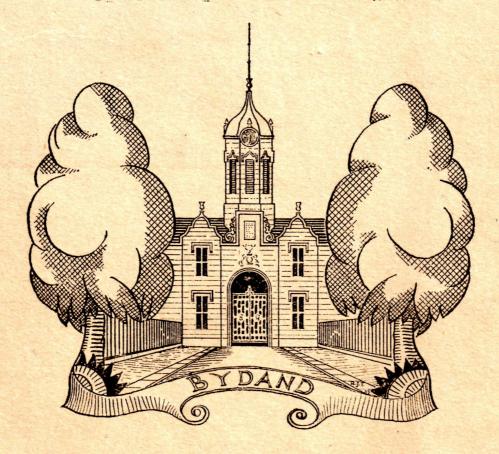
# THE-MAGAZINE-OF THE HUNTLY-GORDON-SCHOOLS FORMER-PUPILS' ASSOCIATION.



DECEMBER 1925

No. 1

Huntly:

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### The Founder of the Gordon Schools

IT is now over sixty years since the death of the last Duchess of Gordon, the founder of the Gordon Schools, and one of Huntly's greatest benefactors. Links with her and her times are wearing thin and must soon snap, but we hope to show that it is becoming for us to honour the memory of our founder, who has hitherto been to most of us little more than a name and a figure in the memorial under the "bow."

Elizabeth Brodie was born in 1794 in Fife-Her father was a son of Brodie of Brodie, and "because he had been sent with a pen to a counting-house instead of with a sword to a battlefield" was a man of large fortune, which passed to his only child. He had bought an estate in Kincardineshire, and there, and in Fife, Elizabeth's early years were spent. But when she was only six years of age her mother died, and she was left to the charge of two aunts in Elgin, who brought her up with great care. While recognising the strictness of their rule the child did not rebel under it, and her early training prepared her well for the battles she had to fight. standing traits in her character were independence of mind, and a strong sense of the difference between right and wrong. All that she learned she learned thoroughly, and in one accomplishment at least she excelled. That was in playing Scotch music, reels and strathspeys on the piano, a gift which won recognition and high praise from Sir Walter Scott, with whom she shared a love of all things Scottish. A year or two in London completed her schooldays, and she "came out" at a ball in Fife just before her seventeenth birthday.

About this time Jane, Duchess of Gordon, while on a visit to the Brodies, remarked on the careful education of Miss Brodie, saying "Surely you are training her for a wife to Huntly!" Whether she spoke in jest or whether, matchmaker that she was, she foresaw a possible union between her son and the wealthy Miss Brodie, we do not know. The Duchess Jane died in 1812 and in December of the following year, the Marquis of Huntly, then over forty, the scarred and seasoned hero of more than one campaign; courtier and

citizen of the world, married Elizabeth Brodie, a shy, awkward girl of nineteen, with few gifts or graces, accustomed only to provincial society, and no brilliant figure even there.

What the world, and particularly the friends of the late Duchess, thought of the bride, we can read in the memoirs of a contemporary, Miss Grant of Rothiemurchus—

"He (Lord Huntly) grew very fond of her and so did I. The rest of the family never took to her, and my father and mother, remembering her predecessor, the beautiful, brilliant Duchess, could not avoid making disadvantageous comparisons. . They came and dined with us. She was very timid. She never had the gift of conversation, she could talk well on a subject that interested her, with a person that she liked, otherwise she was silent. Bonaparte would not have chosen her for a wife for one of his generals; she did not shine in her reception rooms."

So thought those who looked at the surface. But the marriage was a happy one. The Marquis' respect grew into love, and the bride, whose dowry paid his debts, took the management of his affairs into her own capable hands. Then with the same assiduity that she had applied to her school studies, she set herself to mastering the duties of her high position. But she always found her social tasks irksome and was only too well aware of her shortcomings. More and more she came to see that the world was vain; more and more she longed for leisure to pursue her own way in meditation and good works.

