THE NOVELS OF SUSAN FERRIER

by

Grace Crocker

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Approved by:

J. H. Nelson
Instructor in charge.

William S. Johnson
Head or Chairman of Dept.

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PREFACE

When in answer to the question, "What is the subject of your thesis?" I say, "The novels of Susan Ferrier," I am not surprised that people sometimes ask, "Who is she? I have never heard of her or her novels." This probably proves that Mr. Saintsbury was right when he said that to some people an old novel is a piece of literature worthy to be ranked with an old newspaper or an old almanac---not quite so dull as the last, and a good duller than the first. Miss Ferrier's novels belong to the class of old novels, but they are worthy, I believe, of a fairly prominent place on our bookshelves. The fact that they have been praised by Sir Walter Scott, Sir James Mackintosh, James Hogg, and more recently by such men as George Saintsbury and Leslie Stephen must be ample reason for giving them consideration.

I am, indeed, delighted that my attention was called to these novels, which have so much about them that is charming and entertaining. I believe that they would still have much attraction for many people today, if attention were called to them, because of the genuine wit and vivacity displayed and also because of the delightful character portrayal.

In this study, which is based on an intense reading of Miss Ferrier's novels, as well as on an examination of critical material concerning them, I have tried to

point out the entertaining qualities of the novels and the excellent picture of Scottish life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to be found in them. I have tried to show, too, that they do not merit the neglect which they suffer today.

I wish to thank Professor R. D. O'Leary who, when I was searching for a topic in the field of the novel, first suggested Miss Ferrier's novels and to express my gratitude to Professor J. H. Nelson for the invaluable help and advice which he has given me during the months that I have been working upon the thesis.

Chapter I

Life of Susan Ferrier

On November 5, 1854, there died in Edinburgh one who might with truth be called the last of that literary galaxy of famous persons who adorned Edinburgh society in the days of Scott, Jeffrey, Wilson, and Lockhart. Although over eighty years have passed since her death no real memoir of Susan Edmonstone Ferrier, the author of three clever, satirical novels, Marriage, The Inheritance, and Destiny, has yet been written. True, her grand-nephew, Mr. John Ferrier, assisted by Mr. J. A. Doyle, put together and published in 1898 her correspondence with some brief details of her life and family, which is dull and uninteresting except for her letters, many of which are charming and spirited, abounding in material for an interesting memoir.

Stephen Gwynn, writing in 1899 in the June issue of Living Age, says the fact that Miss Ferrier belonged to a very notable society, the little world of Edinburgh in the days when Edinburgh held the Great Magician and was headquarters of the Whig Review--might well have led one to hope that a satisfactory biography might be written, for her talent was sufficiently remarkable to render her an appropriate subject for a memoir.

Only a few facts of Miss Ferrier's life are known; therefore I have tried to give something of her personality rather than the events of her life. Much of the study of her character and tastes which I have made has been based upon her novels, for she lives vitally in her works. There we find a real world inhabited by a writer of originality both exquisite and intense.

From Miss Ferrier's own sketch of her father's life we learn that James Ferrier was what we today would call a self-made man. After leaving the grammar school at Linlithgow at the age of fourteen, he was placed in a writer's office where he was paid fifty pounds per annum, from which sum he not only supported himself respectably but procured masters for such branches of education as he had not had opportunities of acquiring. His indomitable and persevering spirit led him to the top of his profession as writer to the Signet. Through the influence of one of his clients, John, Duke of Argyll, he was appointed one of the principal clerks of the Court of Sessions, serving at one time with Scott. Mrs. Ferrier (nee Helen Coutts) was the daughter of a farmer near Montrose. She was very amiable and possessed of great personal beauty. At the time of her marriage she resided at the Abbey of Holyrood Palace with an aunt. After their marriage in 1767 Mr. and Mrs. Ferrier occupied a flat in Lady Stair's Close (old town of Edinburgh), which had just been vacated by Sir James Pulteney and

his wife, Lady Bath.

The family of James Ferrier consisted of six sons and four daughters. Of the sons, three pursued their father's profession. These were John (who was by his marriage with Margaret Wilson, sister of "Christopher North," father of the famous metaphysician Professor J. F. Ferrier of St. Andrews), Archibald, and Walter. Three other sons, James, William, and Lorn entered the army and died there, two in India and one in Demerara. The daughters Jane, Janet, and Helen, all married prominent men; but Susan, the youngest child of the family, did not marry.

Susan's sister Jane was a clever artist and in her youth a beauty, so much so that she fired the muse of Robert Burns. One verse of the poem he wrote is:

> Jove's tuneful dochters three times three,
> Made Homer deep their debtor;
> But gien the body half an e'e
> Nine Ferriers wad done better![1]

We are told that Susan in her youth had her share of good looks in addition to a ready wit. One of the few survivors of the generation who knew her in the days of her youth and vivacity describes her as "dark, tall, and handsome, a most attractive personality, and a brilliant conversationalist; the center of a brilliant coterie in Edinburgh."[2] The reports of her own family

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 14.

2 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 15.

do not, however, confirm her good looks. Her miniature shows a vigorous and expressive face, with fairly well-shaped but not very regular features.

The only surviving story, as it seems, of the novelist's childhood is suggestive of her ability as later displayed in her novels. She had great powers of mimicry, and on one occasion her brothers and sisters, all older than herself, had engaged in pranks in the supposed absence of their parents. Suddenly they were alarmed by sounds of their father's voice--sounds, however, which, as was afterwards discovered, really came from the youngest of the family.

At the age fifteen Susan Ferrier lost her mother, and from that time she seems to have made the comfort of her father the supreme object of her life. That he greatly influenced his daughter's life we do not doubt, judging from the author's own memoir of her father's early life and from one or two incidental touches in the correspondence and diary of his friend and colleague, Sir Walter Scott. Neither is it hard to see what manner of man James Ferrier was, what were the special features of his daughter's mind and character which came to her by right of inheritance, nor how far his observed peculiarities formed a part of her literary stock-in-trade.

With the idea that to understand Miss Ferrier we must know her father, I have set down a few incidents.

from his life, which I deemed best fitted to introduce Mr. Ferrier and at the same time his daughter.

The following little story is told of his childhood: When just a baby, he was put out to a nurse in a cottage as was the custom of his day. Upon his return home a year later he howled to be taken back to his foster-mother and, when witheld from her, neither ate nor slept. So self-willed was he that he was allowed to go back and live in his nurse's family until, at the age of thirteen, he decided to return to his parents.[1] From this we might be led to believe that as he had his way in babyhood, so he did throughout his whole life.

As a very young man Mr. Ferrier was a favorite of an uncle, Major Hamilton, who made his nephew his executor and heir. Upon his uncle's death, however, the young man cancelled every document which was in his own favor and allowed the law to take its course. "But of this he said nothing himself; it would have been very unlike him if he had," says Miss Ferrier.[2] This same independence of mind is shown by the daughter.

Scott in his Journal writes thus of him: "Honest old Mr. Ferrier is dead at extreme old age...He was a man of strong passions and strong prejudices, but with generous and manly sentiments at the same time. We use to call him Uncle Adam, after that character in his

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 7.

2 Ibid., p. 8.

gifted daughter's novel of the 'Heiress.'"[1] And again three days later he writes, "Saw the last duty rendered to my old friend, whose age was

'Like a lusty winter,
Frosty but kindly.'

I mean in a moral as well as a physical sense."[2]

A characteristic story is told earlier by Scott:

> Uncle Adam (vide "Inheritance"), who retired last year from an official situation at the age of eighty-four, although subject to fits of giddiness and although carefully watched by his accomplished daughter, is still in the habit of walking by himself if he can possibly make an escape. The other day in one of these excursions he fell against a lamp-post, cut himself much, bled a good deal, and was carried home by two gentlemen. What said old Rugged and Tough? Why, that his fall against the post was the luckiest thing that could have befallen him, for the bleeding was exactly the remedy for his disorder.[3]

Susan's intimate friend Miss Clavering in a letter to her adds this postscript, "How fares the Savage? Give him my tenderest love."[4] That humorous little touch, referring, no doubt, to the novelist's father, seems to verify Scott's descriptive words, "frosty but kindly." Kindly he must have been or no "tenderest love" would have been included.

Mr. Rowland Grey, writing in the Fortnightly Review

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1 Scott's Journal, II (Jan. 20, 1831), p. 221.

2 Ibid., (Jan. 23, 1831), p. 223.

3 Ibid., (Jan. 23, 1831), p. 223.

4 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 107.

in an article entitled "Heavy Fathers," gives too harsh a picture, I believe, of Miss Ferrier's life with her father, whom he calls her "eminently respected and quite unconscious jailer." He takes bits from her letters here and there, pieces and puts them together with no explanations of what went before or after or under what circumstances they were written, to prove Mr. Ferrier to be a "heavy father" and one of the probable causes of his daughter's silence after her third novel. He uses, for example, lines taken from one of her sprightliest letters, which, when read entire, shows the writer in high spirits. Here she makes no complaint of hardship or of unreasonable demands of her father upon her. She is merely trying to explain to Miss Clavering, who has been urging her to pay her a visit, that she cannot come at this time, and uses her father as an excuse. (Incidentally, she was at this time, 1809, working on Marriage and needed seclusion.) She writes thus:

> My father I never see save at meals, but then my company is just as indispensable as the tablecloth or chairs, or, in short, any other luxury which custom has converted into necessity. That he could live without me I make no doubt, so he could without a leg or an arm, but it would ill become me to deprive him of either; therefore, never even for a single day could I reconcile it either to my duty or inclination to leave him.[1]

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 107.

Mr. Grey then asks, "And how did the father requite such self-surrender? A later letter answers piteously: 'I never lived in such profound retirement. Except the Walkers and James on Sunday we never have a soul.'"[1] This seclusion from society is to be explained by the fact that Miss Ferrier was again writing a novel, The Inheritance. There must have been much very well worth while in Mr. Ferrier to have prompted his daughter to devote so much of her life to him. His early letters to "My dear Roe," which is his pet name for her, show great tenderness.

It is generally understood that the masterly portrait of "Uncle Adam," the eccentric old Scotchman, outwardly so shrewd, austere, and cynical but inwardly kind and tender-hearted, was at bottom that of her father. In the author's humorous words, the brief description of "Uncle Adam" seems to point to Miss Clavering's "Savage," as she tells us that his civility was always of a rough nature, "something akin to the embrace of a man-trap, or the gentle influence of a shower bath."[2]

Uncle Adam, like Mr. Ferrier, having penetrating and shrewd judgment, formed decided likes and dislikes. His dislike for his shallow, affected niece, Miss Belle

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1 Fortnightly Review, XCII (Aug. 21, 1909), 84-6.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 164.

Black, he expresses vigorously thus: "I ne'er see that craatur that I dinna wish myself blind, and deaf, and doited."[1] I think Miss Ferrier shared Adam's feelings often when in the presence of some of her "detestables."

With the death of the mother and the marriage of her sisters Susan became mistress in her father's house. How she filled that place can best be judged from her correspondence, which shows her life and character in its fresh and humorous days. In her letters to Miss Clavering and her sisters there is a reckless mirth dependent on animal spirits and joyous surroundings. The later letters show a matured and more serious-minded woman, happy in the "quiet even tenor" of her way.

Mr. Ferrier's business brought him into close contact with the Duke of Argyll's family, and there resulted a very hearty friendship between Susan Ferrier and the ladies of that house. The effect on the author's literary career was of no small importance. Her visits at Inverary Castle are said with pretty evident truth to have had much influence in supplying her with subjects of study. Here she met dukes, lords, ladies, and all types of "fashionables." The characters she encountered here furnished a needful contrast to those with which she was familiar. On these visits she also met the Duke's niece, Charlotte Clavering, who became a very dear friend, encouraging her and criticising her works. In

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 154.

fact the two first planned to write in collaboration.

Contemporaries of Miss Ferrier wondered how the daughter of an Edinburgh lawyer, who had only glimpses of the fashionable world, could produce the speech and ways of that world so convincingly; and the explanation is found in her visits at Inverary Castle. A letter to her brother, written while she was visiting with Lady Augusta Clavering and her daughter, shows the round of activity in which she engaged. She writes thus:

> You were hardly out of the door before I felt sick and went to bed, but was obliged to rise to receive the Laird of Makdougall and his daughter, a great bumping miss in a blue riding-habit; then in galloped Bessie Muir, so that I was at my wits' end between a fine town madam and a rank Highland miss. On Friday we dined at Dalry with a party of paper lords, and saw Mrs. Frank for the first time, and think her the loveliest creature I ever saw. Next day I was in the Elysian fields with my dear doctor...Sunday we had our usual bill of fare from Q Street, including Bob the Weaver, and that hedgehog Willie T. Today we dine at John's to meet Lord Frederick; on Sunday we have them. Tomorrow we have the brothers Pringle, and Louis, and Lady. On Monday, G. Thompson the poet; Wednesday, at Louis's; Thursday the Pringles; and on Friday we set off.[1]

In a letter to her sister she writes:

> We saw the Duchess of Argyll dressed for the Peers' ball, very splendid in white satin and tulle, embroidered with silver and diamonds...She had an At Home the other night and pressed me to go; but deliver me from such things![2]

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 41.

2 Ibid., p. 162.

The At Home was the occasion of the entry of King George IV into Edinburgh.

In a letter to Mr. Ferrier, Lord John Campbell urges him to come to his ball and to bring Miss Ferrier. From other notes in her letters such as, "I must now dress for the grandees," "By way of pastime I play whist every night to the very death of the fusty dowagers," and the humorous postscript, "The Grand Duke Nick of lass has arrived," we know the novelist knew lords and ladies first hand. "She did not, like certain writers of our own day, talk familiarly of the Honorable Jem and Jemima on the strength of seeing the one at a respectable distance in a club smoking-room and the other across some yards of gravel and the railings of Rotten Row."[1]

Besides these lords and ladies whom the novelist met, there were the members of the literary circle of Edinburgh. Miss Ferrier early in her life was brought into contact with Scott and all her life enjoyed close intimacy with the family of Henry Mackenzie, "The Man of Feeling." She was a personal friend of Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart, and through the marriage of her brother John to Margaret Wilson ("Christopher North"). There is a tradition, too, of a friendship with Leyden, which he, at least, would fain have made more than friendship.

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1 Littell's Living Age, CLII (Mar. 31, 1882), p. 786.

At Inverary in her younger days she often met "Monk" Lewis, whose aversion to female writers prompted him to write thus:

> I hear it rumored that Miss F_____ doth write novels, or is about writing one. I wish she would let such idle nonsense alone...I have a pity and contempt for all female scribblers. The needle not the pen, is the instrument they should handle and the only one they ever use dexterously...[1]

It is rather amusing to us today that one of M. G. Lewis's literary talents should have sought to silence the voice of a satirist of Miss Ferrier's abilities.

In Miss Ferrier's visits to London, or perhaps in some Edinburgh drawing-room, she probably met some of the famous literary Bluestockings, for her description of the meeting at "Mrs. Bluemits" in her novel Marriage is told in such a manner that it seems an actual experience. The attitude of superiority and condescension of these so-called great folks arouses just a little ire in Miss Ferrier. She exposes their weaknesses and absurdities very cleverly in the following lines:

> Mrs. Bluemits, although not an avowed authoress, was a profound critic, a well-informed woman, a woman of great conversational powers, and to use her own phrase, 'nothing but conversation was spoken in her house.' Her guests were always expected to be distinguished either for some literary production or for their taste in the belles lettres.

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[1] Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 136.

> Two ladies from Scotland, the land of poetry and romance, were consequently hailed as new stars in Mrs. Bluemits' horizon. They were received by her with that air of condescension which great souls practise toward ordinary mortals, and which is intended, at one and the same time to encourage and to repel, to show the extent of their goodness, even while they try to make their protegé feel the immeasurable distance which nature or fortune has placed between them.
>
> It was with this air of patronizing grandeur that Mrs. Bluemits took her guests by the hand and introduced them to the circle of females already assembled.[1]

When the visitors are seated Mrs. Bluemits and her friends continue thus:

> "Where," says Mrs. Aspley, "in either Walter Scott or Thomas Campbell will you find such lines as these:
> 'Wet with their own best blood shall drip
> Thy gnashing tooth and haggard lip!'"
>
> "Pardon me, madam, but I am of the opinion you have scarcely given a fair specimen of the powers of the Noble Bard in question."[1]

This so-called intellectual group then enter upon a discussion of Dryden's dogs and Byron's dogs:

> "Scott's dogs, madam, are tame domestic animals--mere human dogs, if I may say so. Byron's dogs--But let them speak for themselves.
> 'The scalps were in the wild dog's maw
> The hair was tangled round his jaw.'
> Show me, if you can, such an image in Scott."
>
> "Very fine, certainly!" was here uttered by five novices, who were only there as probationers, consequently not privileged to go beyond a response.[2]

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1 Marriage, II, p. 253.

2 Ibid., p. 254.

A very weighty conversation then follows upon Dr. Samuel Johnson, the author of Gulliver, and the enlightened bard of Twickenham. There is little wonder then that Lady Emily, amused at this account given by her friend, Mary, replies:

> If I had been there, I certainly should have started a controversy upon the respective merits of Tom Thumb and Puss in Boots, and so have called them off Lord Byron.[1]

Few cultural centers in the early part of the century could have been better fitted to furnish pasture for Miss Ferrier's gifts than that of the Edinburgh group in which she was brought up and lived, because her material was drawn from real life. Edinburgh furnished her exactly what she needed. The society in which she lived was "compact and homogeneous enough to be carefully studied, varied and animated enough to be thoroughly interesting, grotesque enough in some of its phases to give full scope to the vigorous and even extravagant humor in which the novelist dresses it."[2]

There was besides the fashionable people and those of the literary circle another group in which Miss Ferrier lived that was too noticeable, and had too marked an influence on her writings to be overlooked and that was the "singular race of excellent old ladies"

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1 Marriage, II, p. 255.

2 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 21.

whom Lord Cockburn has described in a well-known passage. They were, he tells us, "merry even in solitude, very resolute, indifferent about the modes and habits of the modern world; and adhering to their own ways so as to stand out like primitive rocks above ordinary society. Their prominent qualities of sense, human affection, and spirit were embodied in curious outsides, for they all dressed, and spoke, and did exactly as they chose; their language, like their habits, was entirely Scotch, but without any other vulgarity than what perfect naturalness is sometimes mistaken for."[1]

We meet such characters as these in "Aunt Grizzy, with a long waist and large pockets, peppermint drops and powdered curls"[2] and Donald, the old Scotchman, "clad in a short tartan coat and striped woolen night-cap, with blear eyes and shaking hands."[3]

We, perhaps, would have a better understanding of Edinburgh society from the author's own description of that life in Marriage. The experiences of Alicia, who moved in a small coterie in Edinburgh, gives us this picture very clearly and concisely in the following paragraphs:

> By degrees Alicia found that in some points she had been inaccurate in her idea of the style of living of those who form

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 18.

2 Marriage, II, p. 214.

3 Ibid., I, p. 65.

> the best society of Edinburgh. The circle is so confined that its members are almost universally known to each other; and those various gradations of gentility, from the cit's snug party to the duchess's most crowded assembly, all totally distinct and separate, which are to be met with in London, have no prototype in Edinburgh. There the ranks and fortunes being more on an equality, no one is able greatly to exceed his neighbor in luxury and extravagance. Great magnificence, and the consequent gratification produced by the envy of others being out of the question, the object for which a reunion of individuals was originally invented becomes less of a secondary consideration. Private parties for the actual purpose of society and conversation are frequent, and answer the destined end; and in the societies of professed amusement are to be met the learned, the studious, and the rational; not presented as shown to the company by the host and hostess, but professedly seeking their own gratification.
>
> Still the lack of beauty, fashion, and elegance disappoint the stranger accustomed to their brilliant combination in a London world.[1]

Miss Ferrier has been likened to the character, Lady Emily, of Marriage, and the likeness seems very well drawn. Personally I believe the witty, alert, keen observer, Lady Emily, minus the "Lady," with her ready repartee upon all occasions, is as nearly a picture of the novelist as we could find. In this character I seem to find the keynote to her life, and I shall quote a number of passages which show this likeness. Consider, for instance, the passage in which Lady Emily says to Lord Lindore,

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1 Marriage, I, p. 168.

