and subordination had been in abeyance among the few Secular Clergy who still

clung to the wreck, or who had succeeded those, after the establishment of foreign Seminaries. Every Missionary acted as he pleased, without consulting his Brethren, staying where he chose, or wandering from place to place, as inclination or necessity disposed him. The Regular Clergy, on the other hand, consisting chiefly of Priests and Benedictines, had the superior advantages of organisation and method in their system of life. Hence, after a few years, many of the Secular Missionaries had abandoned the struggle as hopeless, and retired to Foreign Countries to obtain the livelihood denied them in their own. Rome had been frequently appealed to, and entreated to appoint a resident Bishop as the best remedy for the state of things, but difficulties had invariably come in the way, and hitherto nothing had been done."

"The law was as severe against Popish priests as against thiggers, gypsies, and sorners. In 1751, in Aberdeen, Rev. Patrick Geddes on a charge of being by habit and repute a priest, Jesuit, and trafficking Papist was found guilty, banished furth of Scotland with certificate that if he ever returned, he being still a Papist, shall suffer punishment of death."

From "Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century," by Henry Gray Graham, p. 491.

"But, if the Scotch Episcopalians had difficulties to contend with, the Catholics were in a still worse position, for though several of our most influential

families adhered to the old faith, they did so at great personal sacrifice, drawing upon themselves the suspicion or dislike of their fellow-citizens, as, for many years, any reference to a Popish priest, or even to a family belonging to the Romish Church, seems to have excited a feeling akin to horror. From the Reformation, until the Rebellion of 1745 was beginning to be forgotten, the civil rights of Roman Catholics were completely ignored; they seemed to have no stated place of meeting, but Mass was stealthily celebrated in the family circles of their adherents or in some miserable apartment unknown to the public, the whole having to be gone about as if the participators were committing a crime. In 1772, when the fears of Jacobitism and a wholesale return to Catholic domination began to subside, the Catholics built a house on a piece of ground which was reached through a court on the north side of Castle Street, near the entrance to Justice Street, the ground floor of which was fitted up as a place of worship, the clergymen living upstairs; but as their numbers increased, a regular chapel, capable of containing 800 persons, was built at the same place in 1804."

From "Aberdeen, Its Traditions and History," by William Robbie, p. 297.

I

Early Days in the Enzie

PRIEST GORDON

CHAPTER I

Early Days in the Enzie

CHARLES GORDON was born at Landends, in the parish of Bellie, Enzie, Banffshire, on the 30th June, 1772. Like many distinguished ministers of religion in our country, he began life in a humble and pious home. Like many men, too, who have made their mark in various spheres of public work, he was nurtured in early days amidst rural scenes. He laid a fine physical basis for his long and useful career by living much in God's wide open, and the Spey and the sea not far off must have stirred his boyish imagination. The country round about Fochabers was a fine place to have been born in, even though he did not

come into the world with a silver spoon in his mouth.

Social distinctions arising from material possession and condition seem somehow to be of less account when one is living in the presence of Nature and amidst her affluence. Individuality, in such an environment, has a better chance of being developed, and personal dignity maintained.

The district of the Enzie is one of the few in Scotland in which there was not a complete ecclesiastical overturn at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and many of its inhabitants can claim an unbroken succession from ancestors who were utterly unaffected by what the Scottish Parliament decreed in 1560. Such a state of things was partly owing to the paramount influence of the Chief of the Gordon clan more than three centuries ago. He did not espouse the cause of the Reformation, when it became a general movement throughout the country, and his retainers and tenants, with few ex-

ceptions, naturally enough at that time followed the example of the laird. But while it was a common saying in the north that the Gordons "hae the guidin' o't," it says something for the robust independence of the people upon his estate and its neighbourhood, that when the representative of the Gordon house passed over to the side that was backed up by State and Court, they remained religiously as they had been, and stood where their fathers stood. The white heat of the great popular movement had cooled down, and there was not momentum enough derived from the change to induce them to go and do likewise. That partly accounts for the number of Roman Catholics in the region where Charles Gordon was born, and for the priests and bishops—some of whom obtained celebrity—who came from its borders.

The district, like too many in other parts of Scotland, has suffered grievously from small holdings having been merged into large farms, and the consequent

scattering of numerous families which were a strength and a credit to the land. After years of toil in reclaiming bits of the wilderness, and rearing children in simplicity and God-fearing habits, who, when grown up, became the best available labourers and domestic servants, those humble households were broken up and driven forth either to the Colonies, or to our large towns with their questionable advantages.

Such wanton waste of the best resources of the country is seen now to have been an economical blunder as well as a national misfortune. What class of men have done more to bring sinew and lustre to Scotland than its crofters and cottars? To a large extent they have given our land its character, and made it what it is in the eyes of the world. Sturdy perseverance, thrift, independence, and piety are the conspicuous parts of our nation's escutcheon, and who have done more to put them where they are than the persons described

in Burns' immortal "Cottar's Saturday Night"?

The Roman Catholic inhabitants of the district, who largely consisted of the class I have described, are now much reduced in number, as was bound to be the case when a general depopulation was going on. But how prolific the district was in its palmy days in men who won distinction because of their character and abilities! Among the multitude of persons who passed from this region into the priestly office, a large number attained to high rank in the Church, as the following table, kindly furnished by Mgr. Wilson of Elgin, abundantly shows :—

VICARS APOSTOLIC IN SCOTLAND

CONNECTED WITH THE ENZIE.

2. Bishop James Gordon, 1706-1746. Son of Patrick Gordon of Glastirum, a Cadet of Letterfourie. See Rev. J. F. S. Gordon's "The Catholic Church in Scotland," published Glasgow, John Tweed, 1869, p. 3.

5. Bishop Alexander Smith, 1735-1766. Born in Fochabers, 1684. See Gordon's History, p. 9.

6. Bishop James Grant, 1755-1778. Born at Wester Boggs in the Enzie. See "Gordon," p. 11.

10. Bishop John Geddes, 1759-1799. Born at Mains of Curridoun in the Enzie. See "Gordon," p. 454.

14. Bishop Alexander Paterson, 1816-1831. Born at Pathhead in the Enzie. See "Gordon," p. 460, and Scotch Catholic Directory, 1832, p. 34.

16. Bishop Andrew Scott, 1828-1846. Born at Chapelford in the Enzie. "Gordon," p. 465, and Scotch Catholic Directory, 1848, p. 99.

18. Bishop Alexander Smith, 1847-1861. Born at Newbigging in the Parish of Rathven, Banffshire. "Gordon," p. 478, and Scotch Catholic Directory, 1862, p. 133.

19. Bishop James Gillis, 1838-1864. Born at Montreal, Canada, 7th April, 1802. Father a native of the Parish of Bellie in Banffshire. "Gordon," p. 480, Scotch Catholic Directory 1865, p. 125,

20. Bishop John Murdoch, 1833-1866. Born at Wellheads in the Enzie, 11th November, 1796. "Gordon," p. 491, and Scotch Catholic Directory, 1867, p. 138.

22. Bishop John Gray, 1862-1872. Born at Buckie, Banffshire, Scotch Catholic Directory, 1873, p. 145.

Bishop George J. Smith, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles. Born at Cuttlebrae in the Enzie. Consecrated 25th April, 1893, Scotch Catholic Directory, 1894, p. 222.

This most remarkable list of men, who came from the district named in the 18th and 19th centuries, and who attained to celebrity, may be supplemented by a reference to one who, in the field of letters, is better known than any of them, but whose waywardness clouded his life. In the Appendix will be found epitomised accounts of the strangely chequered career of Alexander Geddes.*

Being constitutionally of a serious and reverent mind, Charles Gordon, the youngest of nine children, was dedicated to the Ministry in his Church. And, so far as the workings of a man's inner consciousness can be revealed in his character, we can quite understand how

*Appendix No. I., Alexander Geddes.

the Ministry as a calling should have been his personal choice. Charles Gordon was not what could be called "clever" or "intellectual," but he was exceptionally strong on the moral side of his nature, where the conscience and heart come in as factors. Duty was the sovereign ideal of his life. He had, through that, a vivid sense of the reality and therefore of the proportions of things. Wisdom is not mere intellectual perception and attainment. It is that apprehension of things which the moral sense and the action of God's spirit lead a man to, as he thinks and ponders.

Charles Gordon's mind was not quick, but no one could sooner find his way to things fundamental, and take a firmer grip of them. He had no special capacity for those ideas and forms of knowledge which make the philosopher and the scholar, but his mind had always plenty of room for the things which made the man, and, if circumstances favoured, the hero and the saint. Right-

eousness and eternity count for more to such a man than all the feverish dreams and transient interests of time. What are the pomps and shows of earth to him who sees that the main thing in life is to please God, and to be conformed to His image? To bring himself and his fellows, so far as he could, under the power of those sacred convictions and transcendent aims—to enter the Ministry—must, therefore, have appeared to be a course which, if the way were open, justified itself on reason's highest ground.

Not that Charles Gordon, the lad, reasoned out things in this elaborate fashion. In certain moods of the mind it does appear to most of us to be a strange ordinance of heaven that the most momentous choices we have to make in life, such as are involved in personal religion, marriage, and our calling, should have to be made before the understanding has reached its maturity. But deeper thoughts remind us that we often find our way to the best things in life by

instinct, affinity, or intuition, rather than by well-weighed logical argument. Charles Gordon was drawn by an inward impelling impulse to seek to become a minister of God.

II

In Scalan Seminary

CHAPTER II

In Scalan Seminary

THE Seminary to which Charles Gordon was taken on 24th January, 1785, when he was a mere boy, and in which he began his education for the priesthood, was, in its surroundings, more like a lodge in the wilderness than a seat of learning. But the necessities of the times made the situation most eligible. The tension of feeling throughout the country between Protestant and Catholic made it prudent that the latter should not obtrude his Church and its work upon the notice of the people. There was safety in seclusion.

Certainly a more out-of-the-way place than Scalan Seminary, which was opened in 1712, could scarcely have been found

in all Scotland.* Nestled at the foot of mountains in Glenlivet, far from the lines of traffic, it was indeed a retreat, and about as non-apparent to the busy world as was compatible with real existence. It had also the signal advantage of being on territory which owned the sway of the Duke of Gordon, and was consequently under his protection. The last Catholic Duke of Gordon died in 1728; but even after the change of creed the family did not press hard upon their old tenants.

But remote as the situation was, and friendly as were the Gordons, the inmates of Scalan found to their cost that their abode was not inaccessible, especially after the risings of 1715 and 1745. More than once soldiers found their way to it, and tutors and students had barely time to escape for their lives to some hiding in the neighbouring hills. On one of those visits the original building was wrecked and burned.

*Appendix No. II., Scalan in Glenlivet.

In Scalan Seminary

In letters which passed between Bishop Hay and his coadjutor Bishop Geddes, there are passing allusions to the weather at Scalan which shew that it was no earthly paradise, and which also help to explain the hardy endurance of Charles Gordon and other students who lived for a time in that mountainous region :—"The winter was long and late this year at Scalan. Field-labour was in consequence seriously retarded, and everybody was now on the catch of every fair blink to do what they can in it."—"The weather had been very variable in a constant rotation of frost, snow, rain, and strong winds every twelve or fifteen days."—"The weather at Scalan this autumn was rainy."—"It was only on the 19th October that they were able to carry home a few 'stooks' of half-dry 'bere.'"—Bishop Hay tells us he was "stormed-stayed at Aberlour." He made his way to Scalan about the middle of March, fortunate in having reached it before the setting in of a fresh

snow-fall. Of January 8th, 1789, it is written:—"It was considered an incident of trifling importance that they had been buried in snow for several weeks without any means of communication with the outer world."

The domestic economy in the house did not, any more than its severe climatic environment, pamper the flesh. "The life at Scalan was not one of indulgence. The bell rang at six in the morning, and the boys, who wore the Highland dress of black and blue tartan, with home-made shoes (brogues), performed their morning ablutions in the Crombie. They had meat for dinner only twice or thrice in the week, vegetables, oatcakes, and sowens supplying its place on other days. Their breakfast and supper consisted of oatmeal porridge. The Bishop invariably dined with the boys. In the house he generally wore a long coat or reading-gown of blue and red tartan, spun by the thrifty housekeeper Annie Gerard."

We learn that much as the Principal was bent upon economy, he had not unfrequently to correct the penuriousness of Annie Gerard, the housekeeper of the Seminary, who, not satisfied with stinting the boys of such poor indulgences as they were sometimes permitted, would attempt to include the Bishop and his visitors in her too rigid economy!

Annie Gerard's iron rule in her own department of housekeeping was ocasionally resented by little outbreaks of insurrection. "Is it proper that there should be any female power in a place of this kind?" was the question raised by one who keenly felt the want of some of the luxuries he had been accustomed to. But what could Annie do? The income of the school from endowment was ridiculously small, and in those days money was scarce, particularly amongst those in the north who had at heart the interests of such an institution. Annie had to do her best under the resident Bishop to make ends meet, and she had

this always to fall back upon for her comfort, that if the youths were reduced to "plain fare," they had always abundance of "fresh air"—air richly charged with ozone, such as no glutton or wine-bibber cooped up in a palace had an opportunity of breathing.