The couple spent the first winter of their married life at Bath. Then followed a long tour on the Continent. They arrived in Brussels only a day too late for the ball given by the Duchess of Richmond, Lord Huntly's sister, on the eve of Waterloo, but in time to share in the excitements of the days following the battle. It was just after this that they returned to Scotland. They spent the summer and autumn at Gordon Castle and at Kinrara, Lord Huntly's shooting lodge in the Highlands. At the beginning of winter they took up residence at Huntly Lodge, which was to be their No official welcome was permanent home. given them till the following year, when on

Lady Huntly's birthday, the 20th of June, a great gathering of tenantry and townspeople paid her homage. (Might we here suggest that the schools keep this date as Founder's Day, and make it the occasion of the annual sports.'

Twelve years passed happily, and uneventfully, except for the Marchioness' conversion, which exposed her to the taunts of many of her friends, and which increased her dislike for society. The road she had chosen was never an easy one; to her it was doubly hard, for she met with few sympathisers on her own way of life, and she had still to continue on the round of pleasure she found so irksome. Yet her wealth and high position gave her boundless epportunities for doing good, and these she seized eagerly, for her constant fear was that she might be an "unprofitable servant."

In 1827, Alexander, fourth Duke of Gordon. died, and the Marquis George, the last of the race, succeeded to his father's title and estates. To the new Duchess the change brought new responsibilities, which she did not shirk, and a wide sphere of influence, which she wel-Just before leaving Huntly Lodge for her new home at Gordon Castle, she, and some of her guests, paid a visit to Huntly Castle, and standing in the great hall of the castle were endeavouring to decipher the motto that runs round the walls. The day was cloudy and the light bad, and none could read the words. Suddenly the sun broke out and revealed the motto "To that that love Gcd al thingis workis for the best." Taking these words as a good omen for the future, the Duchess entered on her new life with fresh courage in her heart.

At Gordon Castle the Duke and Duchess entertained lavishly, but there was little gaiety in their gatherings, and no ball as in the days of their predecessors. To those who were not of the Duchess' way of thinking, life there was dull enough. She spent much of her days in meditation, and in visiting the people on the estate. Her interest in children led her to establish an infant school in Fochabers, and later, with some money of her own and some she obtained from selling jewels, she built an episcopal church near the castle. She also gave advice and help in administering the estates, and in 1829, when part of Gordon Castle was burnt down, and much damage was

done to his lands by the many floods, the Duke is said to have exclaimed—"I am unfortunate in everything save in a good wife." Life in London during the season was more strenuous. The Duchess was chosen to be Mistress of the Robes to Queen Adelaide on her coronation, and this position entailed constant attendance at court, and participation in uncongenial gaieties. Perhaps the happiest periods of her life at this time were the holidays she and the Duke spent on the Continent.

The death of the Duke in 1836 brought many changes. He had no son to succeed him; the estates went to his nephew, the Duke of Richmond, and the title of Duke of Gordon fell into abeyance. The Duchess left her home at Gordon Castle and returned to her dower-house at Huntly Lodge, where the rest of her life was spent. Here, in the retirement of widowhood, she could end her days as she best pleased, and here, freed from so many duties that she considered unprofitable, she dispensed such bounty and hospitality as only one of her large heart and large means could practice. At one time she was giving regular relief to several hundred poor people; not once, but many times, she threw open her lodge for conferences of ministers and others. All sorts and conditions of people came to her for help and advice; all found what they sought.

In 1837 came the founding of the Gordon Schools, to us the crowning act of the Duchess' life. Her love for children had led her to establish infant schools in many places, but to these she added Huntly Schools, in memory of her husband, for older boys and girls; and an industrial school. During the rest of her life these schools were a continual source of interest to her. She visited them frequently, and we read of her providing one year a Christmas tree and gifts for six hundred children attending the schools.

The year of the Disruption marked the next epoch in her life. Although her husband had been a member of the Church of Scotland, the Duchess had remained in the Episcopal Church, but she found the evangelical doctrines of the new Free Church to accord with her own views, and ignoring the political significance of her act she cast in her lot, after serious consideration, with the dissenters. She became a member and a staunch supporter of Huntly Free Church. The Duchess joyed

in the wave of religious feeling that swept the country at that time, and took it as an answer to her own prayers for a spiritual reawakening in Scotland.

The closing years of the Duchess' life were marked by the great revival meetings held, with her permission, in the Castle Parks. These were initiated by Mr Williamson, the Free Church minister at Huntly, and were held in 1860 and the two following years. They were attended by thousands from all over Scotland and were the means of blessing to countless numbers. Many of the preachers, the most notable of their day, were accommodated at the Lodge, while the arrangements for feeding the multitudes were made by the Duchess herself, and gave ample proof of her organising ability.