> "I don't think it requires any miraculous power either to entertain or be entertained. For my part I flatter myself I can entertain any man, woman, or child in the kingdom, when I choose; and as for being entertained, that is still an easier matter. I seldom meet with anybody who is not entertaining, either from their folly, or their affectation, or their stupidity, or their vanity; or, in short, something of the ridiculous, that renders them not merely supportable, but positively amusing."
>
> "How happy you must be!"
>
> "Happy! no--I don't know that my feelings amount to happiness neither; for at the very time I'm most diverted, I'm sometimes disgusted, too, and often provoked. My spirit gets chafed and--"
>
> "You long to box the ears of all your acquaintances," said her brother laughing.
>
> "Well, no matter--there is nothing so enviable as a facility of being amused."[1]

And who, having read her novels, could doubt Miss Ferrier's ability to entertain "any man, woman, or child," when she chose. She saw the amusing side of everyone's character. Their folly, affectation, or stupidity afforded her entertainment. She saw the ridiculous where others saw nothing unusual. This characteristic went with Miss Ferrier through life. She enjoyed exposing the weaknesses not only of the would-be intellectuals like Mrs. Bluemits but the frivolous type of characters such as Lady Juliana with her "man, maid, pup, macaw, and squirrel," who, when shown her baby Mary, turned from the child and kissed the poodle.

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1 Marriage, II, pp. 73-4.

We do not doubt either that the novelist was often tempted to "box the ears" of some of her "detestables,"--a character like the Earl of Glenroy, for instance, who "felt himself a great man; and though he did not say, even to himself, that he was the greatest man in the world, he certainly would have been puzzled to say who was greater."[1] She would have held the same feelings for a too-talkative one like Mrs. Malcolm,--"one of those women who would ask if the sea produced corn, rather than hold her tongue."[2]

The following paragraph strengthens the impression that Miss Ferrier and Lady Emily were alike in their ability to entertain:

> "There must certainly be some fascination about you, otherwise I should never have sat so long listening to you," said Mary to Lady Emily.[3]

That the novelist possessed this power is seemingly further verified by the story which Sir Douglas Maclaugan tells of his father, who was the Ferrier family physician. Mr. Maclaugan says that his father found that the charm of Miss Ferrier's conversation invariably led him to spend three-quarters of an hour on his visits to her instead of the conventional quarter of an hour. To avoid this the duty of visiting was transferred to the son, with

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1 Destiny, I, p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 58.

3 Marriage, I, p. 73.

the result that a like waste of time followed in his case.[1]

In the following humorous description by Lady Emily of two classes of clever women we do not find it hard to recognize to which group the novelist belongs. She describes in no uncertain terms one of her own outstanding characteristics,--the power to "electrify by her wit:"

> "There are two descriptions of clever women, observe; the one is endowed with corporal cleverness--the other with mental; and I don't know which of the two is the greater nusiance to society; the one torments you with her management--the other with her smart sayings; the one is forever rattling her bunch of keys in your ears--the other electrifies you with the shock of her wit."[2]

Although Susan Ferrier poked fun unmercifully at folly, littleness, meanness, she appreciated true worth as much, and again she lets Lady Emily speak for her thus:

> "Then lest you think me utterly insensible to excellence, you must suffer me to show you that I can and do appreciate worth when I can find it. I confess my talent lies fully as much in discovering the ridiculous as the amiable; and I am equally ready to acknowledge it is a fault, and no superior wit or understanding; since it is much easier to hit off the glaring caricature lines of deformity than the finer and more exquisite touches of beauty, especially for one who reads as he runs--the signposts

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 15.

2 Marriage, II, p. 85.

are sure to catch the eye.[1]

Not only in her wit and humor is Lady Emily like the novelist, but many of her ideas of life seem similar. The bargaining in marriage for wealth and title among the upper classes may be taken as an example in this quotation:

> "But I own it chafes my spirit to sit and look on such a scene of iniquity. Yes, iniquity I call it for a woman to be in love with one man and at the same time laying snares for another...But how despicable to see her (Adelaide) with her affections placed upon one man, and at the same time lavishing all her attentions on another and that other, if he had been plain John Altamont, Esq., she would not have been commonly civil to!"[2]

As I stated previously Susan Ferrier never married. She writes her brother, "I desire to keep my flame alive, yet I mustn't burn my fingers." The flame we learn more of from a letter to her bosom friend to whom she confides thus:

> I'm going to tell you that I'm deeply and desperately in love! And what makes my case particularly deplorable is that there's not the least prospect of the dear man lending so much as a little finger to pull me out of the mire into which he has plunged me... I'd have you guess his degree, but you'd as soon bethink you of the great Cham of Tartary as the Right Honourable John Philip Curran, Master of the Rolls, Ireland!!! I wish I could give you any idea of his charms, but, alas! none but a pen of fire could trace his character or record the charms of his

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1 Marriage, II, p. 85.

2 Ibid., p. 170.

> conversation. Don't set me down for mad; I'm only bewitched.[1]

In a later letter discussing Miss Clavering's "perfect man," she says, "I call him a perfect child," and then, humorist that she is, adds, "Wait till he has attained the ripeness of my currant (Curran) and had some fifty summers to warm him."[2] And this affair we are prone to take no more seriously than the writer herself.

As I have already stated, Miss Ferrier through her father was early brought into contact with the family of Sir Walter Scott. Anne, his daughter, was a close friend, for she writes the novelist after her father's (Scott) death, "There are few in Scotland whose friendship I value so much as yours." Miss Ferrier's friendship with the great novelist himself is most interesting and throws light upon her character. Among the author's letters is one from Mr. Scott written in 1810 to Mr. Ferrier. He writes thus:

> And now, my dear Sir, Mrs. Scott and I make point to petition, that if the weather be favorable in the beginning of October, Miss Ferrier and you would look in upon us for a quiet day or two...[3]

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 63.

2 Ibid., p. 60.

3 Ibid., p. 236.

Miss Ferrier tells little of the visit, which was made to Ashestiel in response to this invitation except of the long rides in the afternoons and the ballad-reading by Scott in the evenings.

Several invitations were issued between this date, but "owing to my dear father's infirmities," she tells us, she did not visit Scott again until in 1829 after her father's death. It is unfortunate that this visit coincided with the gaps in Scott's Journal. Of this trip she writes her sister, Mrs. Kinlock as follows:

> You will naturally expect a narrative of my visit to Abbotsford, but indeed I saw and heard a great deal too much to be able to detail anything. It was all too delightful, only too exciting for one unaccustomed to soar beyond the sober unrealities of everyday life. Nothing could exceed the kindness of Sir Walter and Miss Scott and, I was more gratified by his attention because I felt it was not all on my own account, but for the respect and esteem I know he entertained our dear father, and a tribute to his memory is more prized by me than any mere personal regard can ever be. Miss Anne is very amiable and agreeable...Mrs. Lockhart I also liked very much; she is very amusing and seems most warm hearted where she takes a liking... the two children are delightful creatures...I have half promised to visit Mrs. Lockhart at her cottage next summer and to spend some time with my bosom friend Margaret Fergusson. I dined and spent a night at Huntley Burn, but could not spend more as my time was limited to nine days...Miss Buchanan*

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* The "Missie" of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

was the only other resident guest...[1]

It was on this visit that the novelist took Sir Walter Scott into confidence about the authorship of her novels, for she wrote with the greatest secrecy and received from him the advice, which resulted in her severance with Blackwood, her publisher.

Several visits seem to have been paid to Scott during the winter, for she writes Lady Charlotte Bury: "My chief happiness is enjoying the privilege of seeing a good deal of the Great Unknown, Sir Walter Scott. He is so kind and condescending that he deigns to let me and my trash take shelter under the protection of his mighty branches and I have the gratification of being often in this great and good man's society...The great simplicity of character and unaffected affability of this astonishing man's manners add infinite charms to his disposition, and he is as delightful as a private individual in society as he is supremely so in his works."[2]

In May, 1831, Miss Ferrier again visited Scott, and Lockhart brings out by a few effective touches her kind thoughtfulness in these words:

> To assist them in amusing him in the hours which he spent out of his study, and especially that he might be tempted to make those hours more

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, pp. 241-2.

2 Ibid., p. 243.

> frequent, his daughters had invited his friend, the authoress of "Marriage", to come out to Abbotsford; and her coming was serviceable. For she knew and loved him well, and she had seen enough affliction akin to his to be well skilled in dealing with it. She could not be an hour in his company without observing what filled his children with more sorrow than all the rest of the case. He would begin a story as gaily as ever; and go on, in spite of the hesitation in his speech, to tell it with highly picturesque effect; but before he could reach the point, it would seem as if some internal spring had given way--he paused and gazed round him with the blank anxiety of look that a blind man has when he has dropped his staff. Unthinking friends sometimes pained him sadly by giving him the catch-word abruptly. I noticed the delicacy of Miss Ferrier on such occasions. Her sight was bad, and she took care not to use her glasses when he was speaking; and she affected to be also troubled with deafness, and would say, "Well, I am getting dull as a post; I have not heard a word since you said so-and-so," being sure to mention a circumstance behind that at which he had halted. He then took up the thread with his habitual smile of courtesy--as if forgetting his case entirely in the consideration of the lady's infirmities.[1]

How fully her good gifts were understood and valued by Scott is shown by his description of her in his Journal:

> Miss Ferrier comes out to us. This gifted personage, besides having great talents, has conversation the least exigeante of any author, female at least, whom I have ever seen among the long list I have encountered with; simple, full of humor, and

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1 Lockhart's Life of Scott, X (1862 ed.), pp. 68-69.

> exceedingly ready at repartee; and all this without the least affectation of the bluestocking.[1]

He would, no doubt, have enjoyed hearing that humorous and gifted woman say as she did in one of her letters, apropos of Waverley, that "Sir Walter Scott had no business to take the bread out of other people's mouths by writing novels."[2] And his heart must have been touched, could he have known what Lockhart knew about Miss Ferrier's last visit as told by Lockhart.

C. W. Copeland, writing in the Atlantic Monthly, said that these reminiscences of the year 1831, which I have quoted, of the friendship between Scott and Miss Ferrier commemorate one of the most touching offices of friendship to be found in books.

Miss Ferrier's love and esteem for Scott was shown by the dedication of her last novel, Destiny, to him. After this work she wrote no more, although she was urged by friends and publishers. What she had written was done spontaneously for the pure joy of it with no thought of fame or profit. In a letter to her sister after the publication of Marriage she wrote, "I don't care a thing about money."

Susan Ferrier was, as Scott said, unaffected. She had nothing of artificiality in herself, and she disliked it in others. She was unpretensious in regard to her

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1 Scott's Journal, II (May 12, 1831), p. 221.

2 Atlantic Monthly, LXXI (June, 1893), p. 836.

novels, and no one, reading her later letters with their record of every day events, would imagine that they were the work of a woman who, before she was fifty, had produced work which many critics deem worthy to give her name an abiding place among the writers of English classics.

That she had always been at heart a home-body and that other things besides novel writing interested her we learn from her letters. Shortly after the publication of Marriage she writes a sister, "My attention to my flowers, picking currants, pulling peas, eating gooseberries and etc., fills up the measure of my days completely..."[1] And in a later letter she says, "Tell Helen (her sister) of all things to sow large beds and long rows of dwarf rocket larkspur; there is nothing makes a garden look so brilliant."[2]

That the last days of her life were happy we judge from her letters in which she speaks of the "quiet even tenor of our days, diversified by plentiful visits from friends and kindred in the morning and reading and knitting at night...nor would I have it otherwise.[3]

And I doubt not that the old friends who called saw something of the keen, witty humorist of her earlier days--

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 150.

2 Ibid., p. 168.

3 Ibid., p. 282.

ready not only to entertain, but "to be entertained."

Mr. Rowland Grey, in his article "Heavy Fathers," pictures the novelist's life as being dreary and isolated. He seems hardly to know Miss Ferrier when he says, "She faded into a subdued old maidenhood beside the much flattered original of her own Uncle Adam." She faded into "old maidenhood," we agree, but she was never subdued. One could as soon have tamed one of her own Highland chieftains into insignificance as to imagine Susan Ferrier subdued. I do not think it possible that anyone with a keen sense of the ludicrous--almost unequalled--or a faculty for seeing the entertaining side of everyone's character, which she possessed, could ever lose entirely those traits as is suggested by Mr. Grey and supported in some measure in the implications of Mr. Doyle in his Memoir.

That there were two sides to her character we know,--one easily and spontaneously humorous, the other laboriously and artificially moral. To think that she could ever have lost the former entirely, as has been suggested, is past belief. She saw the humorous side to every small incident. We can imagine her chuckling to herself as she writes her sister of such commonplace incidents as the following: "My father grumbles a little at the degeneracy of modern partridges and always discovers, after having picked one to the bone, that there is

nothing upon it."[1]

The traits of the clever, witty girl, who writes her brother, "The Grand Duke Nick o lass has arrived," and to her friend Charlotte Clavering (who evidently had appropriated from some well-known source a part of the novel which she (Miss Clavering) was writing): "You might just as well have stolen the Regalia and thought to walk the streets unmolested with the crown of Great Britain on your head,"[2] gleam forth in more subdued humor in the woman, past sixty years of age, as she writes her friend of Lord Jeffrey's treatment of her novels.

After the publication of Destiny Miss Ferrier wrote no more, although she was repeatedly urged by publishers and friends. She had been praised and honored by Scott, which was the supreme and crowning honor for any Scottish writer of that day, when a year after the publication of Marriage he wrote in the epilogue to the Tales of My Landlord thus:

> I retire from the field of fiction conscious that there remains behind not only a large harvest, but laborers capable of gathering it in. More than one writer has of late displayed talents of this description, and if the present writer, himself a phantom, may be permitted to distinguish a brother or perhaps a sister shadow, he would mention in particular the author of

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 200.

2 Ibid., p. 96.

the very lively work called "Marriage."[1]

Sir James Mackintosh, who became so interested in Destiny that he forgot to attend a meeting of Parliament, writes her the following letter:

> On the day of the dissolution of Parliament, and in the critical hours between twelve and three, I was employed in reading part of the second volume of Destiny. My mind was so completely occupied on your colony in Argyllshire that I did not throw away a thought on kings or parliaments, and was not moved by the general curiosity to stir abroad till I had finished your volume. It would have been nothing if you had so agitated a youth of genius and susceptibility, prone to literary enthusiasm, but such a victory over an old hack is perhaps worthy of notice.[2]

Miss Hope Mackenzie wrote her friend that she was authorized to offer her, through Mr. Sutherland Mackenzie, one thousand pounds for "anything." I have quoted the urgent request below.

> Louisa (Mrs. Forbes) applied to me to persuade you to listen favorably to a request she was authorized to make to you (through her connection Mr. Sutherland Mackenzie) that you would accept £1000 for a volume, anything from you (these are Louisa's words), which a friend of Mr. S. M.'s a gentleman in the line from London, is most anxious to get from you. Now, dear friend, how much pleasure may you give, and how much good would you do with your thousand pounds![3]

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1 Introduction to Tales of My Landlord by Scott.

2 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 229.

3 Ibid., p. 268.

Miss Mackenzie would tempt her friend not so much with money as the opportunity to do good, a thing which always appealed to the novelist. That she made an effort to write in response to this request we know, for on the back of this letter Miss Ferrier wrote, "I made two attempts to write something, but I could not please myself, and would not publish 'anything.'"[1] The author, no doubt, had ideals of the standard of work she wished to publish, and if it was not of the quality she desired, she would publish nothing. She was no longer young and the stock of originals taken from life was probably not so plentiful. Then, too, impaired eyesight and poor health probably hindered her.

Mr. Saintsbury, however, does not seem to think her health sufficient reason for her ceasing to write. He says there is something curious and in the present day (1882) especially, almost portentous in the fact that Miss Ferrier was content to write only three novels.

Miss Ferrier was what we today would call a successful novelist. She had won a great deal of reputation by her books. The fact that she had made money in most agreeably increasing proportion by her three ventures would not have deterred most authors. Marriage brought her £150 which, although not a magnificent sum, was more than many novelists of greater genius have made by their first works. The Inheritance was sold for £1000 and

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 268.

Destiny for £1700. She might probably have depended for as much on a fourth novel. But she persistently refused to write anymore, and the probable reason for this refusal rather heightens than impairs the merits of the refusal. There have been men and women of one book--a book often inspired by some peculiar circumstance. But that an author should live many days, publish three times with the result of praise and profit, and without sufficient disabling cause retire from the field is a most unusual thing. So she remains in literary history a singular and almost unique figure.

The lapse of three-quarters of a century and a complete change of manners have put her books to the hardest test they probably will have to endure, and they have come through it triumphantly. Having now amused five generations with her gallery of originals, all of whom are excellent company, she will probably continue to entertain many more. In point of natural ability, in acuteness, humor and insight into character Miss Ferrier was far above the average novel-writer of her day and many of those of the present. Novels like hers are not to be met with every day. Therefore I would recommend Miss Ferrier's books, especially to those who can enjoy unsparing social satire and a masterly faculty of caricature.

Chapter II

Characterization in the Novels.

I

The novels of Miss Ferrier made their appearance at a time when the public mind was fascinated by the brilliant fiction of Scott, and it was fortunate for the author that the tastes and qualities of her mind were so essentially different from those of the great novelist as probably to exclude the wish as well as the power of imitation. The trend of her mind was the very reverse of romantic. Though not without a sympathy with the poetical character of the past, she was more interested in the things about her.

This relish for reality unquestionably explains Miss Ferrier's strongest feature as a novelist, namely, her interest in characterization and in transferring to her pages persons from real life. The characters act in an understandable way. We see them concerned with the problems of everyday life. It is easy to believe that many of her characters have actually haunted the streets of Edinburgh or the country mansions in its neighborhood, where they were seen and marked by the ingenious author. We have a feeling that we have talked to Dr. Redgill across the dinner-table, have suffered from Miss Pratt's prying eyes, and been startled by M'Dow's terrible laugh, for they are all realistically

drawn.

In her first work, Marriage, the author has been content to string together, with only a rudimentary attempt at central interest, amusing portraits or caricatures, the finest of which will rank with the best originals in English fiction; and the sketches alone make the book worth reading.

When Marriage was first published, Edinburgh enjoyed it as something new in contemporary fiction. The "Bluestocking" ladies discussed it at interminable tea-parties and amused themselves by trying to identify the characters and also the author, whom they felt certain was a Scot, acquainted with "high-life" of both Scotland and England.

Miss Ferrier, fearing that she might be detected, because many of her characters were from originals, writes her friend and confidant, Charlotte Clavering, shortly before the publication of Marriage thus:

> I am boiling to hear from you, but I've taken a remorse of conscience about Lady Maclaughlan and her friends; if ever I was to be detected, or even suspected, I would have nothing for it but to drown myself...As to the misses, if ever it was to be published, they must be altered or I must fly my native land.[1]

That Miss Clavering recognized the characters as acquaintances we see from her answer to the above letter.

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[1] Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 92.

She writes:

> First of all I must tell you that I approve in the most signal manner of 'Lady Maclaughlan'...Do I know the person who is the original? The dress is vastly like Mrs. Damer, the manners like Lady Frederick; tell me if you did not mean a touch at her?[1]

Mr. Morrow, writing in the introduction to Marriage (Rhys edition), says that Lady Maclaughlan represented Mrs. Damer, the sculptor to whom her cousin, Mr. Horace Walpole, was to leave his Gothic palace at Strawberry Hill. On the other hand the Encyclopedia Britannica states that she was Lady Charlotte Campbell, later Charlotte Bury. So we may judge, as Miss Clavering said in her letter, that she was probably like Mrs. Damer in dress but Lady Campbell in manner. Mrs. Fox, that "fine fashionable-looking woman with a smooth skin and still smoother address," was the portrait of Lady Clark. The aunties, distant relation of the Duke of Argyll, were the three Miss Edmonstones, for one of whom Miss Ferrier was named. Mrs. Macauley was also an original, as may be seen by this letter to Miss Ferrier from her sister: "Molly Macauley...is still alive and in her ninety-first year, at Inverary..."[2] The fact that the author did not authorize the use of her name until 1852 was probably because of the audacity she had shown in taking many of

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 92.

2 Atlantic Monthly, LXXI (June, 1893), p. 603.

the characters from living models.

II

Of the many entertaining characters who throng the pages of Miss Ferrier's novels, the most original, lifelike, and convincing are Lady Maclaughlan, Lady Juliana and her daughters, Adelaide and Mary, the three maiden aunts, and Dr. Redgill, from Marriage; Miss Pratt, Mrs. Major Waddell, Lord Rossville, and Colonel Delmour, from The Inheritance; M'Dow, the Earl of Glenroy, and Mrs. Macauley, from Destiny.