But time vindicated the household economy of Annie Gerard as it forcibly demonstrated the wholesomeness of the regimen enforced by poverty, when nature was so close at hand with its enriching compensations. In course of years Scalan became quite a sanatorium. Bishop Hay was never in better health than when inhaling its bracing air. Bishop Chisholm also visited it for his physical as well as intellectual and spiritual quickening. He added hydropathy to spareness of diet and mountain air for the invigoration of his constitution. We learn that he derived much benefit from his favourite practice of bathing in the Crombie, "in an excellent place in the burn, a little above the Hill Park."

In Scalan Seminary

About the time that Charles Gordon entered Scalan Seminary, Bishop Hay, Vicar Apostolic of Scotland, took up his abode in it, assuming charge of the students, and it thus became an ecclesiastical centre as well as a seat of learning. The coincidence was a happy one for the ingenuous youth from Bellie. Bishop Hay was a man of extraordinary capacity, a born master of men and affairs, keenly alive intellectually, and yet taking a strong and practical grasp of the multiplied interests of his Diocese. He was vigilant, and a strict disciplinarian, yet eminently human and in fullest sympathy with young people. The reminiscences given of him in that chronicle from which I have drawn so much, bring out the strength and picturesqueness of his individuality. Let a few specimens be given:—"No one could match the Bishop in his captivating power of telling a story. When he came among the boys at recreation, and began one of his stories, every game was stopped, and

they all crowded about the old man to hear what he was going to say. His face gave suitable expression to his descriptions, and the gestures of his hands also helped to impart a sense of reality to what he was saying."

"When the young Sacristan went in the morning to tell the Bishop that everything was ready for Mass, he remembered seeing him take the quid, which he had left in his mouth all night, and dash it into the grate with—'That abominable tobacco!' On being timidly asked why he indulged in such a habit, the Bishop at once gratified his curiosity by explaining: 'Do you think I would continue that nasty habit if I did not find it necessary? I will tell you the reason. I was long subject to a state of health which occasioned me violent headaches, and I tried every remedy I could think of, to no purpose, till I tried the daily use of small twist, which keeps me in much more healthy condition. Were I to give up chewing tobacco, my old com-

plaints and their bad effects would follow: I am, therefore, obliged to continue the ugly practice.'— When the boys were sick, the Bishop not only prescribed for them, but administered his medicine with his own hands. If they were confined to bed, he would often remain in the room with them, saying his prayers and helping them by turns with the tenderness of a nurse till he saw they were better."

Bishop Hay was indeed a brave old man. In 1799, when he was seventy years of age, he faced the strain and turmoil of the removal of the Seminary from Scalan to Aquhorties. It was deemed not imprudent now to come down from the mountainous seclusion to a more convenient place "upon the plain" in the parish of Inverurie. As is usual in all progress upon the earth, there was some loss in the gain. The Bishop's heart was in Scalan on account of its solemn solitude, its hallowed associations, and also from the cir-

cumstance that he had better health in its pure bracing air than anywhere else.

Aquhorties was not, a hundred years ago, what it became—a smiling farm; but little better than a bleak, desolate wilderness.* And, with the exception of the Fetternear family, there were few Catholics near it. But with a firm hand, and clear steady head, the Bishop did what had to be done, and did it well, adapting himself to the changed conditions as if he were beginning his life instead of being within sight of its end.

It may not be unfitting to close this chapter by giving a glimpse of the estimate in which Scalan was held, by those most competent to judge, as a place of education. Bishop Hay had occasion to make a comparison between their home and foreign Colleges, and thus incidentally gives us an idea of the kind of work done in Scalan, and latterly in Aquhorties:—"What is Aquhorties when

*Appendix No. III., Aquhorties.

OLD COLLEGE OF SCALAN, GLENLIVET.

compared to them? It does not even deserve the name of a College. It is a private Seminary, intended only for educating a few humble, pious, self-denied Apostolical Missionaries, who may be fit instruments in the hands of God for preserving the small remains of Religion in their native country. The whole amount of its resources is not sufficient to maintain six students at the present rate of the necessaries of life. It has no resources on which it can depend. All above its small revenue must be begged from others as a charity."*

A summary view of Scalan is given by another hand—"It was at first a very poor and humble establishment, and at its best days hardly ever grew to be more. Yet it served a useful purpose as regarded the Mission for nearly a century."

*Dr. Gordon's History, p. 427, Vol. IV.

III

In Douay College

CHAPTER III

In Douay College

AFTER the great ecclesiastical changes in Scotland in the 16th century, one of the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church sought to recuperate itself and keep its ground was by the planting of higher schools or colleges in important centres on the Continent for the training of Scottish youths for the priesthood. In Rome, Paris, and Douay the principal of those "Scots" Colleges were established, where the education often begun in Scotland was completed. In September, 1785, Charles Gordon was sent to Douay.

While there is no evidence of any special aptitude on the part of Charles Gordon for the higher learning of a

foreign College, it is not improbable and certainly not unnatural to suppose that his uncle, Bishop Geddes, used whatever influence he had in order that his young kinsman might have every educational advantage which was within his reach.

Moreover, it was perhaps felt that one who was so very Scottish, who had such an inveterate predilection for Banffshire ways and speech, and was so thoroughly addicted to all that belonged to his early environment, had better come under the influence of a foreign residence and education. The native granite, it was to be hoped, would get a finer polish than was possible at home. It is to be kept in view, while following the career and studying the character of Charles Gordon, that his kinsman, who came from a similar home, and who belonged, too, to a previous generation, was conspicuous for his urbanity and refinement.

On his way thither Charles had some adventures such as seldom come to

travellers in these days of railways and steamboats. A new world burst upon the Scottish student, and so many things were strange to him. In the course of his travels he went one day with his companion into an inn, where a salad was placed upon the table, which, when Charles Gordon saw, he, with characteristic humour, exclaimed, "Fat's this noo they're gi'in us? A dish o' cauld kail blades? I winner fat they French folks tak' his for? Dae they think we're a' coos?"

It must have been with feelings of mingled curiosity and reverence that this youth from the far north took up his abode in Douay. Here was the place which gave its name to the English version of the Bible authorised by the Pope. Here were to be seen relics of dear old Scotland, such as the famous portrait of Queen Mary and the treasured head of good Queen Margaret, the spouse of Malcolm Canmore.* After many vicissi-

*Appendix No. IV., Queen Margaret's Head.

tudes, it had been put for safety in Douay College, where it was lost in the "tempest of the Revolution." In the College were traditions of previous generations of Scottish students who, like himself, had come to bring their empty vessels to this fount of learning. Links of connection were also found with Aberdeen in the names of Rev. Alexander Paterson and Rev. John Farquharson, who, after holding high office in Douay, were translated to spheres of importance in the north of Scotland.

Gordon's teachers and fellow-students were not impressed with the ready aptitude of his mind. Like many greater men—such as Sir Walter Scott, who showed in subsequent years that they were certainly not lacking in natural ability—he was not a precocious youth. It is said that the Principal of the College, on examining him one day, lost patience with his want of quickness and accuracy. Rather sharply, poor Gordon

was asked if there was anything he could repeat correctly. "Yes", he replied, "the Lord's Prayer." After reciting it without a single mistake, the question was put, "Who taught you that prayer?" "Ma mither," was the reply, which drew forth this eulogy, "When you return to Scotland, please tell your mother that she's the cleverest woman in the land!"*

Towards the close of his residence in Douay, Charles Gordon had, as part of his Providential training for his future work, what was not included in the curriculum—a personal experience of the great upheaval in France, which reached its acute stage in 1789. After it had been deemed prudent to dismiss the most of the students, Charles remained with the Principal and two or three young men who had a northern connection.

"The Revolution in France had reached such a height in 1790-93 as to give the Bishops, and indeed all the

*Appendix No. IV. See an account of Andrew Carruthers, one of Charles Gordon's fellow-students in Douay.

friends of the Scottish Mission, the most serious alarm for the fate of the Colleges in that miserable country. In the spring of 1790 Mr. Farquharson—the Principal—represented the imminent danger of losing the Scottish establishment at Douay in terms so strong that Bishop Hay, at his request, addressed the Bishop of the Diocese recommending the College to his protection."

Mr. Farquharson thus describes the state of affairs at Douay about the middle of the year:—"Since I wrote you last our situation here has been singularly curious: the most tyrannical government is preferable to none at all: better live under a Nero than be daily exposed to all the wild horrors of anarchy. Since the middle of May we are fairly at the mercy of our military: they hold courts-martial, dismiss whom they please, insult openly their officers and clergy. For three days and four nights on end the town exhibited an image of Hell, 4000 armed drunken soldiers with im-

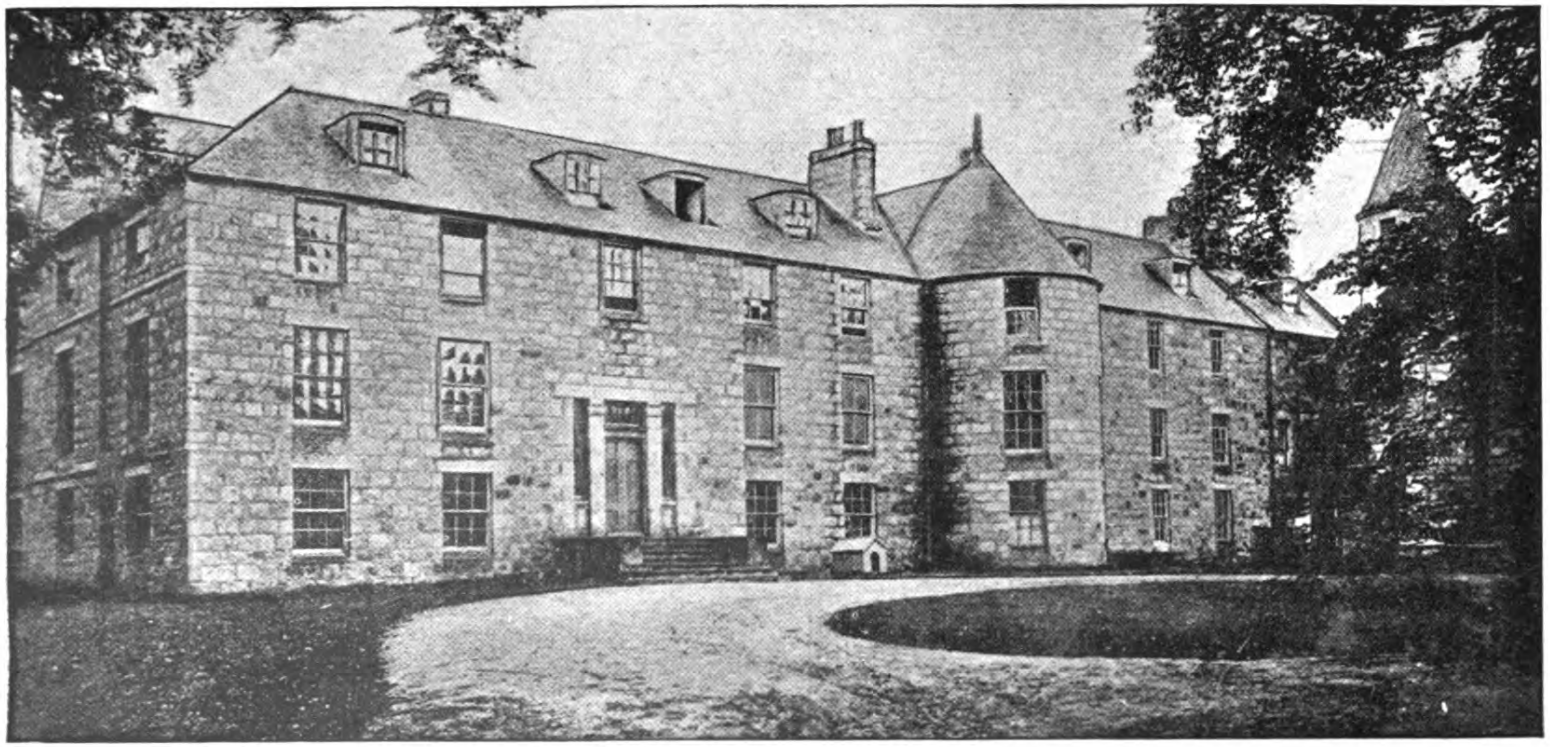
punity rioted all over, entered Communities, forced nunneries, made their quarters good everywhere, yet, to their honour be it said, no indecencies were committed." *

Douay had doubtless done a great deal for Charles Gordon before the terrible political catastrophe with avalanche effect overtook devoted France not many years after his arrival. That fearful uprising, in which there was a grotesque mingling of the nobler and baser elements of human nature, the latter predominating, was nearly as hostile to religion as it was to aristocratic government, and all the inmates of the Scots College in Douay had at last to be dispersed.

Friends in this country were not unmindful of Gordon, and a message found its way to him, that if he and fellow-students from the north were to make their escape from the doomed place and embark on a certain vessel

* Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland, Vol. IV., p. 303.

that was provided for them, they would be taken to Montrose. In those days, and long before, there was constant communication between a great part of the northern seaboard of the Continent and the east coast of Scotland. These fugitives crossed the German Ocean in safety, and landed at the appointed place in the old country, where freedom was less upon the lips of the people and more in their possession. In after days Gordon was of use, it is said, in identifying that rare picture of Queen Mary, now in Blairs College, as something which had belonged to the Scottish seat of learning in Douay.



OLD BLAIRS COLLEGE.

