

# THE LURE OF AULD REEKIE

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**E**DINBURGH, beautiful and romantic among cities, is truly the Athens of the North. Its classic austerity gives it a tone of regal splendor that few cities possess. York is a regal city; the visitor to that old town and its superb minster is well aware that the place is one fit for great kings and powerful bishops. Winchester, too, breathes an air of stately regality, and its great cathedral offers a suitable background against which the history of this grand old city can be told. But Edinburgh even surpasses these great cities, as it does every city of the British Isles in its cold, classic beauty and royal tone. Edinburgh is every inch a capital, and as a capital it is as virile and masculine as London itself. Certain cities seem to possess sex; many can be placed into the categories, masculine, feminine and neuter. Edinburgh, London, Berlin and Rome are strongly masculine, and these hold out great attractions for the male visitors; Paris, Dublin and Vienna are in their fashion strictly feminine; their beauty and their ways are those of a gentler sort.

Rich in historical lore, Edinburgh is in more ways than one a modern Athens. Here surely is the glory that was Greece, and here, too, is a Mecca for those interested in literary landmarks. Midlothian; John Knox; Sir Walter Scott; David Hume; Boswell; Argyll; Dunferline; Mary, Queen of Scots; Robert the Bruce; Waverley; St. Giles; Robert Louis Stevenson; an almost endless list to stir the imagination of students and readers of English literature.

There are really two cities in Edinburgh, and each is a treasure in its way. The Old Town, high upon the great rock that thrusts itself some five hundred feet above the plain, extends from the Castle, down the Royal Mile, to Holyrood Palace. Old Edinburgh, rich in the memories of past centuries, is the town of the High Street, the Canongate, St. Giles Church, Greyfriars Churchyard, John Knox's house, and the Canongate Tolbooth. Looking down from its lofty perch, the Old Town can sit in judgment on the New Town that, in these later days, has grown on the opposite side of the ravine. And yet, the New Town can smile back at its more elevated partner, for the younger member, too, has an historical background of which it may well be proud. The New Town is the present aristocratic quarter of the city. It was laid out in

severe classical style about 1775, and here one finds the brilliant Princes Street, the Church of England Cathedral of St. Mary, the National Portrait Gallery, and numerous houses, streets and squares that are intimately connected with the later literary and political history of Scotland.

Princes Street is without a doubt the finest street in the kingdom. Its right to this position is, however, one that is questioned by a number of streets of great renown. Nevertheless, Princes Street holds its place despite such rivals as Park Lane, Regent Street and the Strand in London, or the famous and glorious High Street of Oxford, so dear to all that love the old university town as "The High". Princes Street runs along the edge of a deep ravine in the shadow of Castle Hill. The shops are on one side of the avenue, while the other side is planted with gardens, rich shrubbery and flowers. With the morning mist rising from the ravine, the sight of Princes Street and the Castle Rock is one to baffle the imagination and recall to mind those stories of childhood that told of great knights, beautiful ladies and tremendous fairy castles.

That brings up the question, "Whence the name 'Auld Reekie' "? The story is an old one, and has often been told. "There was a man in Fife yonder", the old citizens will tell you, "a laird called Durham of Largo, who regulated evening prayer by the smoke of Edinburgh, which he could see from his door. When the reek grew heavy as Edinburgh cooked its supper, he used to call his family into the house with the cry: 'It's time, noo, bairns to tak' the buiks and gang to our beds, for yonder's Auld Reekie, I see, putting on her nichtcap' ".

Away from the noise of tramcars, and the bustle of the beginning of a new day with the opening of shops, the letting forth of cats and the cleaning of sidewalks and steps, the Old Town extends a cordial and enticing welcome. On the way up to the Castle Rock is the first thrill. For there is Brodie's Close, the source of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Dank and dark to this day, the place bespeaks the eerie atmosphere of the days when Deacon Brodie was a Dr. Jekyll by day and a Mr. Hyde by night. Before entering the alley, which fortunately is not so evil-smelling as it is reputed to have been in the old days, one should pause a while, for here Grand Dame Eleanor, Countess of Stair, leaped from the window of one of the houses near by to escape the tantrum of her noble, but violent, husband. Little Miss Eglintoune, later Lady Wallace, tripped across the road here to fill her kettle at the community well. Down through these dark "wynds" many a gossip sped to chat with her neighbor about the goings on among the

*haut monde*. Here the giddy Duchess of Gordon, astride a sow that she had captured from a neighbor's pen, implored her more dignified sister to prod the animal with a stick.