The foibles and weaknesses of the aristocracy are represented by Lady Juliana, Adelaide, Lord Rossville, and Colonel Delmour. Mary Douglas represents the real lady, who has not only title but true worth. The novelist has intended her to be the most nearly perfect character found in her books. Mrs. Major Waddell and her numerous relations also represent a socially ambitious class who, because of their vulgar display of wealth and poor taste, are just on the outskirts of society. Lady Maclaughlan and Miss Pratt are both women of strong personality. They read character with percision, say what they think, and tell all they know. The three maiden aunts, known as the "girls," and Mrs. Macauley represent the true old-fashioned Scots, who love Scotland and cling to its manners and customs. Lord Rossville and the Earl of Glenroy are typical of the old Scottish lords. They are proud, overbearing, egotistical; they hold firmly to the traditions

of the Scottish clans. M'Dow, the vain, crude parish minister, who has not one real spiritual quality, stands in a class by himself. Of these Lady Juliana, Lady Maclaughlan, Miss Pratt, Mrs. Waddell, and the Earl of Glenroy are the novelist's best examples of characterization.

The first of these people whom I wish to introduce is Lady Maclaughlan, a Scotch woman of indomitable personality. She is kind at heart but so frank and outspoken that she is much feared but, at the same time, sought after. Mrs. Maclaughlan has impressed her critics very favorably. Mr. Saintsbury, for instance, says she is the strongest and most original character who has yet found a home in English fiction. The novelist introduces her to us as she bustles into the castle, greeting the aunts with this salutation, "Well, girls! So you're alive, I see; hump!"[1]

Her candid, outspoken manner is shown when, upon meeting Lady Juliana, she exclaims,

> "You are really a pretty creature! You've got a handsome nose, and your mouth's very well, but I don't like your eyes; they're too large and too light; they're saucer eyes, and I don't like saucer eyes. Why ha'nt you black eyes? You're not a bit like your father--I knew him well. Your mother was an heiress; your father married her for her money, and she married him to be a Countess; and so that's the history of their marriage--hump."[2]

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1 Marriage, I, p. 108.

2 Ibid., p. 110.

Seventeen years later we hear Lady Maclaughlan remarking of Lady Juliana's daughter that "she would be handsome when she was forty, not a day sooner; and she would be clever, for her mother was a fool; and foolish mothers had always wise children and vice versa, 'and your mother [addressing the spinsters] was a very clever woman, girls--hump!'"[1] We do not doubt from these brief sketches that there were many persons in fashionable Edinburgh society who fled, or at least desired to do so, when they saw this lady approaching.

The supreme creation of her first novel is Lady Juliana Douglas. From the time that we meet her as a girl of seventeen until she is an old woman, she is always in the foreground; she is consistently silly and selfish throughout the story. Her beautiful daughters, Adelaide and Mary, do not for one moment claim her unselfish attention. It is rather unusual for an author to write of a character of Lady Juliana's importance nothing of her personal appearance except that she was beautiful. Miss Ferrier has concentrated her attention on the vain, selfish aspect of this lady's character, and she never changes her point of view. As we found her at the opening of the story, so we find her at the end.

Something of Lady Juliana's ignorance of money values the author shows in this paragraph:

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1 Marriage, I, p. 267.

> Lady Juliana, brought up in the luxurious profusion of a great house, accustomed to issue her orders and have them obeyed, was, at the time of her marriage, in the most blissful state of ignorance respecting the value of pounds, shillings, and pence. Her maid took care of her wardrobe, and when she wanted a new dress or fashionable jewel, it was only driving to Madam D.'s or Mr. Y.'s, and desiring the article to be sent to herself, while the bill went to her papa.[1]

Just how completely absurd Lady Juliana may be is seen when she critisizes Mr. Redgill for speaking to her of her "daughter." She reproves him in these words:

> "I have repeatedly desired, Dr. Redgill, that you will not use these familiar appellations when you address me or any of my family," interrupted Lady Juliana with haughty indignation.[2]

Miss Ferrier's skill may be noted in the fact that although she pictures Lady Juliana throughout the story under a variety of circumstances in her silliness, yet she makes her always vividly impressive.

The discussion of Lady Juliana would hardly be complete without mention of her daughters, Adelaide and Mary, neither of whom, in point of interest, can equal their mother. Although the girls are twins, they are very different in disposition, as a result, no doubt, of early training. Adelaide, being brought up by Lady Juliana, is almost a duplicate of her mother, heartless, ambitious,

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1 Marriage, I, p. 218.

2 Ibid., II, p. 22.

beautiful, and accomplished; but the "surface was covered with flowers, and who would have thought of analyzing the soil?" Mary, however, being reared by true gentlefolk of Scotland, has many excellent qualities. To her, home, home ties, and true friends mean everything.

Mr. Morrow thinks that in the picture of Mary as the "heroine above reproach" there is, perhaps, a little satire and that Miss Ferrier created the character not so much as the heroine she admired as the heroine she thought she ought to admire.[1]

Lord Cockburn speaks of "that singular race of excellent old ladies" in Scotland whose habits, speech, dress, and manners were entirely Scotch. Such characters are the aunts, Miss Jacky, the sensible woman of the parish; Miss Nicky, the notable housewife; and Miss Grizzy, who is nothing in particular. Having spent their lives in a small country parish, they are quite naturally narrow-minded.

The way they worry over Mary's education is highly amusing. They fear that under Mrs. Douglas' care she is not being properly educated. The following conversation the novelist uses to show the folly of their ideas:

> "It really appears as if Mary was getting no education at all; and yet she can do things," said Miss Grizzy.

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1 Introduction to the Rhys edition of Marriage, I.

> "I think it's high time Mary had done something fit to be seen; she is now sixteen past. Most girls of Mary's time of life that ever I had anything to do with had something to show before her age. Bella had worked the globe before she was sixteen; and Baby did her filigree tea-caddy the first quarter she was at Miss Macgowk's, and Betsy did her screen," replied Miss Nicky.[1]

Their ideas concerning the wearing of the "Girnachgowl collar", which they deem absolutely necessary to make a child's back develop correctly, is amusing. That it was the "tenderest of all themes" with them may be seen in their conversation and in Miss Ferrier's explanations:

> "She should give Mary the benefit of at least a quarter of Miss Macgowk's school; or at least make her wear our collar."
>
> The collar had long been a galling yoke upon their minds; its iron had entered into their very souls; for it was a collar presented to the family of Glenfern by the wisest, virtuousest, best of women and grandmothers, the good Lady Girnachgowl; and had been worn in regular rotation by every female of the family till now that Mrs. Douglas positively refused to subject Mary's pliant form to its thraldom.[2]

The novelist's genial humor and delight in the comic is shown when she adds for the lord of the castle concerning the "collar:"

> Even the Laird, albeit no connoisseur of any shapes save those of his kine, was of the opinion that since the thing was in the house, it was a pity it should be lost. Not Venus's girdle

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1 Marriage, I, p. 264.

2 Ibid., p. 266.

> even was supposed to confer greater charms than the Girnachgowl collar.[1]

When Miss Grizzy complained to Mrs. Maclaughlan, "Mary's back won't be worth a farthing; and we have always been quite famous for our backs," Mrs. Maclaughlan, with her dry wit replies, "Hump!--that's the reason people are always so glad to see them."[2]

One of the most diverting characters of Marriage is Redgill, the epicurean doctor, with his contempt for Scotch music, balanced by his admiration for Scotch breakfasts, and his aversion to churches, as "highly prejudicial to health." The Doctor's indignation toward Mary is very great when she refuses Lord Glenallen, for he had planned to visit them during the game season, and had no doubt he should in time "rule the roast, and be lord paramount over kitchen and larder."[3] The Doctor likes the ladies, but when he goes to a turtle dinner where "five and thirty people (one half of them ladies, who, of course, are always helped first) sit down to dinner, there's an end to all rational happiness."[4]

Justice cannot be done Dr. Redgill by extracts. To appreciate him fully one must read Marriage. Critics of Dr. Redgill are agreed that the characterization is good.

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1 Marriage, I, p. 266.

2 Ibid., II, p. 265.

3 Ibid., p. 217.

4 Ibid., pp. 14-15.

Blackwood says of him: "Anyone who has ever associated with the English of a certain class will recognize in Dr. Redgill the living portrait of hundreds of his type, though never before so well hit off."[1] The Edinburgh Review is just as complimentary, when it states that the Doctor is "equal to any character that could be produced from the best of our English novels."[2] Yet another critic, Mr. Copeland, writing in the Atlantic Monthly, says that the whole of Dr. Redgill's lines may safely be commended to lovers of polished farce, and they have value also in fixing a vanishing type.

Miss Ferrier's best achievement of character in The Inheritance is Miss Pratt, who is not afraid to say "Bow wow to lords and colonels." This lady has been praised by Mr. Saintsbury and Mr. Copeland, both of whom consider her equal to any of Miss Austen's characters.

Miss Pratt is a well-to-do woman of middle age, who visits in many castles of the country and especially in that of Lord Rossville, to whom she is distantly related and of whom she is not the least in awe. She is one who humiliates the proud, outrages the dignified, interrupts lover's conferences, and listens to political news not meant for her. Of her eyes, which look as if they "could

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 139.

2 Edinburgh Review, LXXIV (Jan., 1842), pp. 495-505.

3 Atlantic Monthly, LXXI (June, 1893), p. 836.

not be surprised by anything--not even sleep,"[1] the author writes:

> Miss Pratt then appeared to be a person from whom nothing could be hid. Her eyes were not by any means fine--they were not soft eyes; they were not reflecting eyes; they were not sparkling eyes; they were active, brisk, busy, vigilant eyes..."[2]

But the real Miss Pratt is best made known to us through her conversation, for she is always talking, although "no one may be listening." The novelists says:

> She never restrained her tongue except for the benefit of her ears, both of which were usually on the full stretch, the one to pick up certain little political pieces of information, which it had reason to suppose were not intended for it; the other to make itself master of what was going on.[3]

The author gives an excellent touch to the study of Miss Pratt who, thinking she knows of Gertrude's love affair, gives her hand a significant squeeze saying, "You needn't be afraid of me, my dear, the secret's safe with me."[4] The absurdity of Miss Pratt's keeping a secret is not lost on the reader. Miss Pratt is just as amusing when she says, concerning a conversation to which she had tried so hard to listen, "You know I didn't hear just all, for Lord Rossville was calling me...and at any rate, you know, I wouldn't have stayed to

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 63.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 141.

4 Ibid., p. 287.

listen."[1] The last note, "wouldn't have stayed to listen," is a good example of the novelist's bright wit and satire, which is hard to surpass and which makes her books worth reading.

Next to Miss Pratt the most delightful character in The Inheritance is Miss Bell Black, afterwards Mrs. Major Waddell. Miss Ferrier tells us that Bell was really a very pretty girl; she had a "pretty figure, pretty features, pretty hair, a pretty complexion, a pretty bonnet, pretty boots, and a pretty watch. But over all this prettiness was diffused an intolerable air of folly, affectation, and conceit, which completely marred the effect of her charms."[2]

Bell is engaged to a wealthy and fairly well-connected nabob, Major Waddell, and on this pair the author concentrates the weight of her sarcasm, especially on Miss Bell. Miss Ferrier sums up Bell's character pretty concisely, when she has Uncle Adam say of her, "That craature's folly's just like dust. Drive it out o' ae thing, and it just flies to anither."[3]

After her marriage Bell is always worrying, as she says, about "my position." She reminds Uncle Adam of her position saying, "I really wish, Uncle, you would recollect you are speaking to a married woman,"[4] and

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 306.

2 Ibid., p. 93.

3 Ibid., p. 258.

4 Ibid., p. 409.

complains to him that she and the Major had been refused admittance by the keeper of one of his lodges, "which to a man in the Major's rank in life and me a married woman was a piece of insolence."[1] In answer Uncle Adam, disdaining to recognize her by her "married appellation", calls her "Miss Bell." And Mrs. Bell in telling about it says, "And did you hear how he Miss'e me today? Me a married woman! If the Major had been present he must have resented it."[2]

Mr. J. H. Miller says of Mrs. Major Waddell that he doubts whether in the whole range of fiction there is a more exquisitely finished study of sheer vulgarity, that even Mrs. Elton must admit a sister to her throne.[3] Another critic, Lord Jeffrey, was particularly pleased with the "Nabob (Major) and Spouse."

Another entertaining character is Lord Rossville of Rossville castle. He is "sort of a petty, benevolent tyrant," who has money, family name, and usually his own way. He is a man who delights in his own eloquence. When Mrs. St. Clair, his widowed daughter-in-law, and his granddaughter, Gertrude, come to make their home with him, he looks upon them as "two very fine pieces of wax, ready to receive whatever impression

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 93.

2 Ibid.

3 Miller's Literary History of Scotland, p. 51.

he may choose to give them."[1] A little of his tyranny is shown when he meets Gertrude, who has arisen before sunrise to take a walk. Miss Ferrier describes his actions thus:

> ...the Earl struck his forehead, and took two or three turns up and down the room, then suddenly stopping----
> "Are you aware, Miss St. Clair, of the glaring--the--I must say-- gross impropriety of such a step in itself--..."

To Gertrude who tries to say she is sorry if she had done anything wrong, he shouts:

> "If you have done wrong! Good Heavens!...Who that has proper feelings of delicacy and propriety--who that has a due regard for character and reputation, but must view the matter as I do. Such a step--and at such an hour!"[2]

From this incident we may say we know the Earl.

Lord Rossville's nephew, Colonel Delmour, the "man of ton," although displaying none of his uncle's traits, is, nevertheless, no more to be admired. He is interested in sports, particularly hunting, but as Miss Pratt says, he is usually more intent on "wounding hearts than harts." He has an "air distingue", belongs to a noble family, and supposedly has wealth, all of which admit him to the best society. In him Miss Ferrier satirizes the idle, wealthy, young noblemen, who have no serious aims in life.

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 21.

2 Ibid., p. 38.

One of the most likable of Scotch characters is Mrs. Macauley of whom the novelist writes, "Mrs. Macauley was now an elderly woman in years, but in nothing else."[1] She is engaged by Glenroy as a teacher for the children, although he scouts the idea of her teaching them anything but her own brogue. She must, however, have been a joy to her small charges for "she was one of those happily constituted beings who look as if they could 'extract sunbeams from cucumbers',"[2] and her philosophy of child life surely made her overlook many childish faults for she says, "Childer will be childer let us do what we will; we cannot put gray heads on green shoulders!"[3] "Christopher North," writing of Miss Ferrier's work in this picture of Mrs. Macauley says, "No sinner of our gender could have adequately filled up the outline."[4]

It has been said that there is no sharper sword than ridicule; and Miss Ferrier, no doubt, realized this in her treatment of M'Dow, the loud-spoken parish minister, who lacks all spiritual qualities. He is the most exaggerated of all the people whom she presents, and it may be truly said she "barbs and darts" which she directs against his follies. Mr. M'Dow deals much in state jokes

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1 Destiny, I, p. 26.

2 Ibid., p. 27.

3 Ibid., p. 30.

4 Notes in Marriage, I, taken from Temple Bar, Nov. 1878.

and bad puns, has an "immense horse-laugh," and an enormous appetite, neither of which he ever restrains. It is in her pictures of M'Dow at the table that the novelist excels. She tells us that "no wild Indian could have tracked his prey with greater certainty and finesse than did M'Dow, a good dinner."[1] We can readily believe from the following description that his manners would, as she says, "have driven Lord Chesterfield frantic:"[2]

> Seating himself at the table he (M'Dow) fixed his eyes on her (Florinda) with a stare of astonishment; and while he stuffed one side of his mouth to its utmost extent, he discoursed at large with the other.[3]

The following humorous little incident shows how the lords of the parish feel toward M'Dow. When, as a new minister, he first comes to the district, the Earl of Glenroy finds himself forced out of the barest decency, to ask him to feel free to call at any time. The Earl makes the request in such a way, however, that the average person would have considered it as no invitation at all. M'Dow does not see this, and at the first big feast the Earl holds for the lords of the neighborhood, Glenroy is startled by hearing the well-known neigh of Amailye announcing the approach of M'Dow. The author notes the Earl's feelings saying, "Had the Castle possessed a drawbridge, it certainly would have

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1 Destiny, I, p. 85.

2 Ibid., p. 33.

3 Ibid., p. 373.

been raised on the instant."[1] Miss Ferrier describes M'Dow as advancing "with grappling irons extended" toward the Earl saying:

> "You were so very polite as to assure me of being always welcome, a piece of kindness I shall never forget. I--"
>
> "That's just as it should be," remarked a laird who had three ferries between him and Mr. M'Dow "There ought always to be an open door to the minister."[2]

The ingenious Miss Ferrier enjoyed the witticism of the "three ferries," no doubt, as much as her readers have always done. A luncheon party at the manse, at which M'Dow served a huge banquet, calling it "but a slight refreshment," shows his poor taste. Edith's words express the general feeling of the guests, when she says, "If he had given us some well boiled potatoes and allowed us to walk about...One is always pleased with the humble fare of a cottage."[3]

From M'Dow we turn to Miss Ferrier's most interesting picture of Scottish character--the Earl of Glenroy, whose greatest pride in life is his native land. He detests London and "despises every part of the globe save Scotland." No music pleases his ears except that of the bagpipe, and no company gives him real enjoyment except that of his friends and followers. "When he spoke of the world, he meant only his own country and clan."

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1 Destiny, I, p. 82.

2 Ibid., p. 86.

3 Ibid., p. 154.

Such is his feeling toward London, that after he becomes subject to attacks of the gout, he declares it is due to his visits there. There is in his manner an indolent pomp, which seems to betoken undisturbed power: and throughout the extensive district where his possessions lie, his supremacy is universally acknowledged.

He is significant as belonging to an old order that was gradually passing away. Many of the chieftains had already lost their power and wealth, although the Earl still possesses both. The novelist has done excellent work in the presentation of the Earl. His character is well-written from beginning to end.

The characters which I have discussed are typical and represent adequately the sparkling and enlivening side of Miss Ferrier's work. If space permitted, it would be possible to dwell on a number of other characters by her, which are somewhat like these. Lady Elizabeth and her daughter, Florinda, of Destiny, for instance, are somewhat like Lady Juliana and Adelaide. Mr. Downe Wright, Reginald, and Lord Courtland represent the fashionable young man, whose tastes are similar to those of Colonel Delmour.

III

Besides these major characters, upon whom the writer has lavished attention, there are in her novels a number of minor personages, who show the author's powers of observation, humor, and satire. Some of the sketches,

although short, are very excellent. The term "thumb-nail sketch" has been well applied to the shorter characterizations, for they are, indeed, charming miniatures, full of strength and vigor.

It seems worth while to comment on certain of these sketches and on certain passages. Perhaps the most typical of the novelist's thumb-nail sketches is the following one of Mrs. Boston:

> ...for example there is Mrs. Boston, who by all strangers is taken for a widow, such emphasis does she lay upon the personal pronoun--with her 'tis always, I do this or I do that without the slightest reference to her husband; and she talks of my house, my gardens, my carriage, my children, as if there were no co-partnery in the case...She is both master and mistress, and more if possible--she makes her husband look like her footman."[1]

Some of Miss Ferrier's most skillful minor sketches are of her own countrymen. In Marriage we have a great procession of them, filing past us so rapidly that we get little more than a glimpse of some of them. There is Old Donald in "tartan Jacket and bob-wig," who stands tottering at the chaise door as Mary leaves, and hands her a "bit snishin mull," saying, "God bless her bonnie face, an' may she ne'er want a good sneesh (sneeze)!"[2] and his master, the Earl of Glenfern, an old-fashioned laird of small means and homely manners. We see him in his rough manner welcoming "Leddy Jully Anie" and

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1 Marriage, II, p. 213.

2 Ibid., I, p. 308.

assuring her that she would find as warm hearts among them as "ony ye ha'e left in your fine English policies."[1]

Still other pictures, which the reader carries away, are these quaint figures out for a walk in their "shrunk duffle great coats, vast poke-bonnets, red worsted neckcloths, and pattens,"[2] and Mrs. Macfuss and her family. With a few pointed words the author gives us the general characteristics of the Macfuss family, when she has the old maid, Grizzel Douglas say, "Mrs. Macfuss was a most excellent woman, I assure you, and got all her daughters married...The Macfusses are all famous for their management."[3] Then one should at least mention Mrs. Maclaughlan's husband, Sir Sampson, the "little warrier" with his "meagre shanks" to which not even a military boot and large spur could give a respectable appearance.