IV

In Aberdeen

CHAPTER IV

In Aberdeen

WALKING to Aberdeen, Charles Gordon went on, after a brief interval, to Scalan, Glenlivet, to continue his studies. In less than a year he returned to Aberdeen, and never found his way out of it till, ripe in years and full of honour, all that was mortal of of him was carried to the Snow Churchyard. He completed his education in 1795, and on the 21st and 22nd of March he was ordained sub-deacon and deacon, along with Andrew Carruthers and Andrew Scott. These orders he received at the hands of Bishop Hay, who promoted him to the priesthood on the 2nd of July the same year.

Priest Gordon

But Charles Gordon's principal duty when he returned to Aberdeen was to nurse his mother's brother, which was indeed a labour of love. Bishop Geddes, associated with Bishop Hay as Vicar Apostolic of Scotland, was foremost among the many eminent men who came from the Enzie. He was as beautiful in character and attractive in attainment as he was in personal appearance. Of gentle, persuasive spirit, polished manner, and high purpose, he won golden opinions wherever he went. He had seen much of the world in his travels, and he impressed all those who met him as the gentleman as well as scholar and priest. Some of his plainer brethren thought he had a weakness for dress. "Bishop Hay was content with homespun cloth. Bishop Geddes might be seen wearing silk breeches and silk stockings. Some of the tough old priests used to say that he would have a thousand years of Purgatory for his vanity!"

In Aberdeen

Bishop Geddes had prematurely exhausted himself, more especially through his excessive itinerating labours. In his case the sword was too keen for the sheath. Before old age was reached he was a helpless invalid, but as no vital part of the body was attacked with disease, he lingered for nearly two years. The letters of Bishop Geddes bear witness to the devotion of his nephew Charles, as touching as it was characteristic. In one he tells us he was so weak that he could hardly stagger through the room, and must soon be wholly confined to bed. He also says that his nephew had cheerfully taken him into his house to make him comfortable. Here is a description of the room in which he spent his last days under the tender care of Charles Gordon—"At the top of the flight of stairs in the old humble chapel-house at Aberdeen, the first door on the left conducts you into the little chamber where this pious man now exchanged a life of active service for one of suffer-

ing and inaction. It is lighted by two windows which look into a small green, surrounded and overlooked by houses of the meanest kind." Charles Gordon himself in after years described the patient invalid as totally unable to move his hands, "even to remove a fly from his face."

The subject of our narrative had thus to bear hardness of various kinds in his youth. Sometimes the sick man needed his nephew's assistance twenty times in a night. Charles was on one occasion so much exhausted that he fainted while in the act of lifting his uncle from the bed to his chair. They lay on the floor helplessly, the Bishop uppermost, till his nephew recovered consciousness. No wonder the uncle promised to thank the nephew on the Day of Judgment. The end of all this travail came at last. The remains of Bishop Geddes lie in the same grave in the Snow Churchyard where his nephew was afterwards buried.

In Aberdeen

Released from the duties of the sick chamber, Charles Gordon was now free to give himself up to public work. He became associated with his brother, the Rev. John Gordon, in the oversight of the congregation in Aberdeen, and after the latter was appointed Procurator at Aquhorties, the entire charge devolved upon Charles.

Let the imagination try to picture the environment and sphere which Aberdeen gave to the young priest when he began his work in it more than a hundred years ago. The city had a population of thirteen or fourteen thousand, and for some time before it had been beginning to outgrow its old boundries. The "Loch" was for the greater part drained and the lands on which it had spread its waters was feued, and George Street and adjacent streets were being planned. That great and noble achievement the formation of Union Street, ever deserving of highest praise by every succeeding generation in Aberdeen, had a place in

the brains of its far-seeing and bold promoters. The town was taking a fresh start through the energy and public spirit of its leading men.

But it was a small and compact town compared with the Aberdeen of to-day. Gilcomston was still a suburban village, and its church stood in the open country, all the land to the west of it now covered by Skene Street and Carden Place being then under the plough or spade. The town itself was within very small compass, and it did not take long to walk from one end to the other of it. Like persons on board ship, the inhabitants were thrown upon each other's society, and were familiar with each other's ways.

That led to the differences between them being accentuated, but also at the same time to a deepening and quickening of the sense of neighbourhood. It can therefore be quite understood how Dr. Kidd—with the exception of Andrew Cant the greatest popular religious force that Aberdeen has ever had within its

confines—should have been strongly hostile to the Roman Church, and yet be on friendly terms with its representative, whose career is being pourtrayed in these pages.

Dean Ramsay,* in his "Reminiscences," brings out the kindly, homely intercourse priests and ministers in the north of Scotland had in those days. They were uncompromisingly opposed to each other on ecclesiastical grounds, and yet were on most neighbourly terms.

Even in our own times there have not been wanting evidences that the best representative men of both churches and creeds can recognise and honour what is held in common, as witness the correspondence between Cardinal Newman and Dr. David Brown, Principal of the Free Church College, Aberdeen; and Dr. Blaikie's testimony is also valuable.†

*Appendix No. V., Priest Mathieson and the Seceder Minister.

†Appendix No. VI., Correspondence between Cardinal Newman and Principal Brown of Aberdeen; also Dr. Dyce Davidson and Dr. Garden Blaikie, Appendix No. VII.

Priest Gordon

There was no fat living for the young priest in Aberdeen. His Church in this part of the world was in low circumstances at the beginning of last century, and his income could not have been far removed from that of the renowned vicar who was "passing rich on forty pounds a year." But his early Spartan training and simple tastes enabled him to make a little money go a long way. Even that little was sometimes lacking, and it is related that when funds were very low, his faithful and thrifty housekeeper, Jenny Davidson, would spin a certain quantity of wool or tow to enable her to procure what was needful. His principal daily luxury at table was a penny bottle of ale, which served him twice. Jenny did not provoke appetite with very costly dishes; but occasionally, to break the monotony of his diet, she put such luxuries upon his table as his narrow means would allow.

On one occasion he sent her to the Castlegate for "a pennyworth o' dilse

and badderlocks." Jenny's memory failing her, she returned to inquire, "Fat did ye say, sir; was't 'tabernacles' ye said?" To which the genial man replied with a laugh, "Ay, ay, Jenny, 'tabernacles' 'ill dee fine."

Jenny never heard him complain of his straightened means, but she often heard him turn them into a joke, from which the cynical, bitter temper was as absent as acidity is from sunhine. How poverty is redeemed from what is sordid when its limitations are not only accepted with contentment but spiced with humour! The Priest's "high thinking" was all the more compatible with his "plain living" when it was accompanied by a little playful banter—as if it was the poor man who above all others could afford to keep a light heart. The pleasantry of a healthy and kindly soul can convert a small estate into a valued contribution to a great life.

But things improved. Priest Gordon was not the man to proportion his labour

to his stipend, and in consequence, as is generally the case, his income participated in the progress made. In his own cautious, unostentatious way, he soon began to give a good account of himself as the priest in charge. The work of consolidation went on, and in 1804 a fine new building took the place of the small and comfortless chapel which fitly represented the low state of his Church in Aberdeen before he appeared upon the scene.

Still further improvements were effected in the building in 1814. Up till then, the *Catholic Directory* informs us, it was "an open area, without lobby or gallery; but as the congregation became more numerous, it was found necessary to erect a gallery; a porch was added, and the present organ built." *

Charles Gordon had the gift of winning confidence and evoking liberality, and while he had no patrimony, persons high and low entrusted him with money

*Appendix No. VIII., St. Peter's, Castlegate.

for this and other enterprises. Things began to assume a more prosperous aspect, and those modern representatives of the ancient Inquisition—as some deem them to be—the Income Tax Commissioners, who are always looking out for available victims, thought they might be able to squeeze something out of this priest for the revenue, and he was called before them, when the following dialogue took place :—

Q.—You state you have no income but what you receive from your people?

A.—I say so, and never had any other income.

Q.—Do you get any income from the Court of Rome?

A.—Na, nor yet fae the Court of St. James!

This caused a laugh; the Priest got no more trouble.

Later on, a Commission came to Aberdeen to make enquiries about church accommodation, and sat in the Royal Hotel. Priest Gordon was asked to attend along with other clergy of the town, and when it came to his turn, his answers to the questions put to him

brought out certain facts which are of interest. The questions and answers were as follows :—

Q.—How many members have you?

A.—Close upon 2000.

Q.—How many does your chapel hold?

A.—About 800.

Q.—How do you accommodate so many when you say that your chapel only holds 800?

A.—We have a service at 8 in the morning and another at a quarter past 11.

Q.—How many might attend the first service?

A.—From 500 to 600.

Q.—And in the forenoon?

A.—As many as the house can hold.

Q.—And in the afternoon?

A.—We don't count it, as it is for children.

Q.—And how many in the evening?

A.—In winter from 1000 to 1200.

Cries of "Oh!" as they thought the Priest was not adhering strictly to the truth.

Q.—How can you know or think that there are from 1000 to 1200 in the chapel when you say it only holds 800?

The old man stretched himself up and said, "Well, we are not in the way of allowing anyone to get in but those that put a copper in the plate, and when we count the collection there is always from 1000 to 1200 coins, an' verra few pits in twa!"—(cheers).

V

In the Chapel

CHAPTER V

In the Chapel

THERE can be no doubt that the vivid homeliness, the strain of reality and kindliness in Priest Gordon's speech, which appealed both to ear and heart, had a great deal to do with his long-maintained popularity. There must have been a charm to the common people—something inexpressibly endearing—in the vernacular which fell from his lips as he discoursed to them on the high and holy things of God and His Kingdom. The homespun was so *couthy*. It brought the sacred and familiar together, and made them helpful to one another. Those who daily used his language felt that he was one of themselves, of their own kith and kin, a

part of their dear rugged Scotland, as much as the thistle and heather and granite.

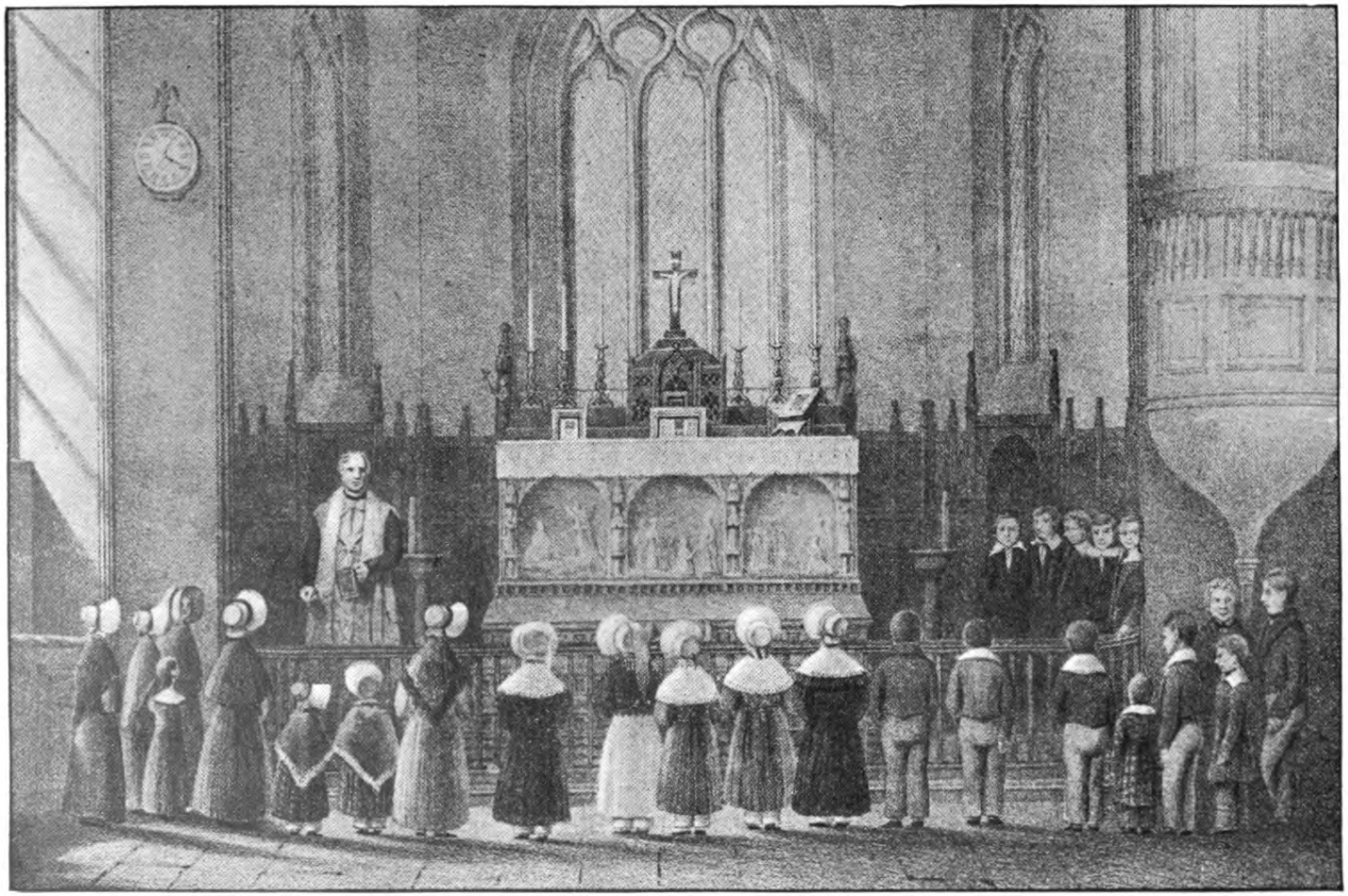
But there can be as little doubt that this dialect, which was racy of the soil, was perfectly natural to him, and that it was seen by his contemporaries to be so. Anything like design or affectation on the Priest's part would have broken the spell. He must have taken a very different place in the esteem of those who heard him had he been regarded as a preacher who was thinking of his mode of delivery, and was consequently too much touched with self-consciousness. He would have appeared to them as one who was acting a part, and had in him something of the adventurer and mountebank. The songs of Burns always rouse the warmest enthusiasm of a Scottish audience, but if an educated gentleman, in proposing a vote of thanks at the close of the concert, were now to speak in the language of the great national poet, he would be laughed

at for his pains. But for the first half of the last century there was nothing outrageously incongruous in an educated person speaking, both in private and public, in the language still used by the people. In that respect Priest Gordon was only one of the lingering and interesting survivals of the old school of two or three generations before, which, in familiar speech, passed from English to Scotch as from a foreign to the mother tongue. In listening to him the people instinctively felt that his dialect was part of himself as much as his complexion and the colour of his hair. Everyone saw him to be a bit of transparent sincerity —truly all of one piece.

