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MR. DUNN BROWNE'S

UNION OF  
CALIFORNIA  
EXPERIENCES IN FOREIGN PARTS.

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## CHAPTER LX.

## THE JEDBURG BORDER GAMES.

ATTRACTED by the announcement, on a huge placard pasted hard by the entrance of Melrose Abbey, that the ancient and honorable athletic games of the Scottish Border were to be celebrated at Jedburg, on the young Marquis of Mid-Lothian's birth-day, my friend, "William the Conqueror," and myself crowded Abbotsford into a short morning pedestrian excursion, and at nine o'clock wedged ourselves into an overloaded special train which was "dragging its slow length" along to the appointed scene of the sports. Our old Anaconda having disgorged its thousand victims, happy in our escape, we wended our way through the crooked streets of the straggling town, which was all gay with flags and banners and bonnie lassies streaming with ribbons; past the old Abbey, which allowed a few smiles of sunlight to play across its dilapidated red sand-stone countenance, as if in honor of the great occasion; away on to a pretty, modest hill, all blushing with heath-

er, where some thousands of people, mostly of the laboring classes, but well-dressed and very well behaved, were assembled to witness the contests. A quadrangle, perhaps five hundred feet by three hundred, with ranges of seats rising above each other all around, with a band of music under a canopy at one end, and a large tent for the accommodation of the performers at the other, occupied the brow of the bill. Hundreds of booths and tents were erected outside for the refreshment of the spectators. Just within the enclosure, hung on little banners, were the prizes to be awarded to the victors in the various games, consisting mostly of gay articles of dress and ornamental wear, coats of many colors, embroidered vests, Highland caps, plaids, a nice pair of boots for the victor in the foot race, a richly embroidered girdle valued at fifty dollars for the best wrestler, &c., which articles, when awarded, were exhibited to the admiring crowd on the persons of the victors, with a great air of triumph and exultation. Within the quadrangle strutted the umpires and judges and marshals, looking as wise as owls, as dignified as donkeys, and as proud as turkey-cocks.

The performances going on at our arrival were feats of leaping, the perpendicular and the horizontal leap, the "hop, step and jump," and various other varieties. Next came wrestling by little boys, some of whom were not more than six years

old, and it was altogether as pretty a display of science and agility as the day had to afford us. The gravity with which the little fellows shook hands to show that they bore no malice, the magnanimity they displayed in raising a fallen foe, and the stoicism they manifested to the praises of the spectators, were lessons in human nature. The victor was a little ten year old, who spread out half a dozen larger boys just as fast as they could come on and take hold. The next performance was a smart shower of rain, which was thinly attended by the spectators, most of whom preferred a wetting up of a different kind in the booths above referred to. Then succeeded feats of hurling, cannon balls of various sizes being the projectiles used. A slight, consumptive looking youth carried away the first prize in this sturdy contest, having thrown the fifty-six pound cannon ball nearly thirty feet, if I understood the announcement correctly. The interest of the crowd now became greatly excited in a hurdle race. The competitors, about a dozen in number, ran out from the enclosure three hundred yards, leaping six hurdles or bars four feet high, in their course, and then returned over the same ground. It was quite a spirited affair, the victor passing no less than three men in the last thirty feet, and coming in less than half a yard before the favorite, who had kept the lead from the first, and was a famous runner from England.

After a recess of half an hour for rest, (which opportunity was faithfully improved by the rain,) we gathered again together to witness the grand affair of the day, the wrestling match, the most famous champions of this time-honored border sport being gathered from all quarters. The wrestlers wore flesh-colored tights and stockings only; clasped hands together behind each other's shoulders, one arm over, the other under, and the contest was usually very quickly decided. Some of the feats of strength were tremendous. A noted young champion, Scott of Carlisle, pulled from his feet a gigantic antagonist, nearly twice his own weight, whirled him completely round in the air twice, and left him gently extended on his back. First, there were many separate single matches, and then one grand trial where winners were matched with winners, and the last man up was to be the victor. Finally, Scott of Carlisle, who had thrown every opponent in a long series of encounters, and a young shepherd from Jedburg, who had been successful against all comers, in a series alternating with the first, were brought into the lists for the last decisive struggle, to decide which should be champion. The shepherd, a tall lad, rough and ungainly, but of tremendous strength, was hitherto unknown to fame, and now trembled with hope and fear as the final trial approached. Scott, slight, but a perfect model of

manly strength and grace, came smilingly and carelessly forward, looking really as if he would be glad to have the shepherd boy gain the prize. They shook hands, the heralds waved a little yellow flag over the head of each, and proclaimed their name and residence, then, amidst a breathless stillness in that vast and excited crowd, the combatants threw their arms about each other as if for a fraternal embrace. Scott experienced much difficulty in bringing his hands together about the burly shoulders of his tall opponent, but succeeding at last in clasping them, he bowed that huge frame together in a grasp like that of a tiger seizing a buffalo, and in the twinkling of an eye, extended him on the sand with face to the sky. But the valiant young shepherd, gathering courage from defeat, claimed his right to demand three trials instead of one, in the last contest, and in the next encounter, seized Scott in his long arms, with a strength perfectly irresistible, lifted him from the ground like a baby to his breast, and laid him gently on his back. And the third trial, too, after a long and doubtful struggle between superior skill and superior strength, was decided against the redoubted Scott, and Jemmy Davidson, the raw shepherd boy, whom nobody knew as a wrestler, received the first prize, and was declared the champion of all the border. The joy of the crowd, especially those from Davidson's own neighbor-

hood, was intense, and their enthusiasm unbounded. They hugged him, and kissed him, carried him upon their shoulders, and shouted his name till they were hoarse. His good-natured antagonist joined his congratulations to those of the crowd, and seemed in nowise cast down by his defeat.

The rest of the games, the blind-fold hurdle race, the jumping in sacks, the wheelbarrow race and other comical sports which concluded the day, we did not stop to see, for the day, which had been unusually fair for the British Isles, having only indulged in two showers and three drizzles, about this time relapsed into a settled rain, and we took the cars for Edinburg, whither, I suppose, you wish we had started a good deal sooner.