Among the minor characters from The Inheritance are the young Masters and Misses Black--"fine, stout, blooming, awkward creatures, with shiny faces, and straight-combed, though rebellious looking hair,"[4] and Miss Lilly Black, who had read every novel in the circulating library and was ready to be fallen in love

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[1] Marriage, I, p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 97.

[3] Ibid., II, p. 246.

[4] The Inheritance, I, p. 90.

with at a moment's notice. Then "to see Mr. and Mrs. Fairbairn in their own family--it is a beautiful sight."[1]

In Destiny we meet Miss Mogg, old Mogg, the muffin-maker's daughter, who had been educated at the first boarding-school in town and finished off at Paris," and Mr. Ribley beside "Kitty my dear," whose watch, like herself, "was always correct." With something of the same tone in which she deals with the parish minister, she pictures "dear little Marjorie M'Dow, who went with her father to pay an unsolicited visit to Florinda, and being very dry "sucked her tea with an avidity that threatened to carry the saucer along with it."[2]

IV

From the foregoing account of the people of Miss Ferrier's books, several facts should be clear. Obviously her forte as a fiction writer lay in the ability to center attention on unusual characters--those that are striking or out of the way. The keenness of her perception made her overemphasize, also, what she saw or felt, which gives to her characters a gloss of caricature; but, in spite of this, they are real and lifelike. Her characters are from all walks of life, but largely from the aristocracy. She took great delight in picturing fine ladies and haughty lords, such

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 228.

2 Destiny, II, p. 307.

as Lady Juliana, Adelaide, and Rossville. She does this excellently, but when she gets down to those of the lower middle order, who have a decided tinge of vulgarity, such as the Waddells, she is most humorous. Then her pictures of her own countrymen are always excellent. Her delineation of the Scotch lords are of value as a portrayal of a style of living, which was passing in her own day and is entirely gone today. One other thing to note about her novels is the fact that she took many of her characters from real life, especially in Marriage.

Chapter III

Plot in the Novels.

I

Of the four requisites of the novel--plot, character, description, and dialogue--the first is the only one in which Miss Ferrier's work may be said to be weak. She is not a particularly gifted narrator, and her plots are comparatively uninteresting, suffering often from her desire to teach. Her strength as a novelist is in her wonderful vivacity, her spontaneous humor, and her relish for reality in the presentation of characters. Although lacking the skill of a great literary architect, she possesses the power to present such a graphic and fascinating picture of men and women that the interest in the mere story is hardly missed. In her earliest work, especially, her object is not only to delineate character but to give it such variety in the people whom she introduces that she suggests a picture of the society of Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As I said before, a large number of her characters go in and out of her stories without influencing or having anything to do with the plots. Such characters are the Waddells, Miss Pratt, Dr. Redgill, M'Dow, the Fairbairns, and numerous minor characters.

Miss Ferrier's characteristics as a novelist are

summed up rather concisely when "Christopher North" and "Timothy Tickler," is discussing her novels, admit that her plots are poor, but that her works are "all thick-set with such specimens of sagacity, such happy traits of nature, such genuine satire, such easy humour, sterling good sense, and, above all--God only knows where she picked it up--mature and perfect knowledge of the world, that I think we may safely anticipate for them a different fate from what awaits the cleverest of juvenile novels."[1]

II

As I said in the chapter on Miss Ferrier's life, Miss Clavering was to have assisted in writing Marriage, and the chapter entitled "The History of Mrs. Douglas" is her contribution. It is rather surprising that as lively a letter writer and as shrewd a critic as Miss Clavering should have written anything as uninteresting as this part. She was, however, helpful to the novelist as a critic, as may be seen in this quotation from a letter, concerning the characters, who use too much French in their conversation:

> I don't like those high-life conversations; they are the sort of thing handed down from generation to generation in novels, but have little or no ground work in truth.[2]

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1 Introduction to Marriage, I.

2 Doyle, J. H., Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 115.

And so Miss Ferrier's duchesses have to strip their talk of French, which the sensible critic arraigned as unnatural.

The original idea of Marriage is stated somewhat briefly in a letter to Miss Clavering. The author's idea that a novel should convey some lesson in morality is shown here also:

> Now as to my own deeds--I shall make no apologies for sending you a hasty imperfect sketch of what I think might be wrought up into a tolerable form. I do not recollect ever to have seen the sudden transition of a highbred English beauty, who thinks she can sacrifice all for love, to an uncomfortable solitary Highland dwelling among tall, red-haired sisters and grim-faced aunts. Don't you think this would make a good opening of the piece? Suppose each of us try our hands on it; the moral to be deduced from it is to warn all young ladies against runaway matches, and the character and fate of the two sisters would be unexceptionable.[1]

In a humorous mood the novelist writes to her friend of the influence which she expects her book to have:

> I expect it will be the first book every wise matron will put into the hands of her daughter, and even the reviewers will relax their severity in favor of the morality of this little work. Enchanting sight! already do I behold myself arrayed in an old mouldy covering, thumbed and creased and filled with

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 76.

dog's ears...[1]

Miss Ferrier's comment on Jane Austen's Emma may be said to apply to her own novel Marriage. To her friend, Miss Clavering, she writes:

> I have been reading 'Emma' which is excellent; there is no story whatever, and the heroine is no better than other people; but the characters are all so true to life and the style so piquant, that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure.[2]

In Marriage the author uses essentially a series of episodes to make up the main story, instead of one large continuous action. These incidents, although lacking in movement, complication, climax, and dramatic effect, are held together by a thread of narrative, which gives unity to the whole. The story holds the attention but never grips the reader's attention as do the stories of Thackeray, Hardy, or George Eliot.

The first of the five episodes which make up Marriage is concerned with the marriage of Lady Juliana, the daughter of a somewhat embarrassed English peer, the Earl of Courtland. Having no ideas beyond her collection of pets, the society to which she is accustomed, and certain romantic ideas about handsome lovers, she is rather alarmed when her father asks her if she has thought of "establishing herself" in the world. She tells him

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1 Doyle's Memoir and Correspondence of Susan Ferrier, p. 76.

2 Ibid.

that all she cares for is to live happily with "the man of my heart," to which her father replies:

> "The man of a fiddlestick!
> What the devil have you to do with
> a heart?"[1]

He then informs her that she is to marry the Duke of L--, who is old, ugly, and squint eyed.

From this the mood of expectation is aroused and the story begins to move forward. Lady Juliana is charmed for a time by the elegant gifts of the Duke, but at last the good looks of her lover, Henry Douglas, prevail, and they elope and are married in Scotland.

The second episode is concerned with the introduction of this spoiled child of English fashionable life to a rough Highland home, abounding with characters. Douglas, who had a position with the Guards, loses his commission as well as the allowance from General Cameron, a rich bachelor, whose favorite he had always been. Lord Courtland now disowns his daughter; so there is nothing for Henry and "his Julia" to do but go to Douglas's father in the Highlands. Lady Juliana is unsuited for the life there and tires of everything, even her husband. When her twin daughters are born, she is heartless in her feelings toward them and allows her husband's brother to rear Mary, whom she calls "a little screech owl". She returns to London with her husband,

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1 Marriage, I, p. 54.

taking Adelaide, the other twin, with her.

The third episode deals with their life in London. General Cameron gets Henry reinstated in the Guards, giving him a small allowance. Henry, delighted says to his wife, "We may have a pretty cottage at Richmond or Twickenham, and I can keep a curricle and drive you about; and we may give famous good dinners."[1] Julia, however, declares she hates cottages, curricles, and good dinners and will have nothing but a place in town. According to his wife's desires then, they live in boundless extravagance in London, and since everyone believes Henry is General Cameron's heir and, therefore, the future possessor of immense wealth, he is allowed to borrow money and goes deeply into debt. After General Cameron's will is published, Henry is daily besieged with creditors of every description, for he is left but a small sum. "Horses, carriages, everything they could call their own were seized...and they found themselves on the point of being turned into the street."[2] Lady Juliana goes to her brother for aid and writes a comforting letter to Henry, which he never receives, for he is thrown into prison for debt. Lady Juliana is horrified, as her "idea of a prison is indissolubly united in her mind with bread and water, chains and

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1 Marriage, I, p. 217.

2 Ibid., p. 251.

straw, dungeons and darkness."[1] She flies to her brother, beseeching him to rescue poor Henry. Lord Courtland smiles at his sister's simplicity and assures her that the King's Bench is the "pleasantest place in the world; that some of his own most particular friends were there, who gave capital dinners, and led the most desirable lives imaginable."[2]

Lord Courtland gets Henry out of prison and exchanged into a regiment of the line then under orders for India. Lady Juliana refuses to follow her husband, and a "violent scene of reproach and recrimination terminated in an eternal farewell."[3]

The fourth episode falls in the second volume. Years have elapsed and the daughters are grown. Mary comes from Scotland to stay with her mother. This part is concerned with Mary's difficulties in adjusting herself to her mother's and sister's ways of life.

The paramount question in the last episode is Lady Juliana's efforts to find suitable husbands, that is, suitable to Lady Juliana, for her daughters. She selects the Duke of Altamont for Adelaide, who thinks it the "height of virtue to sacrifice her heart to duty--the duty of being a Duchess,"[4] and Downe Wright for Mary,

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1 Marriage, I, p. 256.

2 Ibid., p. 251.

3 Ibid., p. 258.

4 Ibid., p. 187.

who declares, in spite of her mother's remonstrance that it is "exceedingly tiresome to be clogged with a great unmarried daughter,"[1] that "with my heart only will I give my hand."[2] In this final episode we see the results of Lady Juliana's theories of marriage in the failure of Adelaide's, for finding life unbearable with the old Duke, she elopes to the South of France with her lover. Here again disillusioned, she sends for her mother to join her. Before leaving, Lady Juliana gives her consent to Mary's marriage to Charles Lennox, saying,

> "Marry whom you please, only remember I'm not responsible for the consequences."[3]

When Mary and her mother say good-by, they part "never more to meet, for Lady Juliana found foreign manners and principles too congenial to her tasts ever to return to Britain."[4] Mary, now finding herself free, returns to Scotland where she marries, as her mother had done before her, "the man of her heart," but with far different consequences.

III

In The Inheritance, which was published six years after Marriage, the individual studies and characters are as good as those of the first novel, while the novel, as a novel, is infinitely better. If its plot is of no

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1 Marriage, II, p. 229.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 302.

4 Ibid.

great intricacy, it is at least fairly well-formed. Miss Ferrier since the publication of Marriage, had learned to feel her own strength and has made advance in artistic skill in this novel. The fact that the "Ettrick Shepherd," writing in 1826, in the November issue of the Noctes Ambrosianae, thought that both The Inheritance and Marriage had been written by Sir Walter Scott furnishes proof of the strength of the novels. He writes thus:

> I aye thought it (The Inheritance) had been written by Sir Walter, as weel's 'Marriage', till it spunked out that it was written by a leddy.[1]

The story of The Inheritance begins in Scotland, moves to London for a season, and then back to the Highlands. In the first chapter of this book, we find Mrs. St. Clair bringing her beautiful daughter, Gertrude, to the halls of Rossville Castle, to which estate she is heiress. Here she meets three nephews, with one of whom she is intended to fall in love, with another of whom she ought to fall in love, and with a third of whom she does fall in love. This is the main thread of story which carries through both volumes--which of the nephews will be Gertrude's husband--Mr. Delmour, the dull politician; Mr. Lyndsay, the virtuous hero; or Colonel Delmour, the cultured gentleman. When Gertrude refuses to bestow her affections upon the right nephew,

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[1] The Works of Professor Wilson, Vol. I, p. 254.

Lord Rossville threatens to disinherit her; but before his mind is made up, he dies suddenly, and Gertrude succeeds to the estate. Colonel Delmour, Gertrude's chosen lover, now becomes doubly attentive, because of her wealth, but Gertrude is too guileless to see that. Colonel Delmour persuades her to go to London, where she is introduced to fashionable society. There she indulges in all sorts of expense and folly, neglecting the good works at Rossville. When she returns home, Lewiston, a villainous stranger, who is an American, forces his way into the castle, exhibiting his power over the mother and, through her, over Gertrude. At last the mystery is solved. Gertrude is not the Countess of Rossville, nor even the daughter of Mrs. St. Clair, but a child whom she has taken for the purpose of foisting as heiress on the Rossville family.

The climax is now reached. Colonel Delmour, learning that Gertrude has no fortune, flies off to London and marries the Duchess of St. Ives.

The sky soon clears, for Mr. Lyndsay, Rossville's third nephew, inherits the kingdom. As he has long loved Gertrude, they are married; and she becomes mistress of Rossville Castle. The scene in which Gertrude tells her betrothed lover the story of her birth, which she has just learned, is said to have suggested to Tennyson the beautiful ballad of "Lady Clare."[1]

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1 Whitmore, Clara H., Woman's Work of English Literature, p. 178.

Mr. Saintsbury thinks that The Inheritance is a book which deserves a great deal of praise; that almost the only exception to be taken to it is the mismanagement of Lewiston, the American, who is not in the least like the American of history or the conventional Yankee of fiction and the stage. He is clearly a character for whom the author had no type ready in the memory or experience, but purely an invention of her own.[1]

IV

The story of Destiny, like its predecessors, is laid in Miss Ferrier's favorite Highlands and contains several picturesque and vivid descriptions of scenery, which are excellent. Inverary Castle and its surroundings generally form the model for her graphic pen. Much of this novel was written at the famous old Sterling Castle, when she was there visiting a sister, whose husband was governor of that garrison. When the novelist was in London in 1830, a year before the publication of her last novel, she visited Isleworth in order to see a villa belonging to Lord Cassillis. This figures in the last part of Destiny as "Woodlands," the beautiful home of Lady Florinda Waldegrave near London.

This novel has a very well-constructed plot. The story begins in the home of Glenroy, a chieftain of large property, who has two children, Edith and Norman. After his first wife's death Glenroy marries Lady Elizabeth Waldegrave, an English woman with a beautiful

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[1] Littel's Living Age, CLII (March. 31, 1882), pp. 836-46.

daughter, Florinda, who by the death of relations, becomes a peeress in her own right. In Glenroy's household then, besides Edith, Norman, and Florinda, is Reginald Malcolm, a nephew of the Chief.

The children have as a playmate Ronald Malcolm, the son of a poor relation, who lives nearby. The children play together and Reginald says that Florinda is to be his wife, for she is so much prettier than Edith. However, after a short time, finding Florinda's high temper and selfishness not to his liking, he claims the mild-mannered Edith. As the children grow up, Reginald's childish preference continues; and when he leaves for the continent to finish his studies, they are engaged. In the meantime Lady Elizabeth, taking her daughter with her, leaves Glenroy and goes to London.

Inch Orran, a distant childless relation of Glenroy's, leaves his immense wealth to Ronald Malcolm, provided he shall marry Edith. Ronald goes to sea, when he is still very young, is shipwrecked and reported as dead. After a long absence, he returns to Scotland to find his family enjoying his property. Miss Ferrier shows herself here as a master of pathos. No story could be much sadder than the scene where Ronald goes to the castle and looks in the window upon the happy family group. This scene resembles in many particulars the sad return of Enoch Arden. The close of the scene is as touching in the novel as in the poem, when Ronald, turning away, sobs,

"Yes, they are happy, and I am forgotten!" The novelist, however, seldom touches the pathetic, for she is first a humorist.

The death of Glenroy's son is the event which brings Reginald and Florinda back to Glenroy's, where a rivalry (which is unconscious on Edith's part) between Glenroy's daughter and the English peeress for the hand of Reginald gives some good scenes. Glenroy dies, leaving Edith unprovided for, because of his belief in her approaching marriage to Reginald, on whom his estate falls. Florinda wins Reginald, and Edith for a time is broken hearted, but Ronald again comes into the story through the unfortunate relations of Reginald and Florinda. He wins Edith's love and all ends well for them, if not for Reginald and his wife.

An interesting anecdote is told by Mr. Austen Leigh in his life of his aunt about Madame de Staël's reading one of Miss Austen's novels and returning it with the disdainful comment vulgaire. She could not have objected to the ton of Miss Ferrier's people. Her first heroine in Marriage is an earl's granddaughter; her second in The Inheritance, a countess in her own right, and in her third novel, Destiny, the only surviving child of a great Highland chieftain.

Such, briefly outlined, are the stories of her three novels. It is, as I stated before, not Miss Ferrier's

plots but other qualities which have given her the place which she holds in English literary history.

Chapter IV

The Treatment of Scotch Life.

I

When in Marriage Mr. Redgill says to Mary, "You Scotch are a wonderful people--a very wonderful people... Your Scotch are not apt to let anything escape them--a very searching, shrewd people as ever I knew," he probably voices Miss Ferrier's own view and the view which is generally held concerning the Scotch. She realized that her countrymen were a fine people, but she is not unreasonable in her admiration. She points out the fine points of the most admirable Scotch characters in Mary, Mrs. Douglas, Edith, Colonel Lennox, and Mr. Lyndsay, and pictures with gusto the faults and weaknesses in the aunts, Lord Rossville, Glenroy, Miss Pratt, Mrs. Waddell, and Mrs. Maclaughlan.

Miss Ferrier has kept alive the racial individuality of her countrymen--both high and low. Typical of her pictures of the mediaeval magnificence, which in her own day still existed in places throughout Scotland, is that of Lord Rossville and the Earl of Glenroy. Of that very entertaining old Scotsman, Glenroy, she writes:

> All the world knows there is nothing on earth to be compared to a Highland Chief. He has his loch and his islands, his mountains and his castle, his piper and his tartans, his forests and his deer, his thousands of acres of untrodden heath, and his

> tens of thousands of black-faced sheep, and his bands of bonneted clansmen, with claymores and Gaelic, and hot blood and dirks.[1]

Besides all these, the novelist tells us, the Chief of Glenroy "had a family tree upon which all the birds of the air might have roosted."[2] Humorously then she says that the Earl had a tree in spite of the fact that Dr. Johnson has said "there are no such things as family trees in the Highlands" and then adds, "but the Doctor's calumnies against trees of every description, or rather of no description, throughout Scotland, are too well known to require refutation."[3] To continue the picture of the splendor in which this chieftain lives the novelist writes:

> Glenroy, therefore, had a tree; and as for his rent-roll, it was like a journey in a fairy tale, "longer and longer and longer than I can tell." However, as the Chief himself was not particular in ascertaining the precise amount of his income, but lived as if the whole Highlands and Islands, with their kelp and black cattle had been at his disposal, it would ill become his biographer to pry into the state of his affairs for the gratification of the curious. Suffice it to say, therefore, that the Chief of Glenroy lived in a style which was deemed suitable to his rank and fortune by all--and they were neither few nor far between--who partook of his hospitality.

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1 Destiny, I, p. 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 2.

That Glenroy does not exactly underestimate his position as Earl of Glenroy may be seen when he speaks thus:

> "What's Lord Allonby, or any lord amongst them to me? The king can make a lord any day, but I defy him to make the Chief of Glenroy."[1]

A rather interesting picture of the social life in the Highlands is given in Destiny. For a short period of the year there is much company. From England come many who are interested in the deer and the grouse. During this season, the Highlands may be said to "open for the season as the King's Theatre shuts."[2] The author pictures the Chief's hospitality thus:

> Although Glenroy saw much good company at his hospitable mansion, yet it was only during a short period of the year; for the Highlands may be said to open for the season, as the King's Theatre shuts; and thanks to grouse and deer, the one has become almost as fashionable a place of amusement as the other. During this season Lady Elizabeth lived pretty much in her own element; but when that was over, a long and dreary interval ensued; not that the house ever emptied of visitors, be the season or weather what they might, but the company was not suited to her taste.[3]

The manner in which the English and the Scotch regard each other is not at all unusual, considering England's older culture and greater wealth. Miss Ferrier deals with this subject in a highly amusing manner.

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1 Destiny, I, p. 264.