Moreover, what was quaint and common in his utterance could be explained by a reference to his personal history. He had gone as a mere boy to France, where there was little opportunity of hearing or speaking English; and when he returned to Scotland, what more natural in the circumstances than that he should

revert to the speech of his early days, which had impressed itself upon his mind at the formative period in life? He could speak like others of his class when he chose, but it cost him more of an effort, and in so doing he was not so much at home as in the dialect of Banffshire, which he had learned upon his mother's knee.

A Scottish professor, who certainly could not be charged with excessive devotion to conventionality, once observed—"People call me eccentric; I am not so; I am only natural." Priest Gordon could put in the same plea for much that made him so picturesque and popular; as, for example, when he took up a small candle and laid it on the ledge of the pulpit, and as it toppled over, he exclaimed—"Hoot awa! I've latten my can'lie fa'." Or, as sometimes happens to the best speakers, when on one occasion he had a difficulty in getting his tongue round the word Nebuchadnezzar, and on some girls sitting near the pulpit



PRIEST GORDON CATECHISING HIS LITTLE ONES IN ST. PETER'S CHAPEL.

giggling, he said, "Ye needna lauch; ye micht mak' a stammer yersel' sometime."

Sometimes, however, the vernacular had its dangers, as, for example, when he spoke of "God Almichty." Young people who did not know the man were apt to think he was swearing!

A few of the more fastidious members of the congregation in Castlegate, afraid lest the dignity of the pulpit should be compromised in the eyes of the rising generation by the quaintness of his speech, were most anxious that something should be done to induce their revered pastor to introduce a change in the style of his address, which would bring it more into accordance with modern ideas. But no one had courage to remonstrate, for they knew very well that while Priest Gordon was genial and gracious he held inflexibly to his own order of things, and that he would have put them off with "Na, na!" They suggested to Bishop Kyle that he, as a man of authority, should take the matter in hand; and, accordingly, on his

next visit to Aberdeen, he embraced the opportunity of suggesting cautiously the desirability of ordering his speech more in accordance with the style which now generally prevailed amongst persons of his position. But all was of no use. Priest Gordon's answer was as conclusive as it was characteristic—"Weel, Bishop, jist you spier at ony o' my bairns ony o' the questions o' their catechis, an' if they dinna gie ye the correc' answer I'll cheenge ma language." What more could be done with such a man? He took and got his own way to the end.

On going into the chapel in the Castlegate, a visitor never knew what was going to happen. At the same time he could assure himself beforehand that his sense of reality and reverence would be maintained, though the latter might occasionally be disturbed for a moment through some observation which escaped from the lips of the Priest, as if he could not help it. Gordon's strong individ-

uality could not be repressed, nor was he at any time to be measured by ordinary standards. He went into the Church as God made him, and, like a Latimer or a Spurgeon, when he appeared before his fellows, he kept nothing back which belonged to his personality; his congregation had to take him as he was, with all the latent possibilities of a nature charged to the brim with that force of originality which never stands in awe of conventionality.

As sometimes happens even to the most self-restrained and considerate preachers, Priest Gordon was one day so carried away by his theme as to be somewhat oblivious of the passage of time. At least one of his hearers was of that opinion, and showed his impatience by taking his watch out of his pocket more than once, as if to see the hour and perhaps convey the hint—he was sitting right in front of the speaker—that it was time to be done. The Priest fixed his eyes upon the delinquent, and

down came the reproof like a thunder-clap—"Tam, we a' ken ye've gotten a watch, but keep it in yer pooch, man; gin ye want tae ken what time it is ye can look at the knock on the wa'" (pointing to the chapel clock).

On another occasion he was lecturing on the existence of God and the mystery of one God in three Persons. He said the unity of God was a truth every member of the Catholic Church knew, and the youngest child present could prove it. To enforce what he said, he called to his aid one of the altar-boys and turning round abruptly, said—"Johnnie, stan' up and tell the folks foo mony Gods there are." Johnnie, taken aback, and perhaps having his mind otherwise occupied at the time, was in a state of mental confusion, and, in a voice which reached the further end of the church, replied—"Three." It was an embarrassing moment to Priest Gordon, and in a tone of displeasure he exclaimed—"Sit doon, ye gowk, ye ken naething aboot it."

In the Chapel

He was very fond of his altar-boys, and, some thought, too indulgent to them, as their conduct in church was not always what could be desired. Two old ladies, who occupied one of the front pews, came to their pastor and lodged a complaint against the behaviour of the boys during Mass.

"Fat hiv ma loons been deein' noo?"

"Oh," they answered, "their conduct at Mass, and even at the most sacred parts of Mass, is scandalous, looking round and laughing."

"Fat wye d'ye ken that?"

"Oh, we saw them," they replied.

"Well, gin ye had been peying attention tae yer ain prayers ye wadna hae seen that. Sae gang awa' an' min' yer ain bisness."

The want of punctuality on the part of some members of his congregation gave him considerable trouble. Irregularity in attendance at church, as well as unpunctuality, prevailed, it appears, in all the churches at that time. Dr. Paul, in

his "Past and Present of Aberdeenshire," gives his testimony as to irregularity in attendance at church, especially on the part of the male sex:—"Within my recollection, many of the gentlemen in Aberdeen, as is stated by Dean Ramsay to have been the case in Edinburgh, were very irregular in their attendance on the usual ordinances of religion in the sanctuary. What were called the genteel congregations of Aberdeen were principally frequented by ladies, and had the Rev. Sydney Smith at that time been preaching there, as he was in Edinburgh, he might have had equal reason to preach from the text: 'Oh that *men* would praise the Lord.'

"Mr. Cordiner, a former minister of St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel in Aberdeen, a man of a peculiarly meek and charitable spirit, stated in a funeral sermon, preached on the death of one of the male members of his congregation, in palliation of his neglect of attendance on ordinances: 'Although he did not honour

us often with his presence, yet his heart was always with us!'" * What Priest Gordon complained of chiefly was unpunctuality.

One Sunday, as Priest Gordon was ascending the pulpit steps, everyone could tell from the expression of his countenance that they were to be treated to something severe. "Ma friens," he began, "ye hae gotten intill a verra, verra bad custom. Fat mak's ye aye come in sae late till Mass? Files the first Gospel 'll be read afore ye're in yer seats. I canna get ye tae come in time. I gaed ye tae half-past awlaven, an' ye're nae here in time! An' gin I gaed ye till twal, ye widna be here! An' it's nae the anes that hae far tae come that's late; na, it's nae them; its jist the anes that's nearest tae the Hoose o' God. Look ower there till the front seat, there's Mrs. Kemp, sittin' there, honest buddie; weel, she comes a' th'

*"Aberdeen Past and Present," by Rev. Wm. Paul, D.D., p. 12.

wye frae the Bing'ill, an' ye a' ken that's guid sax mile awa', an' she's aye here first. Noo that's a lesson for ye!" It was Mrs. Kemp herself—the mother of the late Rev. John Kemp of Dufftown—who told this anecdote with her own lips. She also was one of those old-fashioned ladies who spoke Scotch, and she added, after telling the story, "I wis sae muckle affronted that I didna ken fat wye tae look; I nearly fanted."

Priest Gordon loved music, and paid great attention to his choir. Much of his power throughout his long career, lay in the personal touch of a kindly soul which was never lacking, and which endeared him to all with whom he was closely associated. He often went up at the close of the evening service to speak to the members of the choir, commending them for their work and making suggestions which were generally carried out. On the evening of the last Sunday of the year, it was his practice to turn towards the choir and

say, "Our friends in the choir will be pleased to intone the 'Te Deum' in thanksgiving to God for all His mercies in the past year and during our lives."

VI

In Controversy

CHAPTER VI

In Controversy

CHARLES GORDON was by descent and wide family connection, as well as by conviction, a Roman Catholic. He intensely believed the doctrines he preached, and he was their fearless champion. Yet he was beloved by the people of Aberdeen, who were mostly Protestant, and he was on neighbourly terms with some of his chief ecclesiastical opponents. How did that come about? Must it not have been by his personal devotion to those essential parts of Christianity common to both Protestant and Romanist? It was certainly a high tribute to his character, and clear proof that he had assimilated the doctrine and fully imbibed the spirit of our Christian

faith, that his outflowing affection and solicitude for others were not stemmed by denominational prejudice. While rightly assuming that his own people had the first claim upon his charity, he did not like them to count too much upon his partiality as if it were blind.

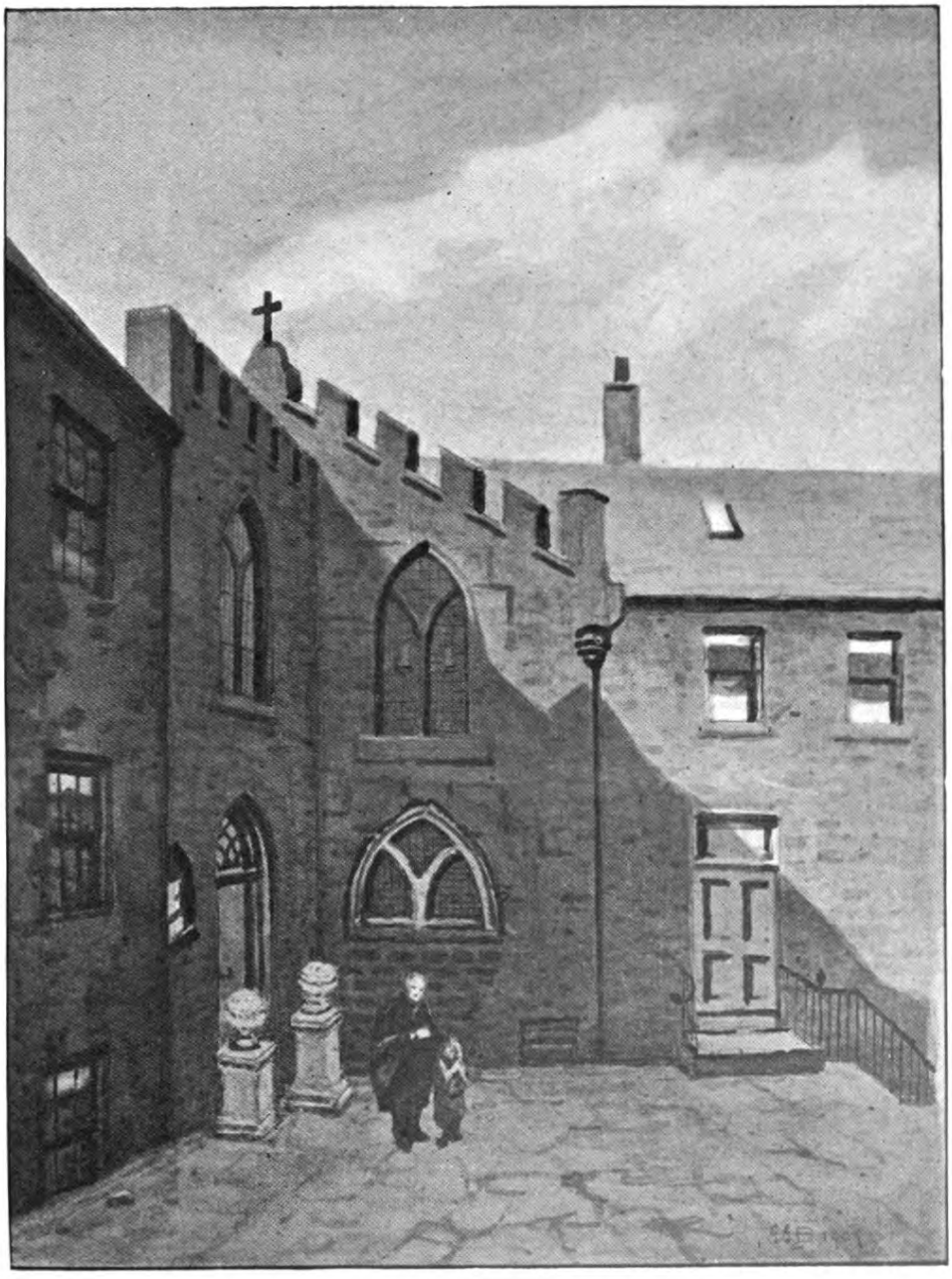
There is an incident in his life worthy of being recorded, which illustrates this trait in his character, and brings out, besides, his alertness and also his severity when there was occasion for it.