But back to Brodie's Close. Once upon a time a black and sinister figure could have been observed slinking out of the shadows. With pistol clutched in one hand and a ring of keys in the other, the figure might be seen entering this shop and that. Brodie was a most respected town councillor, a deacon of the Gild of Wryghts and Masons. Immaculate in tailcoat and breeches, the good deacon used to be seen standing against the door post of some shop. When the merchant of the shop decided that it was high time that he duck across the street to the tavern for a pint of bitter ale, he placed his keys upon a nail by the side of the doorway. Brodie, with the agility of a cat, then came forward and took the impression of the key with a lump of clay held in the palm of his hand. At home it was easy enough for the culprit to make a key from the impression. Robbery after robbery in old Edinburgh alarmed the sturdy Scottish burghers. Deacon Brodie gravely offered his counsel, and advised the tradesmen on the subject of locks and bolts. In fact this trusted son of old Edinburgh went about at tea time to see that merchants had actually made fast their doors. Two robbers were caught doing a "bust" one night, and a third one managed to escape. Deacon Brodie also disappeared that evening, and the local gossips wagged their tongues and heads. Two of his mistresses set to howling that the good man had left them with no provision for their support. Soon Brodie was taken into custody in the city of Amsterdam. He was brought back to Edinburgh, lodged in the grim Tolbooth Gaol, and executed on the first day of October, 1788. It was Robert Louis Stevenson who came upon this case, and immortalized it in his famous "thriller". The extreme crowding of the Old Town explains, in part, why Brodie was able to carry on his nefarious practices in so cramped a setting.

Brodie's Close opens into the Lawnmarket section and from Castle Hill, by way of the High Street and the Canongate down the Royal Mile, the section was one of crowded tenements. Centuries ago the houses that line this thoroughfare were those of the nobility. They were occupied by the elite who found it necessary to set up their establishments on the road that led from the Castle to Holyrood Palace. Even to-day the remains of these mansions tell the story of their days of regal grandeur, for their doorways in many cases still have the amorial bearings, the crests and the texts of their noble builders. Mammoth locks and great door handles, too, give voice to the story of their former tenants. The

street itself was wide enough for only a single carriage, and one can picture the sturdy Highlanders bearing titled ladies and gentlemen to Holyrood in their sedan chairs. On foot the bejewelled ladies in silk were jostled by the many petticoated fish wives from Newhaven and the rough sailors from the port of Leith.

It was in the Lawnmarket that all cotton and linen goods were sold in open stalls or canvas-covered booths. The mercantilistic Scottish parliament once had decreed that: "All cotton claith, white and grey, all lynning claith is to be sold there and in no uther place". Not far off from this mart one might expect to see fat, florid David Hume, immersed in the lore of history, waddle along while Adam Smith, the founder of modern economics, ever with his budget in the red, trudged about in search of an accountant to keep his books for him. It was along here that tragic Mary, once Queen of France, rode in from Leith when she came home to the land of the Stuarts to take her place on the throne of Scotland. At Neitherbow she received the keys of the city. When the provost arose to kiss her hand, the sun burst forth in real Scottish glory and the rain ceased. With characteristic Stuart wit, Mary remarked: "The sun comes out with me, Master Provost". The icy hearts of the citizens melted at the brave words of the queen, and their cold welcome became a warm one. "God bless her bonnie face", they said, as Master John Knox felt a tinge of jealousy creep down his spine.