2 Ibid., p. 10.

3 Ibid., p. 10.

When Mary is going to England, Miss Nicky hopes she will take care not to bring back any "extravagant English notions" with her or get into the "daadlin handless ways" of the English women, and emphatically declares, "I wouldn't give a pin for an English woman... The English women are all poor droichs (dwarfs)."[1] She had seen three in her life time the author wittily tells us. Miss Grizzy sincerely hopes Mary will never look at an Englishman and weeps at the "bare supposition of such a calamity." "Besides," says she, "Mrs. Maclaughlan has a husband in her eye for you, who must be suitable; for you know Lady Maclaughlan has had three husbands herself; so, of course, she must be an excellent judge."[2] She expresses her ideas of Englishmen further in these words:

> "Take my word for it they are a very dissipated, unprincipled set. They all drink and game and keep race-horses; and many of them, I'm told, even keep play-actresses; so you may think what it would be for all of us if you were to marry one of them."[3]

That the Scotch felt the English surpassed them in style is noted by Lady Alicia, an English woman. of whom Miss Ferrier says, "The observation did not escape her (Alicia) how much an English stranger is looked up to for fashion and taste in Edinburgh, though possessing little

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1 Marriage, I, p. 305.

2 Ibid., pp. 305-6.

3 Ibid., p. 305.

merit save that of being English."[1] Although the novelist admits that the English excel in fashion, she does not, for one moment, admit that they surpass in real qualities of heart and mind, as is shown when the Earl of Glenfern, welcoming Lady Juliana, assures her that she will find as warm hearts in Scotland as in England. He is expressing what to the novelist seemed most important--kindliness and friendship.

Very humorously then the author expresses through Lady Juliana some of the English views of the Scotch women. When Mary is to visit her mother in England, Lady Juliana wonders just what she will do with a girl who has been reared in Scotland. She expresses herself to Adelaide thus:

> "Then what can I do with a girl who has been educated in Scotland? She must be vulgar--all Scotch women are so. They have red hands and rough voices; they yawn, and blow their noses, and talk and laugh loud, and do a thousand shocking things. Then to hear the Scotch brogue--oh, heavens! I should expire everytime she opened her mouth!"
>
> "Perhaps my sister may not speak so very broad," kindly suggested Adelaide.
>
> "You are very good, my love, to think so; but nobody can live in that odious country without being infected with its patois. I really thought I should have caught it myself; and Mr. Douglas became quite gross in his language after living amongst his relations."[2]

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1 Marriage, I, p. 169.

2 Ibid., p. 301.

To contrast further the differences between the Scotch and their neighbors to the south, we might take the description of the Earl of Glenroy's second marriage to an English woman in London. The novelist describes the wedding in fashionable St. James' Square, and then by way of contrast, pictures the barbaric pomp with which the tenants and vassals of the chief celebrate, thus:

> ...the marriage was celebrated with the utmost éclat. On the one side, there was a special license, the presence of a prince of the blood, the benediction of an archbishop, with peers and peeresses, lace and pearls, a magnificent saloon, an elegant déjeûner, a line of splendid equipages, etc. Such was the scene at St. James' Square; while at the Glenroy Arms the event was celebrated by a numerous meeting of the tenantry and vassals of the Chief with "barbaric pomp"; a roasted ox, and half a score sheep, barrels of ale and bowls of whiskey, long speeches, loud shouting, toasting, cheering, bonfires, bagpipes, and the Highland fling.[1]

In much the same way the birth of an heir, who is always a son is celebrated. Then the author says, "bonfires blazed, bagpipes played, tartans waved, whiskey flowed."[2]

It seems very evident that whiskey drinking was quite common not only at a birth or wedding but at

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1 Destiny, I, p. 7.

2 Ibid., p. 4.

any big gathering of the nobles in Scotland. This was, probably, the main reason for Inch Orran's, a guest of Glenroy, taking his unceremonious departure with these words: "Sir, this is my first visit, and it will be my last."[1] No wonder Glenroy, startled at his guest's abruptness, hastily explains in these words that they are not exactly a "company of hermits" in the Highlands of Scotland:

> "Come, come, Inch Orran, I see how it is; you are a sober man yourself, and have been a little scandalized at seeing some of my friends take their glass so freely; but every country has its own customs, you know, and I didn't suppose you expected to find a company of hermits in the Highlands of Scotland."[2]

In the following paragraph Miss Ferrier humorously tells something of the extravagance of an English bride in the eyes of a Scotch husband, who would have liked to suggest to his bride that she might be a little more economical but decided it was "too soon, or rather too late to say so."[3] Judging from the retinue, which the bride was taking, perhaps the husband was justified in suspecting that after all he may not have drawn the "capital prize in the marriage-lottery." The novelist describes the bride's extravagance as follows:

Much as Glenroy loved pomp and

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1 Destiny, I, p. 91.

2 Ibid., p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 7.

> retinue, he was somewhat startled at the magnitude of his lady's bridal train. In addition to his own traveling carriage and servants, there followed Miss Waldegrave's equipage, containing that young lady, about five years of age, her French governess and English subgoverness, and attended by her own maid and the Lady Elizabeth's footmen. Glenroy thought less might have served her; but it was too soon, or rather too late to say so.[1]

Miss Ferrier finds the Scotch attitude toward an English education thoroughly amusing. Mr. Ellis, the tutor for Glenroy's son, urges Glenroy to send the boy to an English university. Glenroy remonstrates and answers with the following quotation from Doctor Johnson, "the only one the Chief had ever burdened his memory with:"[2]

> An English education could only tame a Highland Chieftain into insignificance."--"And, sir, my son shall not be tamed into insignificance at any of your English universities."[3]

A pretty picture of the villagers of the two countries is sketched in Marriage, and from the brief glance which the novelist gives in the following paragraph, we must agree with Mary Douglas that the Scotch rustic was far more picturesque:

> The view now opened upon the village church, beautifully situated on the slope of a green hill. Parties of straggling villagers in their holiday suits were descried in all directions, some already assembled

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1 Destiny, I, p. 7.

2 Ibid., p. 216.

3 Ibid., p. 216.

> in the churchyard, others traversing the near footpaths that led through the meadows. But to Mary's eyes the well-dressed English rustic, trudging along the smooth path, was a far less picturesque object than the barefooted Highland girl, bounding over trackless heath-covered hills; and the well-preserved glossy blue coat seemed a poor substitute for the varied drapery of the graceful plaid.[1]

Then, too, Miss Ferrier compares springtime in England with that in Scotland. Lady Emily says to her Scottish friend, "You must needs acknowledge, Mary, that spring in England is a much more amiable season than in your ungentle clime."[2] One can almost feel that "ungentle breeze" of the northern country, when the author says, "an indescribable shivering was felt by every human thing which had bones and skin to feel--in short it was an east wind; and the effect of an east wind upon the east coast of Scotland may have been experienced but cannot be described."[3] She compares the two climates further thus:

> The present [spring] was such a one as poets love to paint. Nature was in all its freshness and beauty--the ground was covered with flowers, the luxuriant hedgerows were white with blossoms, the air was impregnated with the odours of the gardens and orchards. Still Mary sighed as she thought of Lochmarlie--its wild tangled woods, with here and there a bunch of primroses, peeping forth from amidst moss and withered fern--its gurgling rills, blue lakes, and rocks, and mountains--all rose to

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1 Marriage, II, p. 42.

2 Ibid., p. 288.

3 The Inheritance, I, p. 12.

> view...and she felt that even amid fairer scenes, and beneath brighter suns, her heart would still turn with fond regret to the land of her birth.[1]

As we may see Miss Ferrier is especially successful in dealing with the Scots. She knew the habits, customs, and speech not only of the castle but of the cottage as well, as may be seen in the following sketch of the Scottish peasantry in which the novelist describes the cottages, which owe all their "charm to distance", and the children about them. Miss Ferrier in the following paragraphs gives a much less picturesque sketch than that given previously:

> A nearer survey, of the cottage however, soon satisfied her that the view owed all its charms to distance. Some coarse lint-haired, mahogany-faced, half-naked urchins, with brown legs and black feet, were dabbling in a gutter before the door, while some bigger ones were pursuing a pig and her litter, seemingly for the sole purpose of enjoyment.[2]

Upon being asked if they would like to be made clean and go to school, they answer "Naw, with one voice."

Miss St. Clair, entering the smoke-filled cottage, finds an old man, ill and suffering from want. She offers to send a doctor, medicine, milk, soup, a comfortable chair, a warm coat, a bit of carpet for the damp clay floor, but she meets with nothing but refusals from the sick cottager's wife. The practical phil-

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1 Marriage II, p. 288.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 29.

osophy of the peasantry is shown in the pathetic answer which she makes when Gertrude says, "I'm sorry there is nothing I can think of that would be acceptable to you--"

> "Oo, I'll no say that, my leddy," briskly interrupted the hostess..."I hae ne'er gotten a steek o' the guidman's dead claise ready--and to think that he's drawin' near his end."[1]

Professor Wilson and his uncle, Mr. Robert Sym, discussing the merits of Miss Ferrier's work in Noctes Ambrosianae call attention to this "one peculiar feature of true and melancholy interest quite peculiar to themselves [the novels]."[2] Mr. Wilson says that in "her works alone is shown the ultimate breaking-down and debasement of Highland character." A comparison of her work in this respect is made with that of Sir Walter Scott, who it is said "fixed the enamel of genius over the last fitful gleams of their half-savage chivalry."[2] In contrast with Scott, Mr. Wilson says that Miss Ferrier has pictured a "humbler and sadder scene--that of lucre-banished clans--of chieftains dwindled into imitation squires, and of chiefs content to barter recollections of a thousand years for a few gaudy seasons of Almacks and Crockfords, the euthanasia of kilted aldermen and steamboat pribochs."[2]

Perhaps the best picture, showing this decay in the Highlands, is the description of the old castle at

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 33.

2 Introduction to Marriage, I.

Glenfern, to which Henry Douglas takes his bride. Lady Juliana shudders and shrinks back pale and speechless, when she inquires from the post-boy the name of the house before her. Miss Ferrier brings out the tragic aspect by the boy's answer:

> "Hoose! ca' ye thon a hoose?
> Thon's gude Glenfern Castle."[1]

The building, which was nothing but a commodious but quite uncivilized Highland mansion, the novelist vividly describes thus:

> He [the post-boy] stood pointing with a significant gesture to a tall, thin, gray house, something resembling a tower, that stood in the vale beneath. A small sullen-looking lake was in front, on whose banks grew neither tree nor shrub. Behind rose a chain of rugged cloud-capped hills, on the declivities of which were some faint attempts at young plantations; and the only level ground consisted of a few dingy turnip fields enclosed with stone walls or dykes as the post-boy called them.[2]

The same picture of ruin and neglect is shown in Lady Alicia Douglas's description of her home, when they first took possession of it. She describes it thus:

> It was a perfect wilderness, with a dirty farm-house on it; nothing but wood and briers and brambles beyond it; and the village presented a still more melancholy scene of rank luxuriance, in its swarm of dirty, idle girls and

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1 Marriage, I, p. 63.

2 Ibid., pp. 62-63.

mischievous boys.[1]

There seems to be none of the dilapidation in the city of Edinburgh, such as the author describes in the Highlands, if we may take the words of the "ninety-six" year old aunt, Mrs. Violet Macshake. Her tirade against the "modern impruvements" in her native city is, indeed, such as one might expect from one of her age, who had loved Edinburgh as a village and could not quite reconcile herself to the "glowerin new toon", where she use to look out at "bonny" green parks and see the "coos milket." Turning to Mary and pointing out the window, the old lady says:

> "What ken ye about impruvements, barin? a bony impruvement or ens no, to see tyleyors and sclaters whar I mind jewks an' yerls. An' that great glowerin' new toon there whar I used to sit an' luck oot at bonny green parks, and see the coos milket, and the bits o' bairnies rowin' an' tummlin', an' the lasses trampin i' their tubs--what see I noo, but stane and lime, an' stoor an' dirt, an' idle cheels, an' dinket-oot madams prancin'. Impruvements, indeed!"[2]

The study of Scotch life would hardly be complete without further mention of Mrs. Macshake. Considering her great age, we may truly say that she did not belong to the generation in which she was living. Her memory carries her back to her grandfather's time, when

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1 Marriage, I, pp. 179-80.

2 Ibid., p. 336.

"paurents war paurents" and children did not "set up their gabs afore them than as they do noo."[1] Then wives, servants, and "childer trummelt i' the presence o' their heed."[1] Miss Ferrier relates her words thus:

> "Mainers!" repeated she with a contemptuous laugh, "what caw ye mainers noo, for I dinna ken?...I' my grandfather's time, as I hae heard him tell, ilka maister o' a faamily had his sate in his ain hoose aye, and sat wi' his hat on his heed afore the best o' the land, an' had his ain dish, an' was aye helpit first, an' keepit up his owthority as a man sude do. Paurents were paurents then; bairnes dardna set up their gabs afore them than as they du noo. They ne'er presumed to say their heeds war their ain i' thae days--wife an' servants, reteeners an' childer, aw trummelt i' the presence o' their heed."[1]

This characterization is interesting as a bit of commentary on Scotch life, for as the author herself says, "Mrs. Macshake was born at a time when Scotland was very different from what it is now. Female education was little attended to, even in families of the highest rank; consequently the ladies of those days possess a raciness in their manners that we should seek for vainly in this age of cultivation and refinement."[2]

Miss Ferrier felt the keenest delight in the scenic beauties of the Highlands and loved their mountains, rivers, trees, and flowers. She was hurt by any dis-

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[1] Marriage, I, p. 337.

[2] Ibid., p. 344.

paragement of its beauties. Edith probably voices the author's own view on the subject when she says concerning Scotch scenery, "We are naturally hurt when we hear the objects of our affection lightly spoken of."[1] To these words Lady Waldegrave, an English woman, who prefers England to Scotland in all things and only loves it less than France and Italy, replies, "Especially, as you know 'tis said, the uglier the object the more intensely and unreasonably we love it."[2]

That Dr. Johnson, like Lady Waldegrave, loved London and despised Scotland with almost equal fervor is shown by his Journal to the Western Islands of Scotland. Miss Ferrier was amused and satirizes Dr. Johnson's slight sympathy with the grandeur of nature and with all that was wild, legendary, and romantic in the Highlands. Although Dr. Johnson does not care for Scotch scenery, there is one character in Miss Ferrier's books who does, and that is Redgill, who had gone upon a "tower" of the Highlands. Although his mind was much taken up with Lochfine herring, Finnan haddo' and kipperd salmon, he expresses his admiration saying, "I was very pleased with what I saw there, I assure you. It is a fine country in some respects--with it nature has been very liberal."[3] Miss Ferrier too feels that

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1 Destiny, II, p. 284.

2 Ibid.

3 Marriage, II, p. 18.

nature has been very liberal in giving her country much to be admired. In her descriptions of Highland scenery she shows extraordinary power. She writes with sympathy and affection of nature, for nature, showing no arts, follies, or foible leads her to forget her satire and write with truth and sympathy of the thing she loves.

In her descriptions of nature's wilder aspects she pictures the lonely heath with its stream murmuring hoarsely, the dreary muirs, the frowning skies, the old trees groaning in the bleak wind, "which pierced her very soul," and the rugged mountains with their rushing streams. We feel the dreary loneliness of her black crags and naked hills, and are charmed by her gentler pictures of spring with its flowers, blooming by calm blue lakes. Miss Ferrier had little sympathy with a person like Lady Juliana of whose appreciation of rugged views the author humorously says, "All this mighty scenery might have had charms for Ossian but for Lady Juliana, it had none."[1]

When Miss Ferrier sees loom in imagination the somber purple hills of the Highlands, with the black tarns in the hollows, half hidden in midst, her genius awakes. One of her most spirited and, at the same time, most original descriptions is the following in which she has Gertrude say that although the view of Scotland is

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1 Marriage, I, p. 100.

bleak and rugged, such scenes are "more deeply felt than scenes of greater beauty," for one imagines that he is "looking on nature at the beginning of the creation." The author writes thus:

> "...and you should hear them run out in raptures at such a prospect as this"--pointing to the long bleak line of Scottish coast--"even this you must admire; even this cold shrubless tract of bare earth and stone walls and yon dark stormy sea, you will perhaps be told (and you must assent), are fairer than the lilied fields and limpid waters of Languedoc."
>
> Miss St. Clair remained silent for a few moments contemplating the scene before her; at last she said, "Indeed, mamma, I do think there is something fine in such a scene as this, although I can scarcely tell in what the charm consists, or why it should be more deeply felt than scenes of greater beauty and grandeur; but there seems to me something so simple and majestic in such an expanse of mere earth and water, that I feel as if I were looking on nature at the beginning of the creation, when only the sea and the dry land had been formed."[1]

The novelist loves nature so much that she feels pity or even disgust for those, like Benbowie and Glenroy, to whom the beautiful blue lake, upon which they look, means only fish; the lofty heather-covered mountains, sheep; the beautiful flowers and vegetation nothing but "black tang" or "bell wrack". The writer says that "to the eye of taste and the feeling heart

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[1] The Inheritance, I, pp. 11-12.

there would have been rapture in every beam of light and breath of heaven on such a day and amid such scenes," but Glenroy and Benbowie cared for none of these things. "They could not be said to find 'sermons in stone, tongues in trees, or books in running brooks.'"[1] The author describes their reaction to the beauties of nature thus:

> Certainly Glenroy and Benbowie did not seem in character with the scenery, as they were borne along on the bosom of the blue waters, which reflected, as in a mirror, the varied beauties that skirted their shores; the gray rocks, the graceful pendent birch, the grassy knolls, the gushing streamlet, the fern-clad glens, the lofty mountains glowing with heather... Glenroy and Benbowie found much profitable matter of discourse in the various objects of nature...The crystal depths of the limpid waters suggested to their minds images of herrings, fat, fresh, or salted... the mountains in their stern glory, with their lights and shadows and lonely recesses showed forth heath-burning, sheep-walks, black-faced wedders and wool...Inch Orran broke into no idle raptures about the water-plants, the fern, the wild flowers, the tall foxgloves, the gray rocks and bright mossy stones, half hid beneath the broad-leaved coltsfoot...for they were casting searching looks for "black tang" and "yellow tang" and "bell wrack" and "jagged wrack"...[2]

Of the peaceful scenes which the novelist pictures very successfully, I have chosen this sketch from Marriage.

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1 Destiny, I, p. 46.

2 Ibid., pp. 45-46

> The air was soft and genial not a cloud stained the bright azure of the heavens; and the sun shone out in all his splendor, shedding life and beauty even over all the desolate heath-clad hills of Glenfern. But after they had journeyed a few miles, suddenly emerging from the valley, a scene of matchless beauty burst at once upon the eye. Before them lay the dark-blue waters of Lochmarlie, reflecting as in a mirror, every surrounding object, and bearing on its placid transparent bosom a fleet of herring-boats, the drapery of whose black suspended nets contrasted with picturesque effect the white sails of the larger vessels, which were vainly spread to catch a breeze. All around, rock meadows, woods, and hills mingled in wild and lovely irregularity.
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> On a projecting point of land stood a little fishing village, its white cottages reflected in the glassy waters that almost surrounded it. On the opposite side of the lake, or rather estuary, embosomed in wood, rose the lofty turrets of Lochmarlie Castle; while here and there, perched on some mountain's brow, were to be seen the shepherd's lonely hut and heath-covered summer shealing.
>
> Not a breath of air was stirring, not a sound was heard save the rushing of a waterfall, the tinkling of some silver rivulet, or the calm rippling of the tranquil lake; now and then, at intervals, the fisherman's Gaelic ditty chanted as he lay stretched on the sand in some sunny nook; or the shrill distant sound of childish glee. How delicious to the feeling heart to behold so fair a scene of unsophisticated Nature, and listen to her voice alone, breathing the accents of innocence and joy![1]

In the last paragraph, which I quote below, Miss

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[1] Marriage, I, pp. 175-6.

Ferrier's great tenderness toward the land of her birth is shown. Perhaps the feelings expressed by Mary upon her return to Scotland are indicative of the joy experienced at some time by the author after an absence from her native land--a joy which made even peatstacks charming. The author's depth of feeling is expressed thus:

> But even the little torments were forgot by Mary when she found herself again in her native land. The hills, the air, the waters, the people, even the peatstacks, had a charm that touched her heart, and brought tears to her eyes as they pictured home. But her feelings rose to rapture when Lochmarlie burst upon her view in all the grandeur, beauty, and repose of a setting sun, shedding its farewell rays of gold and purple, and tints of such matchless hue, as no pencil ere can imitate--no poet's pen describe. Rocks, hills, woods, and waters, all shone with a radiance that seemed more than earthly beauty.[1]

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[1] Marriage, II, p. 320.

Chapter V

Satire on Upper and Middle Class Life.