One day, passing from his house to the street, he was met by a crowd of supplicants for his charity. The first was a Catholic widow, whom he knew, and he gave her half-a-crown; the next was a Protestant, and to her he gave a fourpenny piece. The Catholic woman seeing this, and thinking no doubt that the Priest did not know to what Church the other belonged, ran after him and whispered, "Oh, Maister Gordon, dae ye no ken it's a Protestant ye gied that money till?" "Oh, wis't?" said Gordon,

apparently surprised. "Aye," said the other, "an' I thocht ye didna ken, that's foo I cam' rinnin' aifter ye t' tell ye." "Weel, weel, ma 'oman, foo muckle siller did I gie you, lat's see't?" "Half-a-croon," she answered, holding up the coin, which Gordon immediately took back as if to inspect it. Then going over to the place where stood the poor woman to whom he had given the fourpenny bit, he said to her, "Lat me see fat I gied ye the noo." She curtseyed, and showed him the small coin. "Weel, gie't back t' me, for they tell me ye're a Protestan', an' I'll gie ye this ither ane instead o't." So she gave back the fourpenny piece, and he gave her in exchange the half-crown, for which she thanked him with a still more profound curtsey. Then turning to the other woman who was still following him, he handed her the smaller coin, saying, "Ma good 'oman, here's the fourpence I gied t' the ither woman, and maybe neist time ye'll min' yer ain bisness."

Yet Priest Gordon was a formidable antagonist to his Protestant contemporaries, and was ever ready to hold his own against all comers. Like Dr. Johnson, too, if his pistol missed fire, he could strike with the butt-end of it. He had many encounters with Dr. Kidd, of Gilcomston Chapel, but there was one of these in particular the fame of which is not likely to die. There are many versions of the story; I give the one which seems to bring out with most characteristic aptitude the two men, who each found in the other a foeman worthy of his steel.

Dealing with some of the leading points in the controversy between Protestant and Catholic, Dr. Kidd delivered a lecture one Sabbath evening upon the character and position of the Virgin Mary as set forth in Scripture. On the day following, the priest and the presbyter happened to meet in the Castlegate, and the latter was at once put upon his defence by the question, "What is this you



ST. PETER'S, CASTLEGATE.

have been saying against the Blessed Virgin Mary?" "I have been saying nothing against her," replied Dr. Kidd. "I only stated that she was a good woman, a saint, in the same sense as my own mother was." Priest Gordon's answer was, "Weel, I winna jist tak' it on me t' say fat difference there micht be atween the twa mithers, but I ken weel there's a michty difference atween the twa sins!" (sons).

On another occasion, it is related, the two good men began in the course of conversation to discuss the doctrine of Purgatory. Dr. Kidd, in his own emphatic way, declared it to be preposterous, a mere figment of the ecclesiastical imagination, having no place in Scripture, and none in the necessity and fitness of things. The canny witty priest went off with this parting thrust—"Weel, a' I've to say, Doctor, is, that ye may gang farrer and fare waur!"

But Charles Gordon did not always come out of the arena with flying colours.

Expert swordsman as he was, he had his humiliating falls, and that, too, sometimes among his own people. In some anti-Popery lectures which had been delivered in certain Aberdeen pulpits, much had been said about the use made of images in the Roman Church. Priest Gordon gave notice that he would answer his opponents on the evening of the following Sunday. The church was more than crowded by persons of all denominations, in expectation of hearing something pithy, and perhaps peppery. In the course of the sermon, in which he sought to demonstrate the absurdity of the accusations levelled against his Church, he said—"Weel, sirs, they tell you we adore eemages; gin ony o' ye thinks that, jist ask the youngest skellach in the chapel, an' he'll laugh at ye. Come here, Johnnie" (to one of the altar-boys). "Do we adore eemages, Johnnie?" Johnnie, suddenly called upon to give witness to his faith before such a large congregation, got confused, and did not reply. "Come

awa', man," said the Priest. "Tell them, do we adore eemages?" The boy, finding it necessary to say something, and the question appearing to invite an affirmative reply, thought he would chance it, and blurted out, "Aye div we!" "Eh man, ye hae deen for me noo. Gae wa' back tae yer seat; a'm thinkin' ye had best gang awa' to ma frien' Dr. Kidd, an' tell him that! Come here, Sandy" (to another boy); "Do we adore eemages, Sandy?" The reply this time was the orthodox answer of the Catechism—"No, by no means, for they have neither sense nor power to hear or help us." "Aye, that's better, man, that's some like the thing; ye had best tak' Johnnie there for half an 'oor efter the sermon and learn him twa or three questions o' his Catechis, or he'll be awa' to Dr. Kidd in nae time!"

In one of his controversial discourses the Priest was rather personal—as polemics of that kind, when the spirit waxes hot, are apt to become—and he

fired this shot, aimed at a well-known minister in the city—"An' fa think ye was sairer on me than ony o' them, but jist ma auld frien'——, who said his questions at the altar rail there?" And he added, "His mither taught him different, and he should ken better."

The following extract from an article in the *Westminster Magazine* for May, 1903, entitled, "People and Places I have known," by Professor William Clark, gives us a glimpse of things in the chapel as they appeared to an outsider, who was occasionally present at the evening service:—

"One of the relaxations of the Aberdeen students was to go to the Roman Catholic Chapel on Sunday evenings, partly to enjoy the music, partly to listen to the discourses of Rev. Charles Gordon, the venerable priest in charge of the church. Mr. Gordon was a dear old gentleman, Scotch to the backbone, speaking pretty broad Scotch even in his sermons—adored by his own people, much respected by the Protestants of Aberdeen. One of the attractions to his "chapel" was his habit of preaching strongly Roman and anti-Protestant sermons on Sunday evenings. Martin Luther and

John Knox were held up to universal execration in the most delightful broad Scotch, and with a vehemence that might have satisfied the Grand Inquisitor. Occasionally these attacks produced bursts of merriment from his Protestant hearers, and if these became audible—which they sometimes did—the author was ejected by the sexton. This was no unusual occurrence, since the laughter was sometimes unavoidable, and the sexton was always on the watch.

Another thing this functionary attended to. We Presbyterian youths had been accustomed to put on our hats and caps the moment the blessing was pronounced; and we were conscious of no impropriety in doing the same in the Roman Catholic Chapel. As we passed along to the door, however, the sexton was ready for us, and quietly removed our hats from our heads, placing them in our hands. One evening he tried this with Duncan Anderson, who did not appreciate the attention. Duncan clapped one hand on his cap, preventing its removal, and presented the other (fist) before the face of the astonished verger, who instantly desisted from his attempts to enforce his ideas of propriety."

VII

On the Street

CHAPTER VII

On the Street

DEAN RAMSAY, in his inimitable "Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character," thus refers to the hero of these pages:—"I recollect Priest Gordon, a genuine Aberdonian, and a man beloved by all, rich and poor. He was a sort of chaplain to Menzies of Pitfodels, and visited in all the country families round Aberdeen. I remember once his being at Banchory Lodge, and thus apologising to my aunt for going out of the room—'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Forbes, for leaving you, but I maun jist gae doon to the garden and say mi bit wordies'—these 'bit wordies' being in fact the portion of the Breviary which he was bound to recite—so easily and pleasantly were those matters then referred to."

But while Gordon had a ministry in the mansions, and amongst the better classes of his communion throughout Aberdeen and surrounding districts, a great part of his time was spent upon the streets and in the closes of the east end of the city as a succourer of the poor. Had Gordon been a monk, he would have been of the Franciscan order.

He was not a learned recluse, a student, or maker of books. He was a man of the people, and the homes and haunts of the distressed were his places of resort. Countless stories are told of his overflowing beneficence, and it has to be remembered that while many friends entrusted him with money as their almoner, much of his bountifulness was owing to his own severe economy and self-denial.

There was nothing maudlin in his sympathy or indiscriminate in his charity. While he freely extended a hand moved by a kindly heart, he always kept his weather-eye open, and held all under the control of a clear and vigorous under-

standing. For many years he had a responsible part to take in connection with the public Soup Kitchen in Aberdeen. It was his practice to taste the soup himself, to see that it was of proper quality. One day, on going in, he noticed at the fireside a small pot with something in it. "What's in this pot?" he inquired. "Oh, sir, it's a wee bit beef for oor ain dinner," was the reply of the attendant. "There's nae twa pots here," said the Priest, and with that he emptied the contents into the big pot among the broth, and said—"If I see that again, I'll get ye dismissed."

A woman once called on him, who said that she had not eaten anything the whole day. The Priest thought from her appearance that she might not have tasted any food, but he had reasons for concluding that she could not with equal truth have asserted that she had not drunk anything that day. However, his charitable heart pleaded on her behalf, and, giving her the benefit of the doubt,

he put a coin into her hand "tae buy a bit o' meat wi'." But no sooner had she gone than he began to question the wisdom of his act, and he followed her to see how she would spend the money. Unobserved by her, he watched her enter a public-house. He speedily followed her in, but by the time he arrived, she had obtained and was in the act of drinking a glass of whisky, the publican placing her change on the counter. Quietly stepping forward, he picked up the money and put it in his pocket, saying, "Noo, ma leddy, ye've gotten yer dram, an' I'll jist tak' ma cheenge."

He had a great dislike to persons striving to keep up appearances, which their own means could not support. There was a member of his congregation in poor circumstances, and to whom he sometimes rendered assistance. On his calling to see her one day, she said, with rather a proud air, "Dae ye see I've gotten a new carpet?" He took no notice. When he rose to go away, she

again said—"Ye're no noticin' that I've gotten a new carpet?" The Priest quietly replied—"My mither niver had a carpet!"

He carried the spirit of ascetic self-renunciation a little too far, sometimes, in refusing to accept comforts which Providence placed within his reach. He was roused out of bed one night to attend the death-bed of one of his people, who dwelt beyond the Bridge of Don. With thoughtful kindness, the family of the sick person sent one of their members to hire a cab, so that the good Priest might be spared the discomfort of a long walk during the night. When the young woman reached the chapel-house and gave Priest Gordon her message, with the information that a cab was waiting for him, he said—"Fat's that ye say, lassie? A kairrage for me! Na, na, our Lord didna gang aboot in kairrages, an' I'm nae ga'in' tae gang naither. Gang ye hame in the kairrage yersel', lassie, an' tell them I'm on the

road, an' I'll be seen aifter ye, an' I'll gang on shank's mere, as I aye gang."

Let me give a few examples of his overflowing and unfailing compassion. One Sunday night, in the depth of winter, when it was bitterly cold, he called at a house in York Street after the conclusion of his evening service, and from underneath his cloak he took out a pair of blankets and spread them over the bed of a sick girl, saying to her mother, "It's a hantle caulder the nicht, an' I mindit that the cauld micht hasten her end, an' I brocht them doon to help to keep her warm."

A man Willie Reid, a member of the congregation, who supported his mother, but had been several months out of work, one day received a message from the chapel-house that he was wanted. On his calling, the Priest said—"Come awa', Willie man; sit doon. Ye'll be winnerin' fat I can wint wi' ye? Weel, it wis t' tell ye that there wis a lass called t' see me, an' gied me a pound

note t' dae onything wi' that I liket. Noo, I sent for you t' gie ye the notie, for ye ha' been a file oot o' work, an' I didna ken onybody that cud be sairer needin't than you." William Reid, in relating the incident long after, said it was a lucky pound for him, as he had never wanted work nor money since for forty years.

On a fine summer day, a young widow was taking a walk with her children in the outskirts of the city near "Split the Wind." As she sat down to rest at the roadside busy with her "shank," the Priest passed, and glancing at the widow's weeds and the young bairns around her, he remarked—"Aye, ma good woman, are a' thae bairnies yours?" On receiving an affirmative answer, he went on—'An' hae ye naebody to help ye to work for them?" The young widow replied that she had nobody but herself. "Gweed help ye than," said the Priest, "for a've nae doot ye hae eneuch a dee," and, handing her half-a-crown, he passed on his way.

But all who met him on the street did not find him equally responsive. He sometimes was very sarcastic, and in his humorous way would administer a check or rebuke, which was none the less telling that there was a merry twinkle in his eye as the caustic words fell from his lips.

A young priest who did not keep his light under a bushel, and was greatly enamoured of his own ideas, proposed to build a new chapel in his district, and had plans made for it which he had to submit to Priest Gordon's inspection. Accompanied by a member of the Aberdeen congregation, he went in quest of the old man, and met him in front of his schools in Constitution Street. With great volubility and a little extravagance, not to say forwardness, the matter was pressed for approval. "Haud man, haud," was the crushing rejoinder; "I have something of mair consequence than that to tell you. I doot ye dinna ken that oor rabbit claikit this mornin'!"