The houses on the Royal Mile were never in any sense spacious mansions. They were small, cramped apartments. Even in the residence of that famous attorney, the Duke of Argyll, the reception room for clients was indeed the family bedroom. The Duchess was forced to use the only other room as a sewing room, kitchen and dining room. So great were the numbers of people that flocked to the city that the density of the population in this elite section of the capital rivalled that of the "Lower East Side" of New York City in its heyday. One maid, and she a maid of all work, constituted the single household assistant. For even the very wealthy, for lack of space, had to get along somehow on this meagre staff. In many cases, it is reported, the poor domestic had to sleep in a cupboard or in a chest of drawers. The curfew sounded at ten, to the cry of "Gardey-loo", a Scottish attempt at the French, *Gardez l'eau*. At this time the refuse and trash, solid and liquid, descended from the upper windows to its resting-place on the street. The aroma was anything but enticing, and for years Edinburgh had its characteristic odor. Even when that famous native son, James Boswell, visited his home city in company

with Dr. Johnson, the diarist relates, "I could not prevent his being assailed by the evening effluvia of Edinburgh". In those old days it was a mark of real style for the elite to employ a hired scavenger to remove the refuse. Narrow slits in the stone work indicate the presence of tiny rooms into which the pious repaired for private prayer. These rooms were usually just off the dining room, and truly did the master of the house enter into his closet when he prayed.

The Royal Mile is a mile of memories. Toward the Castle amid the dim wynds, one thinks of the gay and ill-fated Mary, a figure that has had the power to stir men's hearts through the centuries. Here one transcends all time in the presence of the great and the simple events of the past. Sir Walter Scott, limping slightly, and carrying on his mind the weight of those financial difficulties that he so nobly solved, passes by. There, also, the gentle Stevenson passes, struggling with a heavy armchair that he is taking to his friend Henley who is so seriously ill at an infirmary near at hand. And so up the height to Edinburgh Castle, there are many old friends that will cross the path of the visitor.

The Castle is a rugged one, and resembles nothing so much as one of those toy castles that small boys used to receive at Christmas. High up on the Argyll Battery, the view is stupendous, and one can look past the city far out over the green hills of Fifeshire. The Castle stands on a structure built early in the 7th century by Edwin, King of Northumbria. Long a favorite place of residence and often a jail for the Scottish royalty, it dates from the 14th century. The Castle was the impregnable stronghold for the warring tribes of the country. Tradition has it that the infant James, poor Mary's son that was born in the citadel, was lowered in a basket from the ramparts when Mary fled to Stirling. The walls are from ten to fifteen feet thick, and they curvet and climb around the rock in such a fashion that they suggest the Great Wall of China as it follows the irregular contours of its terrain. Tradition also says that the city itself was founded some eight centuries ago by the beautiful lady who was forced ashore during a storm at sea. Edgar Atheling, the Saxon heir to the English throne, sailed for Hungary with his two sisters, the story relates, when an easterly wind drove the ships into the Forth. Shelter was sought at Dunfermline, the seat of Malcolm, the ruler and the very Malcolm of *Macbeth*. Malcolm fell in love with one of the sisters, Margaret, and in a trice, he married her. The new couple went off to live among the Saxon Lothians, rather than remain among the wilder Celts of the Forth. Margaret, devout and saintly,

employed her time in dispensing charity and in prayer. At her request, Malcolm built a tiny chapel for his beloved queen high up on the rock. This chapel of Saint Margaret, one of the smallest on the British Isles, being only 17 feet by 11 feet, still stands as a silent memorial to the saintly lady. Across the court another queen once dwelt, a queen greatly loved and greatly hated; a queen equally devout although, perhaps, not so severe in her saintliness. Here Mary, Queen of Scots, attempted to bring something of the gaiety and the life of the French court, which she so dearly loved, to the grim and cold court of Scotland. Here, in the dour Scottish atmosphere, she danced and sang with her ladies and gentlemen, and from this bulwark she set out on her hunting and hawking expeditions. Music, and "play acting", pursuits of questionable propriety, aroused Calvinistic John Knox; here in this very Castle he chided her for her frivolity. The Queen's room is a mere closet, and her son's room little better. One wonders where they put the five noble ladies who were "honorary rockers of the cradle". The wee child, who was later to become the king of England, was also attended by one furnisher of coals, five violers, a master cook, several pantry servants, and a court confectioner.