I

Miss Ferrier, as a satirist of upper and middle class Scotch and English life, may be said to censure the foibles rather than the more serious faults of human nature, and in practically all instances her satire is mingled with bright wit and genial humor. Among the many subjects which she chooses to satirize are affectation, ignorance, vulgarity, selfishness, egotism, pride, and superiority, rather than more serious vices. Dryden has said that satire is a civil way of jesting by which either hatred or laughter or indignation is aroused, and the feeling that is most often excited by Miss Ferrier's satire is laughter. She may, indeed, be said to "laugh men out of their follies." Not only in Marriage but in The Inheritance and Destiny is there an ever-present supply of satire and humor. They may be said to go hand in hand.

Miss Ferrier's books reflect the ambitions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century high society and show especially the artificial life of the age--its cards, parties, toilettes, lapdogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking, and such idle vanities, which amuse the author. Although a great struggle was being waged for liberty and the

battle of Waterloo fought three years before the publication of Marriage, the novelist barely mentions this great event.

II

Of all the subjects which Miss Ferrier satirizes, that of marriage arouses her indignation most. She says that "parents ought, if possible, to avoid even forming wishes for their children. Hearts are wayward things, even the best of them."[1] The novelist feels only disgust for a father, such as Lord Courtland, who says to his daughter, "I'll suffer no daughter of mine to play the fool with her heart. She shall marry for the purpose for which matrimony was ordained amongst people of birth--that is, for the aggrandizement of her family, the extending of their political influence--for becoming, in short, the depository of their mutual interest."[2] When the daughter replies that she does not love the man he has chosen for her, Lord Courtland quickly assures her that that is not necessary, "for love was now confined to the canaille; that it was very well for ploughmen and dairy maids to marry for love, but for a young woman of rank to think of such a thing was plebeian in the extreme."[3] The author satirizes this custom further by telling us that after Lady Juliana

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1 Marriage, I, p. 180.

2 Ibid., p. 54.

3 Ibid., p. 56.

had selected Adelaide's husband, not the bride to be, but the mother was "touching the pinnacle of joy" on the wedding day. A little more of Miss Ferrier's irony on the subject of marriage may be seen in the following paragraph in which she says:

> Captain Malcolm had made a love marriage with a lady of good family and great beauty, but no fortune. This step of course displeased the friends (so called) on both sides.[1]

Miss Ferrier is probably more severe in her criticism of marriage customs than of any other subject; yet, in her most serious criticisms there is much humor and good nature shown. To illustrate her humor I have chosen to discuss briefly Mrs. Downe Wright, who sets out to find a wife for her son, "a commonplace, weak young man." That the novelist had a somewhat impish sense of fun may be seen in her treatment of this young lord, whom she describes as follows:

> No one, I believe, is more sensible of his mental deficiencies than his mother: but she knows that a man of fortune is, in the eyes of many, a man of consequence. To keep him in good company and get him married is all her aim; and this, she thinks, will not be difficult, as he is very handsome--possesses an estate of ten thousand a year--and succeeds to some Scotch Lord Something's title."[2]

Mrs. Downe Wright once had views of Adelaide for a wife, but this young lady met her son's advances with so much

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[1] Destiny, I, p. 39.

[2] Marriage, II, p. 86.

scorn that Mrs. Downe Wright declared "she was thankful that Adelaide had shown the cloven-foot in time, for she never would have done for a wife for her William."[1] The fond mother next has designs upon Mary, who has difficulty in getting rid of William, for he is "so simple he makes much of just civility." Lady Emily advises Mary to "turn upon him short and give him a snarl at the outset to be rid of him at once,...turn your back upon him and only throw him a monosyllable now and then over the shoulder."[1] In the following words Lady Emily humorously reminds Mary that since all Downe Wright lacks is "a little more brain," perhaps she better think twice before refusing him:

> "Young Downe Wright is handsome, good natured, and rich; and though 'he is but a Lord, and nothing but a Lord,' still there is a dash and bustle in twenty thousand a year and that takes off the ennui of a dull companion...and then I see nothing that he wants but a little more brain."[2]

Miss Ferrier at times puts on a long face and seriously exhorts thus:

> Surely parents have much to answer for, who mislead their children in such an awful step as marriage![3]

But more often she brings out and forces home her point by ridicule, as may be seen in the case of Mary who,

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1 Marriage, II, p. 86.

2 Ibid., p. 86.

3 Ibid., 180.

upon being informed by her mother that she is to marry Mr. Downe Wright, insists that she doesn't know the man. When Mary says that she should like to know "something of his character, his principles, his habits, temper, talents, in short, all those things on which my happiness would depend,"[1] Lady Juliana exclaims, "Character and principles!--one would suppose you were talking of your footman."[1]

The unhappiness which comes to one who marries only for "aggrandizement of family" is shown in Adelaide. Ambition leads her to marry the Duke of Altamont; and the Duke marries her because he thinks she would look well as the Duchess of Altamont. He also thinks that they should "be seen always together." Therefore he allows her to have no separate engagements. They go to the theater, to receptions, and to drive, always together. For relief from this formal display Adelaide tries to expose the old fellow to inclemencies of the weather, but she finds he is "provokingly healthy." The novelist describes the young wife's schemes thus:

> The young wife to rid herself of this display opened the doors of the carriage in cold weather and shut them in the scorching sun, but the Duke was insensible to heat and cold. The poor wife found he was most provokingly healthy; and she had not the respite which an attack of rheumatism or a toothache would have afforded.[2]

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1 Marriage, II, p. 163.

2 Ibid., p. 272.

Another of Miss Ferrier's themes for satirization is the education of women, or rather the lack of serious education for them. She pokes fun, rails, and preaches on this subject; yet she does so in a sympathetic tone. She would show that the follies and weaknesses of her characters are due often to their education. That the novelist felt that parents were responsible for making self-reliant men and women may be seen from the following line in which she says, "Yet I believe it is from their parents that children receive by far the most important part of their education."[1] That parents neglected the more serious education of their children is pointed out by the author, when she explains that Lord Courtland is partly to blame for Lady Juliana's vacuity of mind for he is "too much engrossed by affairs of importance to pay much attention to anything so perfectly insignificant as the mind of his daughter."[2]

The education of the girls of that day consisted of a few accomplishments such as playing on the harp or spinnet, acquiring a scanty knowledge of French, and learning to play whist. Such an education, as in the case of Lady Juliana, was for the sole purpose of forming a brilliant establishment. "The cultivation of her mind or the correction of her temper had formed

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1 Destiny, I, p. 107.

2 Marriage, I, pp. 56-57.

no part of her scheme of education."[1] Lady Juliana, the author tells us, knows nothing of such things as "enlightening or pleasant conversation or the satisfaction of a good book." In all her novels Miss Ferrier satirizes the light-minded society girl, whose time is spent in frivolities, which have been aptly described as nothing but saying, "How do you do in the morning" and "What's trump in the afternoon?"[2] Humorously in the following paragraph the author calls attention to the fact that such an education does not fit a girl to become the wife of a poor man, as did Lady Juliana. We are not surprised then at Douglas' and his wife's words, when in consternation he tells her that General Cameron is married and their allowance cut off. She exclaims, "'There ought to be a law against old men marrying--'" "'And young ones too,' groaned Douglas, as he thought of the debts he had contracted on the faith of being the General's heir."[3]

Miss Ferrier makes light and amiable use of irony, concerning the educational accomplishments of the aristocrats, when she writes thus of the conversational abilities of the inmates of Beech Park:

> There never was anything to be called conversation at the dinner-table at Beech Park;...The Earl hated to converse--it was a bore.[4]

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1 Marriage, I, p. 57.

2 Cambridge History, XI, p. 380. A remark made by Mrs. Montague.

3 Marriage, I, p. 249.

4 Ibid., II, p. 71.

She satirizes the Duke of Altamont's conversational abilities thus:

> With him, as with all stupid people, company was society, words were conversation--and all the gradations of intellect from Sir Isaac Newton down to Dr. Redgill, were to him unknown.[1]

The novelist finds a delightful subject for her satire in the attitude of Glenroy toward a college degree for his son. The Earl, who considers a college education as nonsense, says, "A fine thing, to be sure, for a Highland Chief to have a B. A. tacked to his name!"[2] He expresses his feelings further thus:

> "Finish his studies! finish his fiddlesticks! I never finished my studies--I never was at any of their English universities. I should be glad to know what my son could learn at an English university!...He shall not be tamed into insignificance if I can help it. It is a fine preparation for a Highland Chief to be cooped up in one of their musty colleges..."[3]

Then the scheme of sending his son to the Continent seems even worse to the Chief, who continues:

> "What can he learn there [on the continent] but to dance and speak gibberish, or to be running after old bridges and broken statues...Statues! a pack of rubbish. I would not let one of them within my door.[4]

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1 Marriage, II, p. 189.

2 Destiny, I, p. 223.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 224.

And Benbowie, his friend, agrees with him, when he adds, "I would not give a three-year-old stot for any stuccy babbies that ever were made."[1]

In no uncertain terms the author delivers her reproof to the nobility in the following paragraph, in which she calls attention to the fact that this class, although possessing honors, wealth, and power, has not produced as illustrious names as might have been expected. Mr. Lyndsay says that it would be difficult to conceive refinement of manners in a person of low birth; still he cannot see why a noble mind might not be "conferred on a peasant as well as on a prince." Colonel Delmour, the aristocrat, however, cannot conceive that the "offspring of a clown or mechanic," who had "walked the world in hob-nail shoes, could possess a lofty spirit."[1] With much vigor Miss Ferrier, no doubt, expresses her own feelings through the words of Lyndsay who says:

> "Then you must feel yourself greatly superior in mind to Virgil, Horace, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, and a long et cetera of illustrious names down to the present day, who, if not absolutely low-born, have yet no pretensions to high birth. For my own part, I think it rather humbling than elevating to reflect on the titled insignificance of this very family, who, though possessed of honours, wealth, and power for centuries, has never produced one man eminent for his virtues or his

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1 Destiny, I, p. 224.

talents."[1]

Miss Ferrier takes great delight in satirizing some of the aristocrats' notions of propriety. As an example of her humor, take the time that Lord Rossville criticises Gertrude for having risen early and taken a long walk. He considers walking before breakfast, "when only dairy-maids and lower orders of people are abroad,"[2] as a "most rude, masculine habit," which should be shunned by young ladies of rank and family, and he emphatically expresses his ideas further as follows:

> "--and certainly nothing, in my opinion, can be more unbecoming, more unfeminine than to behold a young lady seat herself at the breakfast-table with the complexion of a dairy-maid and the appetite of a ploughman."[2]

Then for vulgarity, in particular, the novelist has the eye of a lynx. Right and left, high and low, she unmasks it with unflagging delight, as may be seen in her pictures of Major and Mrs. Waddell, the Blacks, Mrs. Mung Malcolm, and others. The following paragraph, in which Mrs. Black expresses her ideas on marriage and nobility, is a good sample of the way the novelist points out vulgarity:

> and so indissolubly united in her (Mrs. Black) imagination were the ideas of a poor being a low marriage on the one hand, and a rich being a genteel one on the other, that to separate them was utterly impracticable.

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1 The Inheritance, I, pp. 77-78.
2 Ibid., p. 40.

> The coarsest booby, with twenty thousand a year and a title, would have struck Mrs. Black with awe, or at least respect; while the most elegant mind or person, destitute of the trappings of wealth or the insignia of grandeur, would have been wholly overlooked.[1]

The novelist, no doubt, could overlook somewhat such vulgarity as is shown by Mrs. Black, but affectation such as Mrs. Waddell is guilty of, she could not quite forgive, if we may take this quotation as evidence of Miss Ferrier's own feeling: "Vulgarity is bearable--stupidity pardonable--but affectation is never to be endured or forgiven."[2]

Something of the manner in which the writer satirizes affectation may be seen in the following description of Mrs. Major Waddell when, "oppressed with the weight of her own magnificence," she comes to visit Gertrude at Rossville Castle. The author describes her as follows:

> But the carriage door being opened, there stepped out Major Waddell... The Major placed himself on one side of the carriage door, black Caesar at the other...and then after a little feminine delay, there came forth Mrs. Major Waddell in all her bravery. A rich, voluminous satin mantle enveloped her person; a rare and costly lace veil streamed like a meteor to the wind; muff, bonnet, feathers, boots, reticule--all were in perfect keeping...
>
> Placing a hand upon each of her supporters, she descended the steps

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1 The Inheritance, I, pp. 383-4.

2 Marriage, II, p. 87.

> of the carriage with much deliberate dignity, and then, as if oppressed with the weight of her own magnificence, she gave her muff to Caesar, while the Major gallantly seized her reticule, and assisted her to a flight of steps, where stood the Countess, provoked at herself for her precipitation in having so unwarily rushed out to receive this unexpected importation.
>
> "Well, cousin, this is really kind!" exclaimed Mrs. Major; "but you see what it is to be without a lord and master..."[1]

If Gertrude were provoked with herself for being present for Mrs. Major to "show off" before, we may say that she more than gets even by her witty answer, which is a good example of the repartee of the characters in Miss Ferrier's novels. Gertrude replies to Mrs. Waddell thus:

> "I imagined it was my Aunt Mary who had arrived, and, knowing how helpless she is, I hastened out to see that she was properly attended to."[2]

Miss Ferrier shows Mrs. Waddell's poor taste further in the following paragraph, in which Bell speaks of her and the Major's taste for "plain things."

> "A very handsome carriage, it is," said Miss Pratt.
>
> "Very plain, but the Major and I are both partial to everything plain."
>
> This plainness consisted in a bright blue body with scarlet arms, bearing the Black and Waddell quarterings, mantle, crest, cipher, couped gules, and all appliances to boot.[3]

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1 The Inheritance, II, pp. 158-9.

2 Ibid., p. 159.

3 Ibid., p. 162.

Miss Ferrier often introduces some sort of religiosity that she may ridicule it. For example, take the following paragraph, in which the author describes the feelings of the elderly Lady Elizabeth regarding sacred things:

> Lady Elizabeth's feelings are such that she rejects with horror, as something that savored of Methodism and enthusiasm, the slightest allusion to anything of a sacred nature when spoken out of church.[1]

The writer herself was in sympathy, probably, with the Methodists, for her most despicable characters speak slightingly of them. After telling us that Mary is so good and kind and has so many admirable traits that she is accused of being a Methodist, the novelist with much delight adds, "Lady Emily defended her against the charge of Methodism, maintaining that in many respects Mary was no better than her neighbors."[2] Miss Ferrier expresses the same idea when she tells us that Lady Arabin is very extravagant, has a good fortune, and spends it "supporting her station in society. Methodists, however," adds the clever satirist, "are for abolishing all these distinctions and endowing hospitals with their money."[3] Equally as humorous is the way the author pokes fun at those who go to church for other purposes than to worship. Dr. Redgill says to Mary, who insists upon

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1 Destiny, II, p. 386.

2 Marriage, II, p. 45.

3 The Inheritance, II, p. 240.

going to church, "It's just a poor country church, and there's nothing to be seen after you do go..."[1]

Something of the strength of Miss Ferrier's satire in dealing with a foolish mother, who sacrifices herself and spoils her children, may be seen in the treatment of Mrs. Fairbairn, of whom the novelist writes thus:

> Mrs. Fairbairn was one of those ladies who, from the time she became a mother, ceased to be anything else... every object in life was henceforth viewed through that single medium. Her own mother was no longer her mother; she was the grandmamma of her dear infants, her brothers and sisters were mere uncles and aunts, and even her husband ceased to be thought of as her husband from the time he became a father.[2]

"Shakespeare's anathema against those who hated music is scarcely too strong to be applied to those who dislike children," says Miss Ferrier. She feels, however, that the charm of their "unsophisticated prattle, little freaks, and wayward humors" are lost when a tiresome mother forces her child to "notice the company," as does Mrs. Fairbairn, when she brings her nursery to the drawing-room and takes foolish pride in showing herself in the "midst of her angels." When Bell and the Major visit her, she talks of nothing but her children. Of little Charlotte she says that she is so "plagued with her teeth" and so fond of her mother that she will go to

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1 Marriage, II, p. 34.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 235.

nobody else, and "screams when the maid offers to take her." When Charlotte's brother comes in, all eyes are turned upon him. Charlotte, "indignant at finding herself eclipsed, then began to cry with all her strength."[1]

> "It's her teeth, darling little thing," said her mother..."If you will feel her gums," putting her own finger into the child's mouth, "you will feel how hot it is."
>
> This was addressed in a sort of general way to the whole company, none of whom seemed eager to avail themselves of the privilege, till the Major stepped forward, and having with his forefinger made a circuit of Miss Charlotte's mouth, gave it as his decided opinion that there was a tooth actually cutting the skin. Miss Bell followed the same course, and confirmed the interesting fact.[1]

Now and then Miss Ferrier pokes fun at the egotism of men in such brief lines as, "Your sensible men--that is men who think themselves sensible, and wish everybody else to think the same--incline to foolish women."[2] She laughs at them again when she says concerning Gertrude's birth, "As the Salique law was not in force in the Rossville family, the sex of the child was, indeed, a matter of little consequence save in the eyes of those sturdy sticklers for man's supremacy."[3]

Now and then the novelist gives a gentle little thrust to the women, when, for instance, Lady Emily says, "though man is a reasonable being, he shall know

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 238.

2 Marriage, II, p. 212.

3 The Inheritance, I, p. 5.

and own that woman is so too,--sometimes."[1] Women like Mrs. Mung Malcolm, who are always "silent when it is proper to speak and speak when it is proper to be silent,"[2] are often the target for her pen. The author has Dr. Redgill add his bit to the discussion of woman when he says, "To talk sense to woman is like feeding chickens upon turtle soup."[3] And I should add that the Doctor valued turtle soup very highly.

Miss Ferrier does enjoy satirizing her own countrymen for their superstitions and the gift of "second-sight." When Mary promises her aunts that she will "never marry any but one who wears the dirk and plaid and has the second-sight,"[4] she is laughing at the aunts' superstition. Mrs. Macauley of Destiny has the gift of dreaming and entertains the utmost respect and veneration for this endowment and places the most perfect reliance on her own oracles. She regales the breakfast-table one morning with her dream, which was "all a dream should be,--grand, confusing, dark, incoherent, contradictory, senseless, and sublime...There was a large raven with a wedding ring in its mouth; there was a shroud, two coffins, and a grave."[5] A few days after this memorable

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1 Marriage II, p. 213.

2 Destiny, I, p. 59.

3 Marriage, II, p. 41.

4 Ibid., I, p. 337.

5 Destiny, I, p. 221.

dream, a letter arrives, telling of the death of Sir Malcolm and giving sanction to Edith's marriage. It is little wonder then that Mrs. Macauley exclaims, "Oh, what a mercy it is I had the good sense to tell my dream before it came to pass."

That Miss Ferrier must have seen the humorous side to every incident, if there could possibly be one, is seen in the following incident. The old Scotsman, Douglas, Earl of Glenfern, has died and a number of guests are present, who make various "surmises and speculations" as to the cause of his death, which are quickly ended by an ancient gentlewoman. Her belief in "second-sight and such superstitions nonsense," is sneered at by a "skeptic (who, by-the-way, was only a low country merchant, elevated by purchase to the dignity of a Highland laird)."[1] Miss Ferrier relates the conversation thus:

> "Glenfern was nae like a man that wad hae gaen aff in this gate," said one.
>
> "I dinna ken," said another; "I've notic'd a chainge on Glenfern for a gey while noo."
>
> "I agree wi' you, sir," said a third. "In my mind Glenfern's been droopin' very sair ever since the last tryst."
>
> "At Glenfern's time o' life it's no surprisin'," remarked a fourth, who felt secure of being fifteen years his junior.
>
> "Glenfern was na that auld neither," retorted a fifth, whose

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1 Marriage I, p. 278.

