

1878. The youthful burgh of Crieff

A commentator in the Herald:

Commenting on the youthful burgh of Crieff, and its pretensions aping of nobility. One wonders how these super-genteel hunters-up of snobbish villas and cottage nomenclature in their restless itching after human grandeur have been so long in landing into the world of heraldry – that some dashing daring spinster or widow does not write herself “Countess of Blessington of Honeysuckle House,” or “Lady Mary McTavish of Myrtle Lodge,” or some fussy descendent in the second or third generation from some obscure grubbing earthworm dubbing himself “Sir Peter Puffington of Holland House” or “The Hon Benjamin Bluethumbs of Belmont Cottage.” Perhaps the dim vision of a certain tax acts as a solitary deterrent on the aping vanity of your nobility imitators from adopting the crest and shield and coming out as full-blown Barons and Earls; for in reality the one piece of absurdity would be only a fitting and proper match for the other. But the worst of the matter is, that every clachan in Strathearn seems emulous of the careering vanity of this youthful burgh – every “Sheeling on the hill” is being named like some old baronial keep. “Comrie Wast” is sorely plague stricken, as witness her list of nonsensical names, such as, “Claremont Villa,” “Elvar Cottage,” “Holland Bush,” &Co. Following in the wake of Comrie there is the “Ross” with its “Rossearn,” and its “Viewfield,” and whatnot.

Travelling westward, the infection has reached of all places in the world -- **St Fillans**. St Fillans at once so remote and so original – so very original, indeed, that only some thirty or forty years ago there might have been seen (the writer saw it) a most remarkable sign- board fixed over the door of a one-storey thatched house, on which was painted the following questionable statement:- “*New laid eggs every day by Mrs McKenzie.*” But now, alas! In the wonderful end of a wonderful century honest, unlettered Mrs McKenzie with her extraordinary sign and new laid eggs has passed away and instead there is Earnbank, Glenearn, Rose Cottage, Lake Cottage, and Holly Cottage, and stucco and shoddy, and the aping of gentility with the impotent from swelling efforts to attain the size of oxen, making old natives wonder and stare, and exclaim, in the words of Byron, “Blessings on their learning.” Yes, a thousand blessings on their shallow and showy attainments of all these super cultivated natives of Strathearn. Strathearn, once remarkable as the home of sterling plain common-sense, while half the population now in latter days seem only intent on making abortive efforts to appear in the eyes of the outside world as a generation of admirable Crichtons.

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