Outside the Castle stands "Mons Meg", a cannon cast before the discovery of America. An inscription says that the gun was cast at Mons in 1486. Another story relates how a veteran blacksmith and his seven sons cast the piece in Galloway when King James II of Scotland was harassed by the Clan Douglass. Two shots from the powerful gun caused such gaps in the Castle wall that Douglass gave up. The gun was christened "Meg" after the wife of the blacksmith. The gun, which shot granite projectiles, was brought around from one war to the next. For a while it rested in the Tower of London, from which place it was restored to Edinburgh by King George IV at the behest of Sir Walter Scott.

The old Castle could tell countless stories of intrigue and harrowing episodes that are not always recounted in history books. Lady Lindsley entered one night accompanied by her lackey for the purpose of bidding farewell to the condemned Argyll. As the pair left the castle, a lamp was flashed in the face of the groom and the poor fellow dropped his lady's train in a fright. The irate noblewoman cuffed the man and struck him in the face. Next morning it was discovered that a groom was occupying the condemned man's cell, and the Argyll had passed out with the gallant Lady Lindsley. On another occasion, a condemned man passed out in an empty wine keg, to the amazement of the guard. The great hall is a timbered one in which the old Scottish councils

frequently met and in which the state banquets were held. To-day it is a museum of ancient weapons and regimental colours. The arms of the Scottish kings and nobles appear in the storied glass of the room. The lug, or listening post, with its secret stairway, was a spot much used by royal eavesdroppers who slipped down from the royal apartments to overhear the nobles as they prattled over their wine.

The Crown room of the Castle contains the Crown regalia, called the Honours of Scotland. Here, in this obscure place, lie the Crown of Robert Bruce, the sceptre of James V, and the mace of Scotland's Royal Treasurer. All Scotland feared that Charles I of England might remove these precious items to London. During the Commonwealth interlude, the Honours were removed to Dunnolton Castle, where the wife of the parish minister buried them in a garden, lest the Cromwellian hosts make off with them.

Of the modern additions to the Old Town, none can compare with that glorious Scottish National War Shrine. This is one of the greatest sights in all the world, and one of the most impressive memorials of all times. Built on one of the highest peaks of the rock, the shrine is in the shape of a sanctuary, facing north, with two transepts. A great porch forms the entrance, and the tinted light coming through the stained glass windows provides an atmosphere that bathes this great requiem of stone in a warm glow. The glass is pale enough, so that there is no difficulty in reading the memorials that lie in this porch. The arches divide the place into bays, each of which is devoted to a special regiment or unit that saw service in the Great War. Names of the one hundred thousand Scots that perished in the carnage are inscribed in great books set upon bronze lecterns. The bays also contain the regimental colours that point upward toward the groined Gothic arches. All about the windows record the story of the war. No aspect has been left unmentioned. The Women's Window, for example, depicts a wartime harvest being gathered by a corps of women farmers. A woman worker in a munitions factory is shown bending over her machine. The Red Cross nurse is shown in the hospital and on the field of action itself. Another window shows a Zeppelin raid on a British city, with Gothas and search lights. Mine sweepers in the North Sea are shown at their work, troop ships, U-boats, horses, machine guns, all are included in the designs of the artists. The mice that gave the warning of the poison gas attacks are remembered, as are the carrier pigeons, and even the sullen mules. Beyond is the Hall of Honours, truly the soul of Scotland laid bare. Here the story of sacrifice is told by the Celt

with as much sorrow as that of a great requiem and as much ardor as a hymn of praise. Alone of all of the nations that suffered in the war, Scotland has placed her emotion on the knees of God.