VIII

The End

CHAPTER VIII

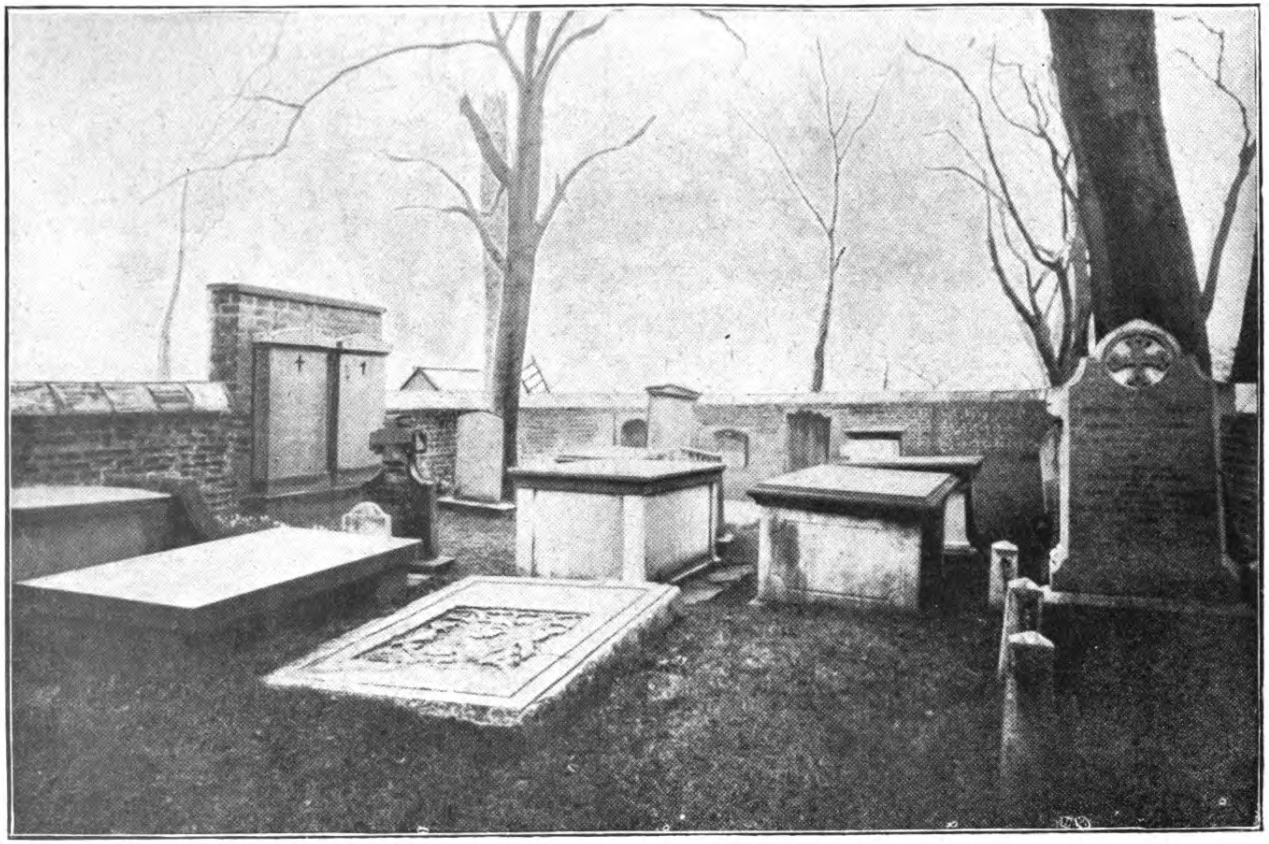
The End

LIKE many other men in whom their fellows trust, and to whom they have learned to look up for leadership, Priest Gordon found that life became fuller in opportunities for works of usefulness as the years went on. The sphere of duty widened, and its claims and calls multiplied as experience advanced, wisdom ripened, and confidence was established between him and those about him. Truly to him that hath shall be given! What invested capital is equal in its returns to that which lies in a good man's life? Life to such a man means so much, and is ever meaning more.

In 1827, a heavy and responsible piece of work was entrusted to him in connec-

tion with the removal of the Seminary from Aquhorties to the house of Blairs,* which, with the grounds attached, had been left to the Roman Catholic Church by Mr. Menzies of Pitfodels. Considerable alterations and extensions had to be made to fit the house for its new use, and Gordon was asked to add the superintendence of this work to his other numerous duties. During the two years these operations were carried on, the Priest proved himself—what some would not have considered antecedently probable—to be a very capable as well as conscientious man of affairs. Amongst the treasures in the archives of Blairs College is a financial statement of the moneys which passed through Gordon's hands while he had the management of the property. It is a model of exactness and clearness, and there is one item in it which is eminently characteristic. In balancing accounts showing income and expenditure, a sum is put to the credit

* Appendix No. IX.



From Photograph by Mr. W. F. Webster, Chanonry.

THE SNOW CHURCHYARD, OLD ABERDEEN.

(The raised stone in the centre is over the grave of Rev. Charles Gordon).

of the College to cover any mistakes he may have unwittingly made to the detriment of its funds while they were in his hands.

In the following year, Rev. Charles Fraser—who carried on the correspondence with Dr. Kidd, which has been made public—was associated with Charles Gordon in charge of the mission in Aberdeen, and from that time until the end of his life he was seldom without an assistant. In the year 1830, he began the erection of the schools in Constitution Street, which stand as a monument to his untiring zeal. To the schools he added two wings to serve as orphanages for boys and girls of his congregation—the crowning act of his life, giving ideal completion to it, as that of a man whose heart ever went out in overflowing affection and tender concern for the rising generation. He publicly stated that he never had any money of his own. All had come to him in legacies or donations, which he simply held in trust for religious and charitable

objects: "I got it from the Church, and it shall go to the Church."

In 1842 he was mainly instrumental in the erection of a chapel in Woodside for the operatives belonging to his Church who were employed at the Printfield.

In 1848, when his health began visibly to decline, he applied for and obtained an additional assistant. The task of instructing and catechising the young was one in which he particularly delighted, and which he did not hand over to another till compelled by sheer failure of strength to do so.

In course of time he was visited by a sickness which would have sent an ordinary person to bed, but Priest Gordon could not be induced to relax his ordinary routine. Every morning at five o'clock, winter and summer, he was to be found on his knees before the altar in the church, saying his prayers and making his daily meditation. His medical adviser expostulated with him. "Really, Mr. Gordon,"

he said, "you are tempting Providence. How can you ever expect to become well again if you expose yourself as you are doing every day—and so early in the morning too—in the cold chapel?"

"Na, na, sir," the Priest replied, "na, na, there's nae fear o' me catchin' the cauld there! Fa iver heard o' onybody gettin' the cauld fan they're sayin' their prayers?"

At last increasing infirmities made it necessary that he should retire from active responsibility, and leave the chapel house. He took up his abode in apartments adjoining the schools in Constitution Street, where he occupied himself chiefly in taking a fatherly interest in the children. A fitting and beautiful close to the long and consistent career of a man of truly childlike character, that he should end his days among the children!

The following communication from one who was a scholar in the Constitution Street School at the time of Priest

Gordon's death, gives a vivid impression of the old man, and his ways in dealing with the children. Although only seven years of age at the time, the writer's recollections of the appearance and personality of the Priest are quite distinct. He recognises a true likeness in the current portraits of him, and even in the unyielding granite of his statue in front of the school :—

"After school hours the children used occasionally to be marshalled in front of his house, which was adjoining, and there—before a row of fruit-laden stalls—he would address to us some kind words of advice, and then distribute his gifts wholesale. From time to time he would take me aside for a talk, all the while toying in an absent way with my ears between his fingers. He would then lead me into his house, always scrupulously neat, and treat me to his favourite delicacy, fruit cake.

My last recollections are connected with his end; of the sadness and awe with which the news of his death was received in our house, and of the solemn tones in which his loss was spoken of. That evening or the following day I was taken to Constitution Street to look for the last time on his kind face.

The End

The scenes at his funeral, the hushed crowds in Castle Street awaiting the cortege from Chapel Court, the closed shops, the long line of the procession down King Street, the public authorities following the coffin on the bearers' shoulders, the double line of red on either side where the Highlanders slowly stepped, all is indelibly imprinted on my mind; and how the novel sight of such public honours rendered by Aberdeen to a Catholic priest impressed my boyish mind."

After months of increasing weakness, the mortal frame at last succumbed to the weight of years, and what was imperishable in him passed from the earth. He died on the 24th November, 1855, in the 84th year of his age, and the 61st year of his ministry. But to that part of the earth whose inhabitants had seen him go in and out amongst them for so many years, proving himself to be one who had done justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly before God, he remained a living memory. That was proved on the funeral day, Wednesday, the 28th, when all the honour that could be paid to the dead was paid to him. The body was conveyed

to the chapel some days before, and an imposing service was held, in which many of the clergy of the north took part, including three grand-nephews of the deceased. The people of Aberdeen in large numbers came out to pay the last mark of respect. The Lord Provost and several Magistrates formed part of the long procession to the place of interment in the Snow Churchyard,* Old Aberdeen, and both sides of the coffin were lined by a detachment from the depot of the 79th Highlanders.

There is something in human nature which, as by an eternal law, is respectfully responsive to goodness wherever and in whatever garb it is to be seen. This spontaneous uprising of reverence for moral worth and Christ-like devotion to suffering humanity o'erleaps the bounds of Church and sect, and brings us into the large place of that great spiritual kingdom whose glory it is to reflect the excellency of the adorable God who is Love.

*Appendix No. XII.

The End

Such a life as we have been following lifts the thoughts up to what is universal and essential in those constituent elements of character which make a man after God's own heart. Such a life tends so far to unite men of diverse creeds who have in them the soul of sincerity, by showing impressively what they have in common when living up to the highest they know. Such a life reveals to us what is possible to a plain man who has a single-hearted desire to serve his day and generation, and who endeavours to do so by translating the Sermon on the Mount into daily practice —humbly living in the Presence and walking in the footsteps of Him who preached it.

Appendix

APPENDIX

No. I

Alexander Geddes

"Alexander Geddes, a Roman Catholic divine, critic, and miscellaneous writer, was born in 1737 at Pathheads, in the parish of Ruthven, Banffshire. His father, also named Alexander Geddes, the second of four brothers, was a small crofter on the estate of Arradowl. His mother, whose name was Mitchell, was a native of the neighbouring parish of Bellie. Both were Roman Catholics. The rudiments of his education were acquired in the village school, kept by a woman named Sellar. His parents being in possession of an English Bible, he applied himself, as soon as he could read, to the study of it, and is said to have known the historical parts by heart before he was eleven years old. The laird of Arradowl having engaged a tutor named Shearer, from Aberdeen, for his two sons, took young Geddes, with his cousin, John Geddes, who afterwards became Roman Catholic bishop of Dunkeld, and another boy, into his house, to be educated gratuitously along with them. At the age of four-

teen he was sent to the Roman Catholic Seminary of Scalan, in the Highlands, to be educated for the service of his Church."

From "The Scottish Nation," p. 286.

"Alexander Geddes a celebrated rationalistic divine of the Roman Catholic Church, was born in 1737, in the parish of Ruthven in Banff, of Catholic parents, who were very poor. Discovering superior talents, he was sent at fourteen to an obscure local seminary, from which he removed at twenty-one to the Scots College, Paris, where he studied Latin, Greek, and several modern languages. In 1764 he returned to Scotland, and officiated for some time as a priest in Dundee. Soon after he was appointed chaplain and tutor in the family of the Earl of Traquair, after which he accepted a charge as parish priest in his native county.

In 1779 he published 'Select Satires of Horace' in English verse, with adaptations to present time and manners. This work attracted attention, brought him a profit of £100, and flattered him with hopes of literary success in a wider and more conspicuous sphere. In 1780 he removed to London, having before leaving Scotland obtained the degree of LL.D. from the University of Aberdeen. Arrived in the metropolis, he officiated occasionally as a priest, but devoted himself mainly to learned and literary pursuits, and finally withdrew himself in 1782 from his priestly functions, in order

to prepare and publish a new version of the Bible for the use of the English Catholics. Lord Petre allowed him a salary of £200. He had conceived the idea of such a work a good many years before, and in 1785 he published his prospectus of the work, in the preparation of which he received encouragement from Lowth and Kennicot. His plan included an exhibition of the various readings of the original texts, explanatory notes, and critical observations. The first volume appeared in 1792, the second in 1797. Of three hundred and forty-three subscribers, only a few were Roman Catholics. His orthodoxy had fallen under suspicion, and the work, as soon as it appeared, was attacked from various quarters, and was at length prohibited to the use of English Catholics by a decree of the Vicar Apostolic. In 1800 he discovered his rationalistic unbelief without disguise, in a volume of 'Critical Remarks on the Hebrew Scriptures, corresponding with a new translation of the Bible,' in which he attacks the credit of Moses as a historian, legislator, and moralist, and compares his claims to supernatural intercourse to these of Numa and Lycurgus. His rationalism was so extreme that even Dr. Priestly 'doubted if such a man as Geddes, who believed so little and conceded so much, could be a Christian.' He died February 26, 1802, and was buried at Paddington. His learning was extensive, and his writings very numerous, but many of them were upon trivial

subjects, and of no value. Irritable in temper, dogmatic in tone, and rash in judgment, his erudition was ill-directed and applied, and the over-partial estimate formed of his merits by many of his contemporaries has not been supported by the judgment of a later age."

From "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography," p. 578.