> conscience smote him with being several years his senior.
>
> "But he had a deal of vexation frae his faemily," said an elderly bachelor.
>
> "Ye offen see a hale stoot man, like oor puir freend, gang like the snuff o' a cannel," coughed up a pthisicky gentleman.
>
> "He was aye a tume boss-looking man even since I mind him," wheezed out a swollen asthmatic figure.
>
> "An' he took nae care o' himsel'," said the Laird of Pettlechass. "His diet was nae what it should hae been at his time o' life. An' he was oot an' in, up an' doon, in a' wathers, wat an' dry."
>
> "Glenfern's doings had naething to du wi' his death," said an ancient gentlewoman with solemnity.1

She then repeats a Gaelic ditty, which seems to prophesy Glenfern's end. Another Highlander to prove that such things as deaths and marriages are often foretold, tells of seeing Castle Dochart's funeral procession, moving through the vale, and three days later he actually died and his funeral procession passed through that very vale. So earnestly is this story told, that "even the low-country infidel was silenced by the solemnity of this story."2

III

These passages which I have chosen are fair samples of the "keen shafts" that Miss Ferrier scatters about her pages to the delight of those who, as Mr. Saintsbury says, have alertness of mind to perceive, and good taste or ill-nature enough (for both explanations may be given)

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1 Marriage, I, p. 276-77

2 Ibid., p. 280.

to enjoy. These passages show that the novelist had a keen eye for the absurdities, faults, and foibles of her neighbors. She holds up their weaknesses before us in a way that sometimes makes us frown, but more often laugh at them. From the author's letter we know that her desire was to "convey some instructions as well as delight" through her novels; yet, she wrote less to reform than to amuse. The criticism has been made that her novels suffer from the conscious attempt to teach. Mr. W. J. Dawson makes an interesting comment on satirists in general, when he warns that if we let our dislike of satire overrule our judgment, we shall not only record our votes against a Juvenal and a Swift but equally against the whole line of Hebrew prophets.[1]

Miss Ferrier's method of conveying instruction through her satire is not tiresome, for she dresses her instructions, as I have said, usually in a robe of humor. The sprightliness of her style is delightful, while she often works with subtle skill, laughing men out of their follies. Then another thing to note about her novels is the extraordinary simplicity of the follies which she satirizes, for the modern satirists usually deal with deeper sins and vices. Therefore, I believe, anyone who enjoys seeing the little foibles of people made sport of, would appreciate Miss Ferrier's novels.

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1 Dawson's Makers of English Fiction, p. 28.

Chapter VI

Miss Ferrier's Keen Powers of Observation.

I

Miss Ferrier's power of observation was intense. She had the ability to observe and divine at once the salient point and to place it before us. This extraordinary power of observation makes her find out the imperfections of the wise and grave as well as of the foolish and frivolous. From the chapter on characterization we see how she casts a penetrating glance into the intricacies of human nature and gives us such clever portraits as those of Miss Pratt, Mrs. Maclaughlan, Mrs. Waddell, the Earl of Glenroy, and numerous others.

As the reader knows from the previous chapter something of Lord Rossville's character, he can appreciate the keenness of Miss Ferrier's observation and the neatness of her satirical expression in the following incident in which Rossville holds himself up as a "pattern to be followed instead of a rock to be shunned." To prove that young people should not choose their life partners he refers to himself thus:

> "You wish to be left free! You wish to be allowed to choose in so important!--hem! Really, Miss. St. Clair, I am too much astonished at the--the--the--what shall I call it? the unwarrantable levity of such a proposal...I must say that under

> these circumstances--there is not, there cannot--there must not, be a choice in the matter...I certainly have not been accustomed to hear of young ladies of family and fortune and distinction choosing for themselves in their matrimonial course. I can only say, for my own part, I--I--had no choice." Gertrude could scarcely restrain a smile at hearing Lord Rossville quote himself as a pattern to be followed instead of a rock to be shunned; but such is the blindness of human nature; we are all but too apt to hold ourselves up as guides when we ought to be satisfied to serve as beacons.[1]

Miss Ferrier shows very clearly the keen penetration of her mind into human nature in the last line of the above quotation, when she says that in the blindness of human nature we are too apt to hold ourselves up as guides when we should be satisfied to serve as warnings to others.

Another excellent example of the way the author points out the blindness of human nature is seen in the treatment of Mrs. Lennox, a good old lady who, although almost perfection, yields unconsciously to the very sin she condemns most harshly in others. Mrs. Lennox, hearing of Mary's engagement to Downe Wright, condemns his mother for trying to effect their union, while Mrs. Lennox herself is trying in every way to bring about Mary's marriage to her own son, Charles. The novelist writes as follows:

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[1] The Inheritance, I, p. 331.

> "Ah! Mary, my dear, let me advise you to beware of being led, even by a mother, in such a matter as this. God forbid that I should even recommend disobedience toward a parent's will; but I fear you have yielded too much to yours. I said, indeed, when I heard it, that I feared undue influence had been used; for I could not think William Downe Wright would ever have been the choice of your heart. Surely parents have much to answer for who mislead their children in such an awful step as marriage!"
>
> This was the severest censure Mary had ever heard drop from Mrs. Lennox's lips; and she could not but marvel at the self-delusion that led her thus to condemn in another the very error she had committed herself, but under such different circumstances that she would not easily have admitted it to be the same.[1]

This same weakness of human nature Miss Ferrier calls attention to in the satisfied provincial aunts, who do not think any too highly of the English, and in speaking of Mrs. Douglas, a very cultured, refined English woman, who has just come to Scotland to live, Miss Grizzy says:

> "She is a most superior woman, though she has rather too many of her English prejudices yet to be all we could wish; but I have no doubt, when she has lived a little longer amongst us, she will just become one of ourselves."[2]

Miss Ferrier observes closely and makes such clever notes as may be seen in the following paragraph, when she reflects on Lord Rossville's mental qualities.

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1 Marriage, II, p. 180.

2 Ibid., I, p. 73.

Rossville has taken Mrs. St. Clair to the top of Pinnacle hill in the face of an east wind to view the Rossville possessions. Driven almost to frenzy by the cold, her teeth chattering, she exclaims nonsensically thus to Rossville, "whose bodily sensations were quite as obtuse as his mental ones:"[1]

> "Superb!...Admirable--inimitable! Happy the country whose nobles are thus gifted with the power of reflecting kindred excellence, and perpetuating national virtue on the broad basis of private friendship."
>
> Mrs. St. Clair knew she was talking nonsense, but she knew who she was talking to and was sure it would pass."[2]

How often people who are baffled, disappointed, or angry, affect great composure, indifference, or even gaiety, as did Glenroy when he learned that Ronald Malcolm, and not his own son, was named as the heir to Inch Orran's property. The novelist's sagacity and keen powers of observation are shown clearly in her description of Glenroy:

> This [the choice of Ronald Malcolm] went so far beyond Glenroy's worst anticipations that he disdained to be in a passion about it. He was perfectly cool and composed, as everybody might see, only his colour was considerably higher than usual; and though he hummed a song, it was much out of tune, and when he laughed very heartily, nobody knew very well what it was at. In short, he had all

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 50.

2 Ibid., p. 50.

> the gaiety and indifference which people commonly have when very much agitated.[1]

The novelist's keenness of perception is noted in the following incident, when she says that absence often dispels the illusions of habitual intercourse. Mary has been away for a year from her Aunt Grizzy, whose awkward manner and uncouth speech were never noticed while Mary lived with her; but now, when they meet again, Mary recognizes her aunt's peculiarities. Although absence may have "dispelled the happy blindness" with which she had looked upon Aunt Grizzy formerly, still she has a great love for her. Miss Ferrier skillfully describes Mary's feelings as follows:

> Mary was, in the arms of her aunt, all agitation, as Lochmarlie flashed on her fancy, at again hearing its native accents uttered by the voice familiar to her from infancy. Yet the truth must be owned, Mary's taste was somewhat startled, even while her heart warmed at the sight of the good old aunt. Association and affection still retained their magic influence over her; but absence had dispelled the blest illusions of habitual intercourse; and for the first time she beheld her aunt freed from its softening spell. Still her heart clung to her, as to one known and loved from infancy; and she soon rose superior to the weakness she felt was besetting her in the slight sensation of shame, as she contrasted her awkward manner and uncouth accent with the graceful refinement of those with whom she associated.[2]

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1 Destiny, I, p. 100.

2 Marriage, II, pp. 196-97.

In her ability to describe people and scenes the author was more than ordinarily gifted. Her vision sweeps over a scene and she has it all in a glance, as may be seen in the following words, describing in detail this old-fashioned room with its stiff respectable chairs, "appropriated solely to the purpose of sitting in bolt upright." This paragraph shows also the novelist's constant desire to bring home a truth cleverly. She describes the room thus:

> In a large, dull, stiff, respectable drawing-room, with its little serpentine sofas and formal circle of chairs; its small elaborate mirrors, stuck half-way up the wall; its high mantlepiece, decorated with branching girandoles and Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses; its Brussels carpet, with festoons of roses; its small bare satinwood tables; its twin fire-screens, embroidered forty years ago by Mrs. Ribley's own hands; not a vestige of book or work, or any other such lumber was to be seen in this room, appropriated solely to the purpose of sitting in bolt upright.[1]

The last little note of the author concerning the "lumber" and chairs shows how her observations are seldom divorced from the humorous.

With something of the same exactness and truth of detail she observes Simon, the old servant, laying the table-cloth:

> He [Simon] then unfolded and carefully laid a table-cloth with mathematical precision, retiring a few paces to judge of its general

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1 Destiny, II, p. 189.

> effect, and then returning to adjust what his eye pronounced to be amiss.[1]

Miss Ferrier's descriptions are often brief but telling. With a few skillful little touches she makes us realize Lady Waldegrave's beauty thus:

> Edith flew to the door to receive her [Lady Waldegrave], but started in surprise at the beauty, the surpassing beauty and brilliancy of the figure that met her view...
>
> "You are very kind, dear Edith," said Lady Waldegrave, as she shook back the beautiful ringlets which shaded her face.[2]

The author impresses us further with her beauty by Lady Elizabeth's question and Edith's answer:

> "Lady Waldegrave is a charming creature, is she not?" said she, stopping in the middle of the floor and leaning her whole weight on Edith.
>
> "Oh, beautiful!" exclaimed Edith; "I could not have imagined anything so faultless, and at the same time so captivating."[3]

Another neat summarizing description is the following of a young English gentleman. The novelist sees clearly the outstanding characteristics of a man like Lindore and gives them to us very precisely thus:

> Lord Lindore...elegant, captivating, and spirituel,--the most admired man in London, celebrated for his conquests, his horses, his

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1 Destiny, I, p. 62.

2 Ibid., p. 338.

3 Ibid., p. 350.

> elegance, manner, dress; in short, in everything he gave the tone. But he had too much taste to carry anything to extreme; and in the midst of incense, and adulation, and imitation, he still retained that simple unostentatious elegance that marks the man who feels his own consequence, independent of all extraneous modes or fleeting fashions.[1]

Another short sketch, full of humor, showing how the author takes notice of little peculiarities or outstanding characteristics such as "long-chinned" and "purple" girls may be seen in this paragraph:

> At the entrance of the strangers a flock of females rushed forward to meet them. Douglas good humoredly submitted to be hugged by three long-chinned spinsters, whom he recognized as his aunts; and warmly saluted five awkward purple girls he guessed to be his sisters.[2]

If ever Miss Ferrier observes carefully, she may be said to do so in her description of Miss Becky, who, no doubt, is wearing a Girnachgowl "collar." The novelist describes her as she moves through the room, "her arms... strapped back, till her elbows met, by means of a pink ribbon of no ordinary strength or doubtful hue."[3] How the shade of this sash flashes before our eyes, as we watch this young lady with her smelling bottle, "to which her own nose, and the noses of her sisters, were wont to be applied."[4]

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1 Marriage, II, p. 274.

2 Ibid., I, p. 46.

3 Ibid., p. 85.

4 Ibid., p. 199.

The keenness of her observation and the neatness of her satirical expression is seen also in this sketch of the fashionable, idle young man of the times:

> Some of those airy nothings, without a local habitation, who are always to be found flitting about the mansions of the great, now lounged into the room.[1]

Miss Ferrier brought to her task a mind of singular vivacity, an eye characterized by a power of acute observation. She notes the little tricks of the gossip, the snobbery of the Bluestocking, the absurdity of frivolous society women like Lady Elizabeth or Lady Juliana. As an example of the artful methods of a busybody, the author cites Miss Pratt, who imagines what Gertrude thinks about a member of their household and repeats it to Mr. Lyndsay, saying Gertrude had said it. Gertrude, the night before, had met Mr. Delmour, a dull politician, whom Rossville intends shall be her future husband. Miss Ferrier cleverly relates Miss Pratt's conversation thus:

> "Well, what do you think of our new member?" Then without waiting a reply--"I thought you looked very wearied last night, and no wonder, for I declare my back was like to break with their politics. I've a notion you don't think he's likely to be any great acquisition to the family, whatever he may be to the county--he! he! he! I must tell that to Anthony Whyte that--he will

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[1] Marriage, II, p. 5.

be so diverted."[1]

A few moments later Miss Pratt and Gertrude meet Edward Lyndsay, who apparently knows Miss Pratt's ways very well, and Miss Pratt continues:

> "But here comes Edward Lyndsay from his walk; I daresay he has been at some good turn already. Good morning, Mr. Edward; where have you been strolling to this fine morning? Miss St. Clair and I are just taking a little chat here, in the sun, till breakfast's ready; for as Anthony Whyte says, I don't like to descend to vacuity. What do you think Miss St. Clair says of our member?--That she does not think him any great acquisition as a member of the family, whatever he may be as a member for the county; isn't that very good?"
>
> Gertrude was about to disclaim the witticism, when Mr. Lyndsay saved her the trouble.
>
> "So good," replied he, "that I am surprised you should give the credit of it to anybody else. Miss St. Clair, I am sure, is incapable of making such a remark."[2]

The novelist points out in her clever manner Lady Juliana's absurdity, when Lady Juliana blames Mary because Miss Grizzy had come to Bath. Lady Juliana looks to her daughter as the cause of her connection with the Douglases of Scotland, overlooking the fact that she herself had married into this family. Her absurdity is shown when Lady Emily wittily says:

> "From all that has been said, Mary, there can be no doubt but that

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 135.

2 Ibid., p. 136.

> you are the origin of Lady Juliana's unfortunate connection with the family of Douglas, and when I have children, I am determined they shall be answerable for my making a foolish marriage; and it shall be their fault if my husband has a mother."[1]

Little common everyday occurrences, such as a false report about a marriage, the announcement in the papers of the birth of a child, or the "surprise, pity, or indignation," which is always manifested at an engagement, are all noticed and commented upon by the author in her usual clever style. Take, first, for example, what Miss Pratt has to say of Anthony Whyte's reported marriage in the following paragraph:

> "I declare you're as bad as Anthony Whyte. I thought he would have raised the country at the report of his marriage with Lady Sophia Bellendean. He certainly did pay her some attention, but he never went the lengths that people said, though it wasn't for want of good encouragement."[2]

Miss Ferrier notes such perfectly human and natural feelings as those displayed by Mrs. Major Waddell, when she wishes to have the editor of the "Morning Post" put in the pillory, because she believes he has not printed the announcement of the birth of her daughter, after she has written "such a long notice of it." She also desires to "cognose" Uncle Adam for his slight in giving Anne a £500 bill for a wedding present, and her nothing. The

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1 Marriage, II, p. 195.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 305.

novelist describes the incident as follows:

> Mrs. Major Waddell was now past speaking. She was to have waited for the Major, whom she had permitted to go to a meeting in the County Hall, but to wait was impossible. She instantly drove off, and called the Major away from his business to attend to her injuries, and consult whether it would not be possible to cognose Uncle Adam, and get the editor of the "Morning Post" put in the pillory.[1]

The novelist writes thus of Mary's announcement of her engagement to her Aunt Grizzy:

> Grizzy received the communication with all the astonishment which ladies usually experience upon being made acquainted with a marriage which they had not the prescience to forsee and foretell--or even one which they had; for, common and natural as the event seems to be, it is one which perhaps in no instance ever took place without occasioning the greatest amazement to some one individual or another; and it will also be generally found that either the good or the bad fortune of one or other of the parties is the subject of universal wonder. In short, a marriage which excites no surprise, pity, or indignation, must be something that has never yet been witnessed on the face of this round world...
>
> "Well, Mary, I declare I'm perfectly confounded with all you have been telling me! I'm sure I never heard the like of it! It seems but the t'other day since you began your sampler; and it looks just like yesterday since your father and mother were married. And such a work as there was at your nursing! I'm sure your poor grandfather was out of all patience about it. And now to think that you are going to be married! Not but what it's a thing we all

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[1] The Inheritance, II, p. 306.

> expected for there's no doubt England's the place for young women to get husbands...I wonder you never brought Colonel Lennox to see us, Mary. I'm sure he must think it odd. To be sure, Sir Sampson's situation is some excuse; but at any rate I wonder you never spoke about him. We all found out your Aunt Bella's attachment from the very first, just from her constantly speaking about Major M'Tavish and the militia; and we all had a good guess of Betsy's too, from the day her face turned so red after giving Captain M'Nab for her toast; but you have kept yours very close, for I declare I never once suspected such a thing."[1]

Miss Ferrier, was not blind to weaknesses such as those displayed by Miss Pratt who is impressed by Mrs. Major Waddell and all her finery, for to her "a fool in satin was a very different thing from a fool in sackcloth."[2] And again we see the novelist, as a student of human nature in her description of Aunt Grizzy, who thinks silence synonymous with low spirits and therefore talks incessantly to her traveling companion. Miss Ferrier describes Aunt Grizzy's attempt to be "actively pleasant" thus:

> There are perhaps few greater trials of temper than that of traveling with a person who thinks it necessary to be <u>actively pleasant</u>, without a moment's intermission, from the rising till the setting sun. Grizzy was upon this fatal plan, the rock of thousands! Silence she thought synonymous with low spirits; and

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1 <u>Marriage</u>, II, 303-4.

2 <u>The Inheritance</u>, I, p. 160-61.

> she talked, and wondered, and exclaimed incessantly.[1]

That Miss Ferrier was, like one of her own characters, Inch Orran of Destiny, "a noter and observer" may be seen in the study which she makes of a malicious person like Mrs. Downe Wright, who tries to make folk miserable by saying malicious things, and who is so clever about it that people "wonder what made them feel so uncomfortable when she was present." The author describes Mrs. Downe Wright as follows:

> Now Mrs. Downe Wright has a real heartfelt satisfaction in saying malicious things, and in thrusting herself into company where she must know she is unwelcome, for the sole purpose of saying them. Yet many people are blessed with such blunt perceptions that they are not at all aware of her real character, and only wonder, when she has left them, what made them feel so uncomfortable when she was present.[2]

As an example of the way Mrs. Downe Wright goes about making people uncomfortable, or at least trying to, consider the novelist's account of the time she called at the Douglas home after Adelaide had deserted her husband and eloped with Lord Lindore. The author tells the story in her usual humorous way as follows:

> Amongst the numerous visitors who flocked to Beech Park, whether from sympathy, or curiosity, or exultation, was Mrs. Downe Wright.

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1 Marriage, II, p. 320.

2 Ibid., pp. 287-88

None of these motives, singly, had brought that lady there, for her purpose was that of giving some good hits to the Douglas's pride--a delicate mode of warfare, in which, it must be owned, the female sex greatly excel.

Mrs. Downe Wright had not forgiven the indignity of her son having been refused by Mary, which she imputed entirely to Lady Emily's influence, and had from that moment predicted the downfall of the whole pack, as she styled the family...She entered the drawing-room at Beech Park with a countenance cast to a totally different expression from that with which she had greeted Lady Matilda Sufton's widowhood. Melancholy was appropriate there, here it was insulting; and accordingly with down cast eyes and silent pressures of the hand, she saluted every member of the family, and inquired after their healths with that anxious air of solicitude which implied that if they were all well it was what they ought not to be. Lady Emily's quick tact was presently aware of her design, and she prepared to take the field against her.

"I had some difficulty in getting admittance to you," said Mrs. Downe Wright. "The servant would fain have denied you; but at such a time, I knew the visit of a friend could not fail of being acceptable, so I made good my way in spite of him."

"I had given orders to be at home to friends only," returned Lady Emily, "as there is no end to the inroads of acquaintances.

"And poor Lady Juliana," said Mrs. Downe Wright in a tone of affected sympathy, "I hope she is able to see her friends?"

"Did you not meet her?" asked Lady Emily carelessly. "She is just gone to Bath for the purpose of securing a box during Keane's engagement."[1]

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[1] Marriage, II, p. 280-81.

Thus the conversation continues until Mrs. Downe Wright, delighted "to get off with what she called flying colours, hastily rose with an exclamation at the lateness of the hour, and a remark how quickly time passed in pleasant company."[1]

From the quotations and references which I have given in this chapter, we may see that Miss Ferrier brought to her task of social comedy a mind of unusual vivacity, an eye characterized by a power of acutest observation, and a heart capable of the intensest feeling. She casts a penetrating glance into the intricacies of human nature and places her observations before the reader very skillfully. Her works show her experienced judgment and habit of reflection.