Some writers have expressed consternation that a people which leaned to the rigid codes of a Master John Knox could conceive and carry out a work of faith that rivals the magnificent achievements of the cathedral builders of the Catholic Middle Ages. But the Celt is articulate when sorrow is concerned. He possesses a genius for the expression of lamentation. The other great British war memorial, the Cenotaph in Whitehall, is as truly Saxon in its reserve as this Scottish one is Celtic. The Saxon is inarticulate in sorrow, and he locks his emotion deep in his heart. The Celt is supreme in sorrow and his sweetest songs, his greatest verse and his noblest music, are sorrowful in essence. Bronze gates lead into the sanctuary of this hymn in stone. Fan vaulting and great groined arches draw one up as do the rolling swells of a mighty Bach fugue as they rise on a great organ. A figure of St. Michael the Archangel in full armor depends from the vaulting. Around this warrior, in bronze, appear all types of Scotsmen and Scotswomen who took part in the war. In purely objective reproduction, neither debased nor glorified, appear infantrymen, cavalrymen, airmen, gunners, sailors, nurses, and surgeons. Before a window, the Spirit of Man hangs triumphantly on his cross, his hands free and unpierced. Beneath is an outcrop of the virgin rock of Edinburgh which appears to have thrust itself up through the smooth floor of polished stone. Upon it stands the altar, guarded by four kneeling angels and containing a steel lined casket of cedar wood. In this reliquary lie the names of those noble Scots from every part of the world who made the supreme sacrifice. Full of majestic beauty, grandeur and pride, this noble requiem stands out as a memorial among memorials. As one writer has said, it is "A great Scottish lament, with all the sweetness of the pipes crying among the hills". As one leaves this hallowed spot, one recalls the words of Lawrence Binyon:

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
At the setting of the sun, and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

Down from the Castle, through the portcullis and out into the High Street, the road leads down past the Canongate to Holyrood Palace. The Canongate section is a section of breweries that tap a stream distinguished for its flavour. Even the stern members



of the Scottish Kirk were wont to visit the ale houses after the long Thursday night prayer-meetings. In the Canongate, too, lived the peculiar Hugh Arnot, so testy a character that when the neighbors complained of the noise of his bell, he resorted to the shots of a pistol to summon his servants. Among the features of this section is the Church of St. Giles. The present building dates from the 14th century, although from time to time additions have been to the edifice. It is the resting place of the great Montrose, and the scene of the diatribes of Master John Knox. Here the great reformer launched his attacks against his sovereign, and here he expounded his version of Protestantism. Here also the signers of the Solemn League and Covenant gathered in 1638. St. Giles is close to the heart of the Scot, and there are many memorials in the building dear to him. The interior is sombre enough, and lacks the warmth of the Anglican cathedrals. The Chapel of the Thistle is a new addition, and a very beautiful one. The Robert Louis Stevenson memorial consists of a bronze tablet and bas-relief by Saint-Gaudens. The spot where that quaint hussy, Jennie Geddes, flung her kneeling stool at the Anglican priest that attempted to conduct rites from Archbishop Laud's Prayer Book is still pointed out. Here also, on a bad Sunday morning, Sir Walter Scott met his first lady love and offered her the protection of his umbrella as they emerged from service into a Scotch "mist". The lady, it might be added, married another. Another strange romance culminated near at hand, and it must have been a queer sight to witness when old John Knox, at 59, entered on matrimony for a second venture and took to wife 17-year-old Margaret Stewart. On this more human, if odd, venture, the sage rode up the hill with his new wife on a gelding. The crowd followed cheering, and, no doubt, waxing a trifle lewd, as it is reported was the custom in those virile days.

Adjacent to the church is the old Parliament House and the Market Cross Square. Formerly the meeting place of the Scottish parliament, the place has become the seat of the law courts since the time that Scottish representatives went to London to take their places in parliament, as provided in the Act of Union of Queen Anne's time. The Advocates' Library is housed here, and it was over this foundation that Hume presided. This library, of over a half million volumes, is one of the five in the United Kingdom that are entitled to a copy of every book published in the realm. In the churchyard of the old Greyfriars Church lie the bodies of George Buchanan, Allan Ramsay, and the historian, Robertson. The remains of Adam Smith are near at hand, in the burying ground of the Canongate Church.