No. II

Scalan, Glenlivet

"At the head of the smiling and well-cultivated valley through which the small River Livet finds its way to its confluence with the Spey, the traveller, passing round the base of a hill named the Bochel, enters a vast amphitheatre, surrounded by hills covered with heather. This amphitheatre is the Braes of Glenlivet. In its south-eastern quarter, about half-a-mile from the foot of the range of hills that separates Banffshire from Aberdeenshire, is the site of the little Seminary of Scalan. During the times of trial and of danger through which the Catholic body in Scotland passed in the early part of the 18th century, the efforts of Bishop Nicholson, and of his coadjutor, Bishop Gordon, were much directed to the maintenance of schools in the remoter, and therefore safer districts of the High-

lands, for the preparation of boys for the Foreign Colleges, and for the education of Catholic children in general. But about the year 1712, encouraged by the temporary lull in the activity of their oppressors, and stimulated to exertion by the scarcity of Missionaries, the Bishops began to entertain a project for the erection of a little Seminary, in a district less remote, where, besides the ordinary purposes which their schools had hitherto served, they might themselves educate and ordain Missionaries for the superabundant labour. Assistance was solicited and obtained from abroad, and the project became a reality. In a retired corner of the estates of the Catholic Duke of Gordon, the Bishops found a place in every way suitable to their purpose. Far from any public thoroughfare, secluded from view by a circle of hills, and at that time surrounded in part by a morass, and reached only by a bridle-path, Scalan was just such a spot as the Bishops could have desired. It was situated, indeed, as we are told by one who knew it intimately —[Mr. W. Reid, 1778,]—in as cold and stormy a place as there is in Scotland; the greater part of the provisions and necessaries of the house had to be brought from a great distance. But it was begun in troublous times; and it was the very ruggedness and remoteness of its situation that recommended it to the choice of the Bishops. The protection of the powerful Family of Gordon was another element of security for the infant Seminary. On a little

eminence, therefore, close to the left, or western, branch of the Crombie, a mountain stream that feeds the Livet, Bishop Gordon proceeded to establish his Seminary. He held at various times Ordinations there. Several valuable Missionaries were trained there; one of whom was called through life 'Scalanensis,' to distinguish him from others of the same name. It was there that Dr. Hugh Macdonald, first Bishop of the Highland District, received his education."

". . . The Author can never forget the day when he first visited this venerable spot. He returned next day to verify the measurements he had taken and the descriptive notes he prepared overnight. The sky was obscured by light drifting clouds, although it was the first day of July. As he crossed the moor with his companions and guides—the Missionaries in Glenlivet and Chapelton—he observed the secluded character of the Seminary. For without the shelter of a tree, it remains invisible to any one approaching it from the north-west, till he has arrived within a quarter of a mile of the door, owing to the advantage taken of slight undulations of the ground lying between the head of Glenlivet and the Seminary. Reaching, at last, the left bank of the Crombie, we ascended the stream to the site of the original building, which the soldiers destroyed in 1746, and which is now marked only by a green mound. We then

crossed a wooden foot-bridge and entered the little court-yard of the later Seminary, about 70 paces from the right bank of the stream. The house is a substantially built farm-house of two stories and an attic, thatched with turf, and about 50 feet in length, by 16 in width. We entered it from the court by the only door in the middle of the west side of the house. A narrow passage on the same side connects both ends of the House with the entrance-door. Turning to the left, at the end of this passage, we opened the door of what was 'Bishop Hay's Room'; a square chamber, occupying the entire north end of the building, lighted by a window that looks into the court and by another that looks down the stream; and with a narrow, light closet attached to it, where the Bishop kept his books. In this room it was that he consecrated Bishop Alexander Macdonald."

From Dr. Gordon's "Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland," pp. 275 and 276.

No. III

Aquhorties and Blairs

"On the removal to Aquhorties, Bishop Hay set to work to improve the property. He built the large house which stands unaltered to the present day, and improved the land, which is described as

in a miserable condition when he acquired it. His efforts were most successful. The hitherto waste land was brought under cultivation, and the grounds round the house were laid out in a style which showed his good taste. In the centre of a pretty little lake he built an artificial island, and this, together with the water conduits, still exists intact.

As one stands facing the house, the window on the extreme right on the first floor is the room where he spent his last fourteen years, and where he passed to another life. There has been inserted in the wall of this room a brass tablet bearing the inscription: 'Here the Venerable Bishop Hay received his eternal reward, 15 Oct., 1811, æt. 83. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints.'

Bishop Hay was buried, as has been stated above, in the church of St. Ninian. The present proprietor of Fetternear has erected over the grave a handsome stone monument, upon which will be placed a brass commemorative of the holy Bishop. Within this church is also the altar, so often used by him at Aquhorties; whilst at Fetternear are preserved his chalice, altar stone, and altar carels, breviary, and missal.

There still stands in front of the house at Aquhorties the good Bishop's sun-dial. Of this an anecdote is told to the effect that the Bishop, desiring to know the hour of the day, called to one of the maid-servants to go and see what time it was

by the dial. The good lassie, whose muscular powers exceeded her intellectual, not knowing how to read the dial, and unwilling not to comply with her master's request, took up the heavy stone upon which the dial was fixed and carried it bodily to the Bishop that he might read the time for himself! The kind old man well knew how to see the ludicrous side of the incident."

"*Ancient Catholic Homes of Scotland*," *by Dom Odo Blundell, O.S.B., pp.* 187-188.

"It was on a day in August, 1853, that the Author of this Memoir visited the House at Aquhorties, no longer a Seminary, but in excellent condition as a farm-house. It is built of solid granite, three stories high, with an attic, 80 feet in length by 22 in width, facing the south. The river Don is a beautiful object from the front windows. Its little pleasure-ground, ornamented with shrubberies and a small pond, is surrounded by a formal belt of trees, in the style of landscape gardening common to the period. At the western extremity of the building is the Chapel, a room about 20 feet by 14, and rising to the height of the second story. A door admits the congregation without their entering the house. A gallery runs round the two sides of the Chapel; in the gallery facing the altar, there were seats for the Fetternear family, and for a few people. In another gallery, on the Epistle side of the altar, communicating with the

schoolroom, the boys used to sit. The altar and altar-rails were still preserved as they had been originally; the excellent tenant having formed a resolution that a place which had once been dedicated to Divine Worship, should not be turned to meaner uses. Two Corinthian pillars above the altar still supported a canopy. The space on the floor of the Chapel was used by the congregation. To the back of the house, a large and fruitful garden, first laid out by the Bishop, is in the highest order."

From Dr. Gordon's "Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland," p. 396.

"Great as must have been the change from Scalan to Aquhorties, the difference between that and the present Blairs College is still more striking. From 1829, however, till 1899, the buildings were much less sumptuous, and there was well-grounded complaint of their inconvenience. If the old Laird of Pitfodels could have foreseen to what a successful issue his proposal of the transfer of the College to his estate of Blairs was ultimately to lead, the worthy benefactor to the Church in Scotland would have had good reason to be proud of his gift. No one can visit the present College of St. Mary without being struck by the completeness and grandeur of the *ensemble*. Besides the general effect of the fine situation from the outside, the interior leaves little to be desired, the Library and the Church especially

should contribute to convey to the students as lofty an ideal of the dignity of the vocation for which they are being educated as could be expected from many a learned discourse on the subject. In the principal reception room are the celebrated pictures of Mary Queen of Scots, Cardinal Beaton, and James III., the old Pretender; but to most minds the most striking portrait is the beautiful likeness of Bishop Hay."

From "Ancient Catholic Homes of Scotland," by Dom Odo Blundell, O.S.B., p. 189.

No. IV

Douay College: Queen Margaret's Head

"According to Papebroch's Appendix to the life of the Saint and Queen, her head was brought to the Castle of Edinburgh at the desire of Queen Mary, who was in it at the time, and on her flight into England, in 1567, it was removed to the house of the Laird of Dury, where it was preserved for many years by a Benedictine monk, but in the year 1597 was by him given up to the missionary Jesuits. One of these, John Robie, conveyed it to Antwerp. There John Malder, Bishop of Antwerp, after proper examination, issued his letters, on 15th September, 1620, authenticating the head as that of Margaret,

and granting leave for its being exposed to public veneration. After seven years the relic was translated to the Scots College at Douay, where, by permission of Herman, Bishop of Arras, and his successor Paul Boudot, it was again exposed, as a genuine relic, to public veneration. Pope Innocent X., by a brief dated 4th March, 1645, granted a plenary indulgence to those who should visit the Church of the College on the festival of St. Margaret; and this grant was confirmed by his successors at various times afterwards. It is believed that this relic disappeared amid the tempest of the French Revolution."

From John Hill Burton's "History of Scotland," Vol. I., p. 381, footnote.

Here is an account of one of the fellow-students of Charles Gordon, in the above College:—

"He, Andrew Curruthers, entered in the sixteenth year of his age the Scots College in Douay. In the course of the six years that he remained there he gave proof in the public schools of the University of that place of astonishing progress in the branches of literature and science. He was already well advanced in his theological studies when the terrible Revolution, which broke out in France in 1792, obliged him to abandon them for a time, and to make his escape along with others of his fellow-students to his native land. He arrived there, at length, in safety, after having encountered

great difficulties and incurred much danger. On his return to Scotland he was appointed Prefect of Studies at Scalan. He was noted there for the perfect order and discipline which he maintained, and after a short term of office he went to complete his theological studies at Aberdeen, under the guidance of the Rev. John Farquharson, formerly Rector of Douay College. In due time he was advanced to the priesthood by Bishop Hay. His ordination took place on the festival of the Annunciation, 25th March, 1795."

From "The Catholics of Scotland," pp. 828-829.

No. V

Priest Mathieson and the Seceder Minister

"Towards the end of the last century, a worthy Roman Catholic clergyman, well known as 'Priest Mathieson,' and universally respected in the district, had charge of a mission in Aberdeenshire, and for a long time made his journeys on a piebald pony, the priest and his 'pyet shelty' sharing an affectionate recognition wherever they came. One one occasion, however, he made his appearance on a steed of a different description, and, passing near a Seceding meeting-house, he foregathered with the minister, who, after the usual kindly greetings, missing the

familiar pony, said, 'Ou, Priest! fat's come o' the auld pyet?' 'He's deid, minister.' 'Weel, he was an auld faithfu' servant, and ye wad nae doot gie him the offices o' the church?' 'Na, minister,' said his friend, not quite liking this allusion to his priestly offices, 'I didna dee that, for ye see he turned Seceder afore he deed, an' I buried him like a beast.' He then rode quietly away. This worthy man, however, could, when occasion required, rebuke with seriousness as well as point. Always a welcome guest at the houses of both clergy and gentry, he is said on one occasion to have met with a laird, whose hospitality he had thought it proper to decline, and on being asked the reason for the interruption of his visits, answered, 'Ye ken, an' I ken; but, laird, God kens!'"

From Dean Ramsay's "Reminiscences of Scottish Life."

No. VI

The Correspondence Between Cardinal Newman and Principal Brown, Aberdeen Free Church College

When Principal Brown published his "Life of Dr. Duncan," he sent a copy of it "From the Author" to Dr. Newman, and that was how the correspondence began between two men, who, though far separated ecclesiastically and doctrinally,

could each recognise the worth that was in the other. In Dr. Garden Blaikie's "Dr. David Brown, D.D., LL.D.," a whole chapter is devoted to this correspondence, which began in 1872, and closed in 1882. The perusal of these letters will repay the reader. Dr. Blaikie thus writes regarding them:— "Unfortunately, we have been unable to obtain the letters of Dr. Brown to Dr. Newman, but the occasions of them were generally the despatch of lectures or other publications, the tenor of which we know, so that in most cases Dr. Newman's allusions to them can be easily understood. Evidently, Dr. Brown attached great importance to the letters, and seems to have expected that they would be made public. In a footnote to an article on another subject in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, he says: 'I had asked my publisher to send him a copy of a book of mine ("The Life of Dr. John Duncan"), which he acknowledged in a letter to myself; and as this book revealed to him much both about my friend and myself, with which he sympathised, a correspondence ensued which continued for years. . . . Copies of eighteen of his letters are now in the hands of his literary executor, and will appear when his *Letters* are published. The best of Dr. Newman, along with his defects, will never be known till these letters are published.'" Extracts from two of the letters are here given:—

Priest Gordon

"THE ORATORY, *January* 14, 1875.

". . . It is indeed to me strange that, being, as the world would say, at your Antipodes, still in those all-important points about which you write I should be one with you; and I rejoice in it as one compensation of the cruel overthrow of faith which we see on all sides of us, that, as the setting of the sun brings out the stars, so great principles are found to shine out, which are hailed by men of various religions as their own in common when infidelity prevails."

"THE ORATORY, *April* 23, 1878.

". . . However, I will say at once, because I doubt whether you are aware of it, that I have always looked at the Free Kirk of Scotland with admiration. I consider the movement to come from God, and to be a portion of that religious revival with which He has been, and is, visiting Western Christendom, in connection with that contemporaneous burst of infidelity which comes from the enemy of Truth; and I think that whatever success the Free Kirk has in its substance, comes from the truth that is in it. And with this avowal I close this letter, wishing you the best blessings from above in association with this sacred and joyful season.

Most truly yours,

JOHN H. NEWMAN."

"Dr. David Brown, D.D., LL.D.," by Dr. Garden Blaikie, pp. 243-244.

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No. VII

Dr. Dyce Davidson's Mother and Dr. Garden Blaikie

"My first tutor was Alexander Dyce Davidson, to whom I have already referred as having been afterwards minister of the West Church. Of the love which I came to have for that man I cannot speak too strongly. In my first winter at the Grammar School, when I was but eight and a half, as my family were at that time living in the country, I was placed as a boarder at the house of his parents. They were in very humble circumstances, and his mother was a Roman Catholic, but a more excellent or lovable woman I have seldom known. With her I read my chapter of the Bible at night, and said my prayers. Of course she never interfered with my Protestant upbringing, and she left on my mind the impression of a singularly devout as well as sweet nature."