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1 Marriage, II, p. 287.

Chapter VII

Miss Ferrier's Style.

I

At the conclusion of his Tales of My Landlord Scott speaks of the anonymous author of "the very lively work, entitled 'Marriage.'" From what has been said on Miss Ferrier's work in the preceding chapters, it should be obvious that her novels are, indeed, "lively" and that her success resulted largely from her sprightly manner. Her books are written in clear, brisk English and with an inexhaustible fund of humor. Her wit is such that makes us laugh--that leaves us merry.

The Nation in discussing Miss Ferrier's novels says of her skill: "Miss Ferrier was in point of natural ability, far above the average novel writer of today. We doubt whether at the present moment (1883) there exists in England any living authoress (unless it be Mrs. Oliphant or Mrs. Thackeray Ritchie) who stands in acuteness, in humor, in insight into character much above the writer of 'The Inheritance.'"[1]

Miss Ferrier bestowed much time and care on her books, and from the general tone of her work we may believe that she was thoroughly well-read. Mr. Charles Copeland, writing in the Atlantic Monthly, says that

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[1] The Nation, XXXVII (Sept. 3, 1883,) pp. 230-32.

Cicero, Montaigne, Le Bruyere, Shakespeare, and Sir Thomas More are made to stand sponsors for many of her chapters in The Inheritance and in Marriage. When we take up her novels today, however, we must not expect that they should be marked by the artistic perfection of style that we find in the more modern novelists, for Miss Ferrier writes in the eighteenth century style; nor should we expect them to be the equal of Jane Austen's.[1]

As an example of Miss Ferrier's style which has won for her books the title "merry" I have given several quotations which show how her wit and humor often appear in most unexpected places. Take, for instance, her description of Mrs. Black, who on Miss Bell's wedding day, when the guests do not all arrive, sits with inward anxiety "like a second Mrs. Blue Beard, ever and anon calling to the children to look out and see if they saw anybody coming."[2] She writes thus:

> The Fairbairn family (including the Major) were now waited for with outward impatience by Mr. Black, with inward anxiety by Mrs. Black. Mr. Black openly avowed his hunger; Mrs. Black vainly endeavoured to disguise her apprehensions that the beef would be roasted to a cinder (a thing Mr. Black could not endure), and that the rice (which the Major was so particular about) would be all in a

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1 Atlantic Monthly, LXXI (June, 1893), p. 836.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 258.

> lump, instead of being--as well-boiled rice ought to be--each and every particle grain separate by itself. All this, and much more, poor Mrs. Black revolved in her mind, as she sat, like a second Mrs. Blue Beard, ever and anon calling to the children to look out and see if they saw anybody coming.[1]

Likewise sprightly is the author's account of the way in which the friends and followers of the Earl look upon him as a "great man." After the death of his first wife, Glenroy is looking around for a second. His friends reason that since it is impossible for anyone so great in himself to make a great marriage, they "merely expected that he would make the best marriage possible."[2] She relates the incident in this paragraph:

> Such was Glenroy and with all these advantages, it was naturally expected that he would form an alliance worthy of himself and his clan, all of whom identified themselves with their Chief, and consequently looked upon his marriage as an event in which they had an undoubted interest. As it was impossible, however, that anyone so great in himself could make a great marriage, his friends and followers, being reasonable people, merely expected that he would make the best marriage possible.[3]

Another unexpected touch of humor appears in the novelist's treatment of the Major and Mrs. Waddell. Uncle Adam, it seems, never spares Mrs. Waddell. When she complains to him that the Major doesn't seem to look

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1 The Inheritance, I, pp. 258-59.

2 Destiny, I, p. 3.

3 Ibid.

well, he quickly retorts, "Whan did he ever look weel?" The keen wit displayed in the remark can be appreciated only after reading Miss Ferrier's brief but telling description of the Major, who in Bell's eyes is the "Apollo Belvidere." She describes him thus:

> Major Waddell was a very passable sort of a person for a nabob;--he had a dingy, bronze complexion, tawny eyes, tolerable teeth, and a long, wrinkled smirking baboonish physiognomy.[1]

As Mr. Copeland says, Miss Ferrier read widely and the influence of this reading is seen in her novels. To show the manner in which she humorously makes use of her knowledge of little points from literature take her reference to Shakespeare's works in the following paragraph, in which she says that Glenroy would have liked to crush M'Dow with a word, but words failed him, for "Glenroy was not like Hamlet. He could have used daggers, but he could not speak them."[2]

In the following lines the author compares Mrs. Black to Lady Capulet. Mrs. Black upon this very important occasion, was up early and astir, for Miss Bell was now on the "verge of becoming Mrs. Major Waddell--a metamorphose which could not be expected to take place without some commotion."[3] Of this affair Miss Ferrier writes:

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 93.

2 Destiny, I, p. 84.

3 Ibid.

> Bright shone the morning of Miss Bell's nuptials, and all things looked auspicious. The collation stood ready, for Mrs. Black, like Lady Capulet on a similar though less happy occasion, had been astir from the second crowing of the cock.[2]

Another humorous little touch referring to King Ahasuerus and the "rebellious Vashti" is given in reference to Glenroy's selection of a second wife. She writes as follows:

> Greater speculation could scarcely have been excited at the court of King Ahasuerus as to a successor to the rebellious Vashti, than that which prevailed amongst the clan on the subject of forming a suitable alliance for their Chief.[2]

The last humorous incident which I have given below is in reference to the Castle of Otranto. The author describes the noise in M'Dow's kitchen on the day that Lucy and her father were invited to the manse for dinner thus:

> With all the progressive sounds were mingled the sharp, shrill, loud voice and Gaelic accents of the chef de cuisine, with an occasional clash or clang, at least equal to the fall of the armour in the castle of Otranto.[3]

Not all of Miss Ferrier's references to literature are of a humorous nature. In fact, she has been criticised for making too many allusions which lack the spontaneous

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 270.

2 Destiny, I, p. 3.

3 Ibid., p. 134.

charm of these that I have given.

If Sir Walter Scott spoke in complimentary terms of Miss Ferrier as a novelist, she certainly returns the compliment in The Inheritance, when she tells of the fascinating powers of Guy Mannering upon Uncle Adam. So real are the little incidents which she relates, that the reader wonders if the story were not based on fact, especially since Uncle Adam was, in some respects, supposed to resemble the novelist's father. Uncle Adam, a visitor at Rossville Castle, is very much interested in Guy Mannering, but when "that puppy," Colonel Delmour, arrives, he feels he cannot live in the same house with him; but at the same time, his interest in the novel is so great that he cannot leave the book behind. Then since he would have been ashamed to borrow it, and "to abstract it never entered into his primitive imagination, for in his day it was not the fashion for ladies, and gentlemen to take other people's books,"[1] he feels that he must prolong his visit. He could have gone to a circulating library in Barnford, but to have Dumple and Dandie Dinmont, Dominie Sampson, and a host of others spread it through the town that he was "a novelle reader--there was distraction in the thought!"[2] Something of the sprightliness of manner, which characterizes all her novels, may be seen further in this discussion of Uncle Adam and the novel:

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1 The Inheritance, II, p. 135.

2 Ibid., p. 136.

> "It will no be possible to live in a hoose wi' that puppy," thought Uncle Adam; and he began to meditate his retreat the following day; but then, as the thoughts of "Guy Mannering" came over him, he staggered in his resolution--leave it he could not; to borrow it he would have been ashamed; to abstract it never entered his primitive imagination; for in his day, it had not been the fashion for ladies and gentlemen to take other people's books, or to lose other people's books, or, in short, to do any of the free and easy things that are the privilege of the present age. True there were libraries in Barnford; but to have recourse to a circulating library! to have it through the town that he was a novelle reader--there was distraction in the thought. Perish Dumple and Dandie Dinmont, Dominie Sampson, and the whole host of them, before he would stoop to such a measure![1]

Uncle Adam is so interested in knowing what happens at the close of the story to the scoundrel Glossin, "whom he could have hanged with his own hands," that he might have skipped to the end and left Rossville Castle at once, but he had never skipped in his life and has such a "thorough contempt for skippers" that he would never have "submitted to so degrading a mode of being relieved."[2] So we find Uncle Adam, consenting to remain under the same roof with Delmour and after dinner see him, hurrying to his own apartment "to try whether another chapter would not set the matter [of Glossin] at rest." To show more

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1 The Inheritance, II, p. 136.

2 Ibid.

of the hilarious style of her humor at times I give this paragraph:

> But then, not to see the end of that scoundrel Glossin, whom he could have hanged with his own hands, only that hanging was too good for him--ay, there's the rub! To be sure, he might skip to the end; but he never had skipped in his life, and had such a thorough contempt for skippers that he would rather have "burst in ignorance" than have submitted to so degrading a mode of being relieved. At one time, during dinner, he had thoughts of sounding Miss Pratt as to the result, but his courage failed him--it was hazarding too much with a woman; now he revolved whether he might not, by going about the bush with Mr. Lyndsay, extract the catastrophe from him; but then he never had gone about the bush all his life, and he was rather at a loss how to set about it now. Before he could make up his mind, therefore, the time came for adjourning to the drawing-room; but, instead of repairing there, Uncle Adam stole away to his own apartment, to try whether another chapter would not set the matter at rest.[1]

Miss Ferrier makes the conversation in her novels telling and epigrammatic and at the same time like real conversation, not like book discourse. Some of her characters, like Mrs. Maclaughlan and Miss Pratt, talk themselves into transparent clearness. In the chapter on Miss Ferrier's life I have pointed out that Miss Ferrier was a charming conversationalist. So interesting was she that busy people, like Dr. Maclaugan, hardly dared to call, lest he spend too much of his valuable time.

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[1] The Inheritance, II, pp. 136-37.

conversing with Miss Ferrier. Since the novelist herself was a good conversationalist, we would expect to find these powers reflected in her books. Miss Ferrier has been likened to one of her own characters in Marriage--Lady Emily, who is one of the most clever characterizations in her novels. To see Miss Ferrier at her best as a master of repartee one should turn to this character, who is always entertaining, clever, and humorous. Everything which she says seems to have a decided point. She sees clearly into everyone's character, recognizes, and laughs at everyone's weaknesses, including her own. She is cultivated, refined, and has an air of sophistication about her, which adds to our interest in her. Typical of Lady Emily's clever words is the reply, which she makes to Mary, who is sad and hurt, because her mother treats her in such a cold, heartless manner. She inquires of Lady Emily what she has done to displease her mother and voices her feelings thus:

> "Alas! I know not; but in some way I have displeased my mother; her looks--her words--her manner--all tell me how dissatisfied she is with me; while to my sister, and even to her very dogs--" Here Mary's agitation choked her utterance.
>
> "If you expected to be treated like a dog, you will certainly be disappointed," said Lady Emily.[1]

Knowing Lady Juliana's propensity for dogs, the reader must smile at the last little touch of humor.

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1 Marriage, II, p. 24.

Something more of Lady Emily's wit is shown when Mrs. Downe Wright, who has not forgiven the indignity of her son's having been refused by Mary, comes to call upon Lady Juliana to give some "good hits" to the Douglas's pride. This is made possible by Adelaide's leaving her husband and eloping with Lord Lindore. The novelist describes her as follows:

> She entered the drawing-room at Beech Park with a countenance cast to a totally different expression from that with which she had greeted Lady Matilda Sufton's widowhood. Melancholy would there have been appropriate, here it was insulting; and accordingly with downcast eyes, and silent pressures of the hand, she saluted every member of the family, and inquired after their healths with that anxious solicitude which implied that if they were all well it is what they ought not to be. Lady Emily's quick tact was presently aware of her design, and she prepared to take the field against her.
>
> "I had some difficulty in getting admittance to you," said Mrs. Downe Wright. "The servant would fain have denied you; but at such a time, I knew the visit of a friend could not fail of being acceptable, so I made good my way in spite of him."
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> "I had given orders to be at home to friends only," returned Lady Emily, "as there is no end to the inroads of acquaintances."
>
> "And poor Lady Juliana," said Mrs. Downe Wright in a tone of affected sympathy, "I hope she is able to see her friends?"
>
> "Did you not meet her?" asked Lady Emily carelessly. "She is just gone to Bath for the purpose of securing a box during the term of Keane's

engagement..."[1]

Another sprightly element is the introduction of Miss Pratt's invisible nephew, Anthony Whyte, who may be said to be an ancestor of Jane Austen's Mrs. Harris, because she is always talked about but never seen. Although Anthony Whyte is never seen, the novelist tells us that "as Whittington without his cat would be nobody in the nursery, so neither would Miss Pratt be recognized in the world without Anthony Whyte."[2]

When Miss Pratt boasts that Anthony Whyte considers dinner bells and gongs so common that he is going to get a trumpet, Colonel Delmour, who feels no special love for Miss Pratt, wittily says, "Being already provided with a trumpeter, it is quite proper that Mr. Whyte should have a trumpet."[3] That there is no love lost between Miss Pratt and Delmour is seen when she says to Gertrude:

> "What do you think of his [Delmour] having the impertinence to tell me that if he found me meddling in his affairs, he would pull Anthony Whyte's nose for him. I should like to see him lay a finger on Anthony Whyte!"[4]

As an example of one of Mr. Whyte's witticisms, which are continually in his "trumpeter's" mouth, take this

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1 Marriage, II, pp. 280-81.

2 The Inheritance, I, p. 56.

3 Ibid., p. 118.

4 Ibid., p. 289.

one concerning the hanging of a picture:

> "Bless me, we're forgetting the Diana--and what a bad light you've put her in! There's a great art in hanging pictures; Mr. Whyte brought a man all the way from London to hang his; and I'll never forget my fright when he told me the hangman was coming."[1]

Mr. Saintsbury makes a clever comment on this character when he says, "It is interesting that in all this talk of Anthony Whyte, Miss Ferrier allowed no skeptical Prig to arise and express to the Pratt his disbelief in such a person."[2]

One of the incidents of her novels, which show Miss Ferrier's skill in handling a purely farcical situation, is the account of a delayed dinner in Lady Juliana's household. Lord Lindore, a visitor, is late coming down; Redgill is just on the point of suggesting that they do not wait, when Lady Juliana says, "It is of no consequence when we sit down to table." The author describes the situation as follows:

> "We ought undoubtedly to wait for Frederick," said Lady Juliana; "it is of no consequence when we sit down to table."
>
> A violent yell from the sleeping Beauty on the rug sounded like a summary judgment on her mistress.
>
> "What is the meaning of this?" cried her Ladyship, flying to the offended fair one, in all the transports of pity and indignation; "how can you, Dr. Redgill, presume to treat my dog in such a manner?"

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 71.

2 Littell's Living Age, CLII (Mar. 31, 1882), p. 786.

> "Me treat your Ladyship's dog!" exclaimed the Doctor in well-feigned astonishment--" 'Pon my honour!--I'm quite at a loss!--I'm absolutely confounded!"
>
> "Yes! I saw you plainly give her a kick, and--"
>
> "Me kick Beauty.--after that!--'Pon my soul, I should just as soon have thought of kicking my own grandmother. I did give her a leetle--a very leetle shove, just with the point of my toe, as I was going to pull the bell; but it couldn't have hurt a fly. I assure you it would be one of the last actions of my life to treat Beauty ill--Beauty!--Poor Beauty!"--affecting to pat and soothe, by way of covering his transgression. But neither Beauty nor her mistress were to be taken in by the Doctor's cajoleries. The one felt, and the other saw the indignity he had committed; and his caresses and protestations were all in vain.[1]

The novelist's sense of the ludicrous is quite as plainly seen in the following incident. Miss Jacky learns that Mary is to marry a Lennox, the mortal enemy of the Maclaughlan race. She asks Mary how she can offend Sir Sampson Maclaughlan so, for she (Mary) is much indebted to him. Miss Jacky recalls the favors rendered by Sir Sampson thus:

> "Many a time have you sat upon his knee; and you cannot have forgot the elegant Shetland pony he presented you with the day you was five years old! and what a return for such favors!"[2]

The quarrel between the Lennox and Maclaughlan race had

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1 Marriage, I, pp. 65-66.

2 Ibid., p. 310.

begun, the author tells us, when Colonel Lennox's father and Sir Maclaughlan were young men in the army and the colonel had told Sir Sampson that he could "make Sir Sampson out of a mouldy lemon."

Miss Lilly Black's letter, which she writes when she accompanies the Major and Bell into the Lake country on their honeymoon always affords Miss Ferrier's readers much enjoyment. It is a good sample of the novelist's sprightliness. Something of the manner in which Miss Lilly, "who had long aimed at the character of an elegant letter-writer," composes the letter may be seen in the following lines:

> Poor Miss Lilly, like many other misses, had long aimed at the character of an elegant letter-writer, and this epistle she looked upon as one of her happiest efforts; she had studied it; she had meditated upon it; she had written a scrawl of it; she had consulted her journal upon it--in short, she had composed it.[1]

This letter called forth the approval of Jeffrey, which shows, says Mr. Saintsbury, that the "awful Aristarch of Craigcrook, when his prejudices were not concerned and new planets did not swim impertinently into his ken, was quite ready to give welcome."[2] Miss Lilly's description of the "never-to-be-forgotten Lake Land" shows Miss Ferrier's reckless sarcasm in full swing.

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1 The Inheritance, I, p. 316.

2 Littell's Living Age, CLII (March 31, 1882), p. 786.

A good example of the eighteenth century style used by Miss Ferrier is the sketch of Mrs. Fairbairn. Mr. Copeland says of this sketch that "viewed as prose, it is admirable...The balanced phrases click in time, and the whole bristles with points." Of Mrs. Fairbairn and her family the novelist writes thus:

> The children of this happy family always dined at table, and their food and manner of eating were the only subjects of conversation. Alexander did not like mashed potatoes, and Andrew Waddell could not eat broth, and Eliza could live upon fish, and William Pitt took too much small-beer, and Henry ate as much meat as his papa; and all these peculiarities had descended to them from some one or other of their ancestors. The dinner was simple on account of the children, and there was no dessert, as Bobby did not agree with fruit. But to make amends, Eliza's sampler was shown, and Henry and Alexander's copy-books were handed round the table, and Andrew Waddell stood up and repeated "My name is Norval," from beginning to end, and William Pitt was prevailed upon to sing the whole of "God save the King," in a little squeaking mealy voice, and was bravoed and applauded as though he had been Braham himself.[1]

It has been said that Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible are the two great conservators of the English speech and that anyone who reads them habitually finds himself possessed of an admirable style and vocabulary. The influence of the Bible upon

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[1] The Inheritance, I, p. 241.

Miss Ferrier's works may be seen in the beauty of language in the following paragraph. Here she lays aside her lighter tone and discusses more serious matters. She describes Glenroy's loss of his only son as follows:

> Glenroy's mind reeled beneath the stroke--all was dark within; his head became confused, his memory imperfect; his was the grief of warm affections and proud hopes blasted and overthrown. His gourd had withered, and he knew not where to look for shelter for his gray head; his cistern was broken, and he sought not the fountain from whence he might draw living water to revive his soul. He was laden with grief, and "the darkness of age came like a mist of the desert."[1]

The novelist writes in much the same tone in the following paragraph, in which Mr. Stuart talks with a bereaved mother concerning the death of her son, who had been lost at sea:

> "That is a natural feeling," said Mr. Stuart; "The horrors of death always come aggravated to our minds when accompanied, as in this case, with anything of suddenness or mystery; we are then apt to imagine it more dreadful than any reality, forgetting that 'the Lord is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the waves of the sea.' True, 'the silver cord is loosened, and the golden bowl is broken,' and the dust has returned to the dust, but the spirit has also returned to God who gave it. What matters it, then, how we enter on the valley of the shadow of death, when we are to pass through it by the light of those Divine footsteps which have trod

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[1] Destiny, I, p. 251.

before us?"[1]

From the excerpts culled from Miss Ferrier's novels and quoted in this study, it should be unmistakably clear that her style is lively and her humor natural and spontaneous. The success which she achieved was the result largely of her sprightly manner of writing. She read widely and was able to make skillful use of her knowledge both of books and of real life. She was able to write of serious matters in a dignified and impressive way, as has just been seen, yet without question she was at her best in employing the satirical manner in writing lines which sparkle with animation and with humor.

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[1] Destiny, I, pp 210-11.

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