Down the street is an interesting old house called the John Knox House. It is a museum of relics, and may have been the house in which the preacher lived during the last few years of his life. His grave is forgotten. A small brass plate with the initials J. K. and the date 1572 can be found in the road of parliament. Many a visitor walks over this plate little knowing that he is passing over the approximate site of Knox's burial place.

Holyrood Palace lies at the opposite end of the Royal Mile from the Castle. This palace had its origin in an abbey founded by David I in the 12th century. For ages it has been a favourite residence of Scottish monarchs. It is tremendously a palace, and is forever associated with the career of tragic Mary. The ruins of the abbey remain, and in this roofless Chapel Royal are interred several Scottish kings, as well as Mary's consort, Darnley. The grounds of the palace were maintained as a sanctuary for debtors until 1881, when imprisonment for debt was abolished. The palace has entertained kings, cardinals, and even penniless fellows like Thomas de Quincey. The present ruler of the British empire, when he visits Holyrood, assumes his title of King of Scotland. But eclipsing even this grandeur, the place is every bit the abode of the spirit of Mary, Queen of Scots. Here are the apartments in which she shivered during the hard Scottish winters. Here are the corners in which she sat surrounded by her five faithful Marys. Here are the state chambers, Darnley's room, Mary's private stairway leading to her secretary's quarters. Here is the room in which Rizzio was so brutally done to death in the presence of the queen. Even the quaint little structure, called the Queen's Bath, is shown. Here it is said Mary bathed herself in white wine to enhance her beauty. The audience chamber recalls the visits of Master Knox to the palace, when he came to condemn the light-hearted young monarch. Even the Queen's workbox is shown, the very spot in which she treasured her private letters. In it now is a small vial, where it is said Mary preserved her tears.

To gain the New Town, a roadway leads across an artificial ridge called "The Mound". On this stand the National Gallery and the Doric buildings of the Royal Institute. Street orators and sidewalk artists are a present-day feature of this spot.

The New Town is famous for Princes Street, that grand boulevard that Sir Walter Scott termed the most magnificent terrace in all Europe. A fashionable promenade it is, with its fine clubs, high-class shops and delightful tea-rooms. The garden side contains the Gothic Scott Memorial. In the gardens will be found an American Memorial to the Scottish soldiers that fell in the World

War. The figure and the bas-relief are by R. Tait MacKenzie of Philadelphia. Down Princes Street one comes to Carlton Hill, with its host of monuments and memorials. This place is a pseudo-Acropolis, and was designed to resemble the famous hill of old Athens. There is a Nelson Memorial, and an incomplete reproduction of the Parthenon as a memorial to the soldiers of the Peninsular Campaign that served under the Iron Duke. Bobbie Burns is remembered in a copy of the Temple of Lysicrates, while a high school is housed in a reproduction of the Temple of Theseus. This Royal High School has a history of over eight hundred years since the days of the old monks. It recalls among its old boys such figures as the late King Edward VII, Walter Scott and Alexander Graham Bell. The temple-like tomb of David Hume is here, and the parents of Robert Louis Stevenson lie here also. A statue of Lincoln is in the burying ground. This was erected to commemorate the Scottish-Americans that fell in the American Civil War. The New Town also contains the Church of England Cathedral, St. Mary's, a splendid building erected from the designs of Sir Gilbert Scott.

Edinburgh is a "white collar" city, a centre of insurance, printing and banking interests. Every other shop appears to be a thriving bookseller's. George Street contains the house of Audubon, the celebrated author of *The Birds of North America*.

For the tourist, Edinburgh can be made the centre of many interesting little side visits. Abbotsford-on-Tweed is the gracious estate in which Sir Walter Scott passed so many of his creative years. Dryburgh, with its ruined abbey, is not far off. Here in this glorious setting lie the remains of Scott. Over the ruins of Melrose Abbey, Scott has woven the beauty of his poetry. Dumfries shares with Ayr a place in the hearts of lovers of simple Bobbie Burns. It is at Dumfries, in St. Michael's Kirkyard, that Burns lies buried. Near by is the house in which he died. Not far from Ayr is the place in which he was born, and a short distance from this little cottage is the Auld Brig o'Doon, forever immortalized in his verse.