From "William Garden Blaikie: An Autobiography," p. 39.

No. VIII

St. Peter's, Castlegate

"The journals of the Presbytery of Aberdeen set forth that in 1698 Mass was said in Count Leslie's house by his brother, that there were four priests in

the burgh, and a nunnery containing six young females, and that a school for children was kept by two 'Papist women.' Lists of Catholics seem at this time to have been transmitted from the inferior Church Courts to the General Assembly, and in 1700 eighty persons of that faith were found in the city, of whom the principal were the lairds of Cairnfield, Hilton, Kingoodie, and the lady of Wartle. In the succeeding century they possessed two meeting-houses, where they assembled in small bands under cloud of night—the one was a ruinous garret in the Gallowgate, the other a gloomy cellar in the Shiprow opposite to the Shore Brae. In 1772, they erected a house of moderate dimensions, the ground-floor of which was fitted up as a place of worship. In 1803-4 the number of Catholics increasing with the growth of the population, it was found necessary to provide additional accommodation for divine service, and the present chapel was built by their priest, the Rev. Charles Gordon."

From "Book of Bon-Accord," by Jos. Robertson, Vol. I., pp. 227-229.

"Robertson says that in 1700 the number of Roman Catholics in the neighbourhood did not exceed 80. . . . . Ten years after the largest of their Castlegate purchases, the Roman Catholics of the district erected on a part of the foreland a

plain dwelling-house of moderate dimensions, the ground-floor of which was fitted up as a place of worship. This house is now the chapel-house, but part of it was the chapel until 1803, when, on the site of the Chapel of the Templars, in the garden, they built and dedicated to St. Peter the present edifice lying between Dancing Master Peacock's Close and Gardener's Lane, and all that remains of the garden is some dozen square feet of grass-covered earth."

From "The Knights Templar in and around Aberdeen," pp. 5-6, by Alexander Walker, F.S.A., Scot.

"In 1773 the attention of Bishops of Lowland districts was at this time directed to the building of a new chapel at Aberdeen. It had already been begun and threatened to be very expensive. It was erected on the site of the present chapel-house, Chapel Court, Aberdeen; the entrance to the chapel being by the present house door, and the house of that day being entered by what is now the middle window (above the door) which was reached by an outer stone staircase."

Dr. Gordon's "Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland," Vol. IV., p. 105.

Priest Gordon

No. IX

Mr. John Menzies of Pitfodels and Blairs College

"For many generations the Menzies had great influence in and about Aberdeen, but being staunch Romanists they were not secure from the persecutions that those of the same faith were subjected to by the Anti-Popish party, after the introduction of the reformed religion. An eccentric member of the family who lived at Nigg, and looked upon Protestants as the reverse of an enlightened body, had possibly borne the persecution of his ancestors in mind when, on being asked by the Rev. Dr. Cruden for a subscription to assist to 'bring in the heathen,' profanely enquired—'An' far the d—l wad ye bring them till, Doctor?'

Mr. John Menzies, who died a very old man in 1843, was the last of his race. He was a member of the Abbotsford Club, and at his expense the volume entitled 'Extracta Variis e Cronicis Scocie,' was printed for the members. He was one of the most accomplished gentlemen of his time, and his purse was open to the poor of all denominations. He died, as was to be expected, a true believer in the religion of his forefathers, of his attachment to which he gave proof by making over by deed, dated in 1827, the mansion-house and lands of Blairs

for the establishment of a college for young men designed for the Roman Catholic priesthood.

The mansion-house, now Blairs College, has been much enlarged since Mr. Menzies' time, and is occupied by five or six superiors or teachers, and over fifty students. Besides a library of great value, it contains a number of interesting paintings, including an original portrait of Cardinal Beaton, also a remarkable portrait of Mary Queen of Scots. An engraving of the former was made at the expense of the late Mr. Patrick Chalmers of Aldbar, for the 'Registrum de Aberbrothoc,' and the latter bears Latin inscriptions printed in 'Memorials of Angus and the Mearns' (p. 482), along with translations, which were obligingly made for that work by the Right Rev. Bishop Strain, when president of the College."

From "Epitaphs and Inscriptions," etc., by Andrew Jervise, F.S.A. Scot., pp. 119-120.

No. X

Summary of the Will of the Late Rev. Charles Gordon

The Reverend Charles Gordon left a General Deed of Settlement dated 8th November, 1852, and a Codicil of later date, by which he appointed as his Trustees The Right Reverend James Kyle, Bishop of the Northern Diocese

of Scotland; his grandnephews REVEREND JOHN THOMSON, then at Peterhead, afterwards at Elgin; REVEREND JAMES GORDON, Beauly; and REVEREND CHARLES MACDONALD, then at Glengairn, now the Venerable Provost of the Chapter of the Diocese of Aberdeen; and THE REVEREND ANDREW FLEMING, Blairs College; along with MR. CHARLES MCGREGOR, manufacturer in Aberdeen; and MR. THOMAS SANGSTER, advocate in Aberdeen; and he expressed the desire that two of his Trustees should in all time coming be two Catholic laymen. He, during his lifetime, acquired by gifts and careful management Heritable Property at Chapel Court, Justice Street, and also property at Constitution Street for Schools and Orphanage, and at Tanfield, Woodside, for School and Chapel, and others. He carefully distinguished in his Settlement what belonged to himself personally, and what was held for Church and other purposes, and in order that full effect should be given to his intentions regarding the various properties, he left four separate Deeds of Declarations of Trust and Instructions carefully drawn up so as to make sure there could be no mistake on any point after his decease. He directed that the yearly revenue from his own private estate, real and personal, should be divided between the Catholic Schools and the Catholic Orphans of Aberdeen. He left a small legacy to each of his three grandnephews, and also to John Smith, student at St. Mary's

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College, Blairs (now Monsignor Smith of Stirling), to be paid on the completion of his ecclesiastical studies; to his young friend Charles Devine, then a student at Propaganda College, Rome (now Canon Devine, the priest in charge at the Church at Woodside, for which he had made provision), and to William Stopani, student at Valadolid, afterwards well known in Aberdeen as Monsignor Stopani, Administrator of St. Mary's Cathedral. His faithful housekeeper, Grace Burnett, and George Riach, his assistant, were not forgotten. He had always regarded Mr. Charles McGregor, one of his tenants, as a true friend and benefactor, and in his Settlement he states:—"I have offered my friend Mr. Charles McGregor a lease of the large shop and household building situated at Justice Street, Aberdeen, which he, of course through delicacy, has declined to accept of from me, but I expect that my Trustees will not think of removing him from the premises, and that they will allow him to continue in possession and so long as he may require on the same terms that he at present holds."

He recommended with all earnestness the utmost simplicity and regard to economy with respect to his funeral, and adds—"If our people have money to give, let not that money be thrown away; let it be given to the poor in some shape or other, but not on very fine braw grave-clothes, coffin, etc., etc."

The sacred vessels, silver plate, and valuable vestment belonging to him he bequeathed to the Church, and his household furniture (of which he asked an inventory to be taken) he left to his successors in office. The rich silver tea service, the gift of Lady Bruce of Scotstown and other ladies of the congregation, he left to Bishop Kyle, with a recommendation that "they should not be thrown away on people little deserving of such things."

The principal Will concluded with this characteristic and beautiful message to his congregation:—"And now as a finale, to the Catholic congregation of St. Peter's Chapel in Aberdeen, and to every individual member of that congregation I leave my most sincere blessing, and I most heartily pray that every individual member of that congregation will conduct himself so as that we may hereafter meet and be happy together in the joys of our common Lord and Master in the Kingdom of heavenly bliss."

No. XI

Obituary Notice from "Aberdeen Journal"

The following contemporary testimony regarding Priest Gordon appeared in the *Aberdeen Journal* of Wednesday, November 28, 1855:—

"We have to record the death of this estimable clergyman, which took place here on Saturday last.

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Mr. Gordon was born at Landends, in the parish of Bellie, on 30th June, 1772. His parents were poor but of excellent character, and he was the youngest of nine children. He was received into the small Catholic Seminary of Scalan, in Glenlivet, at the age of thirteen; and in the course of a year or two he was sent to the Scotch College at Douay.

In 1793, he was compelled to leave Douay, in consequence of the French Revolution. He remained there, however, with the Principal and a few of the students, two years after it had been deemed prudent to dismiss the body of students. Returning to Scotland, he continued his studies for two years, principally in Aberdeen, where he devotedly waited on Bishop Geddes, his uncle, who had been helpless for many years.

On 2nd July, 1795, he was ordained priest by the Right Rev. Dr. Hay, and immediately received in charge the Catholic congregation of Aberdeen, which was then held by his brother, who, however, had to retire from it on account of other important offices which he filled. Mr. Gordon remained in this charge all along, without change. Up to 1832, he discharged alone all the arduous duties of the important mission in Aberdeen. He then received as his assistant the Rev. Charles Fraser, who, dying, was succeeded by Mr. Js. M'Corry, who being removed, was succeeded by the Rev. John Reid. The duties of the mission becoming yet more important and difficult, an additional helper was given

in the Rev. John Ritchie in 1846. On the lamented demise of Mr. Reid and the removal of Mr. Ritchie, the Rev. John Sutherland and the Rev. W. Stopani were appointed to the charge of the congregation, in 1854. By this time, Mr. Gordon's health was very much impaired. He had retired some years before from the chapel-house to his schools in Constitution Street, where he occupied himself principally in taking a fatherly charge of the schools and orphanage. He still, however, officiated, and discharged the various duties of his office until about the opening of this year, when his weakness prevented him from undertaking any special duty. He gradually declined, and on Saturday morning last, about half-past nine, he sank upon his chair, and died so peacefully that none could mark the moment of his dissolution.

Never for one day had he been confined to bed in all his last illness. He had often prayed that he might never be rendered altogether useless, and that he might not be cut off without good warning. Both his prayers were granted, for he was always able to move about, and both himself and his physicians had been for months expecting his death.

Through his exertions St. Peter's Chapel was built about 1803; the schools in Constitution Street about 1832; and some time afterwards he added wings to this latter building for the abode of orphan boys and girls of the congregation. He

succeeded in erecting the chapel and school at Printfield, about 1840.

Mr. Gordon was remarkable, whilst at College, for his piety and fine religious feelings, and he deserved and maintained the same reputation throughout his life. He ever showed the most decided attachment to the duties of the state of life to which God had called him, and though cheerful and happy in his disposition at all times, he was above all happy when engaged in the duties of his sacred office. He took particular interest in the young, and in educating and providing for them, supplying to many the place of a parent.

He was highly respected by all, and intimate with the best families, and beloved by the poor for his unbounded charities. He took the deepest interest in the public institutions of the town of a charitable character, and it is not yet forgotten how much he engaged himself with our Public Soup Kitchen, where he might often have been seen actively dispensing supplies to the poor.

He died in the 84th year of his age, and the 60th of his ministry."

No. XII

The Snow Churchyard

"There was a place of worship in Old Aberdeen called the Church of St. Mary *ad Nives*, or, popularly, the Snow Churchyard, also founded by

Bishop Elphinstone, in 1497. It was designed for the devotional exercises of the parishioners after the Cathedral had been completed, but in 1499, the church and vicarage were annexed to the University, then recently instituted. Originally the church was surrounded by a burying-ground of considerable extent. The burying-ground is, however, now under cultivation, but the portion of the ground which formed the site of the ancient church is still enclosed, and is used as a place of interment by some of our old Catholic families. It lies from 200 to 300 yards to the south of King's College, but on the opposite side of the road. Not many people are aware of the existence of this churchyard, as it is situated behind the houses on the west side of College Bounds, and the entrance is by a doorway not differing much in appearance from the other doors in the street. Scarcely a trace of the Snow Church now exists, as, about the year 1640, the stones of it were taken for building purposes about the College."

From "Aberdeen: Its Traditions and History," by W. Robbie, p. 93.

The following is the inscription upon the gravestone of Charles Gordon in the centre of the Snow Churchyard :—

CAROLUS GORDON, PRESBYTER,
MISS: AP: IN PLANIS SCOTIÆ
OB: ABERD: XXIV NOVEM: MD CCC LV.
ÆT: LXXXIV.

Appendix

For detailed information regarding the interesting history of this church, readers are referred to the chapter entitled "The Snow Church" in Mr. G. M. Fraser's "Historical Aberdeen."

No. XIII

Statue and Portrait of Charles Gordon

The granite statue by the well-known sculptor, Alexander Brodie, in front of the Roman Catholic Schools, Constitution Street, was erected by public subscription—the funds being contributed "by the citizens [of Aberdeen] without regard to sect or party." The inscription on the pedestal is as follows:—

THE REVEREND CHARLES GORDON,
MISSIONARIUS APOSTOLICUS IN ABERDEEN,
FOR THE LONG PERIOD OF SIXTY-TWO YEARS,
ERECTED AND ENDOWED THIS SCHOOL,
AND THE ADJOINING ORPHANAGES,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS
OF THIS CITY.
BORN 1ST JULY, 1772, DIED 24TH NOVEMBER, 1855.
REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

The very fine painting which hangs inside the school is by John Watson Gordon, and, along with the name of the artist, bears upon it "Edinburgh, 1841." It is to be regretted that such a beautiful

work of art should not have a place in our local public gallery.

The chair which Charles Gordon used for years, and in which he died, stands in the Cathedral House.

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