But for some time the health of the Duchess had been failing. Several serious illnesses had undermined her strength, and she died on the 31st January, 1863. She was buried in Elgin Cathedral, and as the funeral passed out of Huntly, followed by a long train of mourners, the streets were crowded with townsfolk lamenting that they would never look upon her like again. As one said "She made it her study to benefit her fellow-men an" what crowds o' puir craters she helpit every day. As for her spiritual, Huntly is Huntly still, but the gude that's been done—it is a' through her."

The fires that kindled in men's hearts then are burning low now. Huntly has changed since those days, and the good Duchess is almost forgotten. But we should not forget the lesson of her noble life, or that "it was a' through her" that the schools were built on their historic site, that we had the Castle parks as playing fields, and that our happiest hours were spent in the shade of HER home and HER linden trees. M. L.

# "The Dominie" and "The Doctor"

THE Editor has asked me to give some recollections of the Gordon Schoools when I was a pupil there. That, for me, is rather difficult, for I have forgotten all the most important things, and what I remember seems so insignificant as to be hardly worth mention-I can, however, never forget the old Dominie marching down the School Road, often with the Doctor by his side. A man of medium height he was, well set up, with an elastic step, in spite of his rather substantial person. He had a few straggling hairs on his chin and his face was round and ruddy, with sometimes a twinkling of humour in his eye. Attired in his tail coat suit of tweed and square black hat, he united an attractive personality to one with whom it would be In one dangerous to take undue liberties. tail pocket of his coat he carried his newspaper, and in the other the "tag." generally gave the impression that he "rejoiced in his labour" when using that instrument of torture, and he certainly enjoyed a read of the newspapers. He wore a massive gold chain which was well set off on his portly Sometimes he had a rather fiery temper, and the boys knew well how to behave

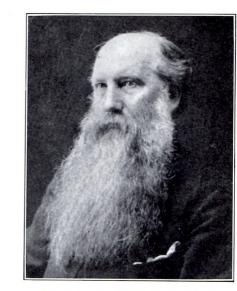
until the storm blew past. Physically, he might be compared to Sir John Falstaff, and he had also, like him, the great faculty of making friends. I could almost imagine some of his old pupils saying, like Bardolph, "I would I were with him wheresoever he is: whether he be in heaven or hell."

Of an entirely different type was the Doctor. His beard was long and flowing, and everything else was in as great contrast. Lean and sarcastic, he had no "tag" but a cane which was often used vigorously and without much "If you will not take it in at discretion. your ears, I will put it in at the tips of your fingers," was a favourite saying of his. Mathematics was the principal subject taught by him and he did it conscientiously and, on the whole, I think, not without success. For long he was handicapped by bad health, and this, no doubt, often affected his temper with the boys; but as Free Church schoolmaster he sent some fine men out into the world, among whom might be mentioned Dr Hastings and the Rev. Peter Thomson.

These two men—the Dominie and the Doctor—were the staff of what was the secondary department of the schools in the middle '70's, and besides they had a certain amount of ele-



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F.P. Magazine

## THE GORDON SCHOOLS:

RONDEAU.

(BY AN OLD FOCEY)

In Gordon Schools, by Deveron's flow, We conned our letters, row by row, With grim Arithmos strove amain And broke our little hearts in vain Attempts to conjugate AMO. Did e'er we deem the hours moved slow? Did e'er we pant the hour to know When we should never meet again In Gordon Schools?

Now that my head is crowned with snow, And comes no more the thrill, the glow, That pulsed so quick in every vein,
Ah! that I might those days regain,
The dear dead days of long ago
In Gordon Schools!

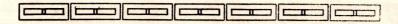
### "BYDAND"

A SONNET.

I sought an emblem for our school, and came In mem'ry to an avenue of limes, That held above in leafy hands the same Green canopy of spring of other times, When we, as boys, toward the tall domed tower Hearing the solemn bell that called, did go Within the school at the appointed hour, And learned one day beneath the arch to know The ancient legend written there in stone, "Bydand" and so with "Steadfast" heart to

Beyond the gates, and looking back alone See from afar the distant tower, and where The slender vane like golden flag unfurl'd, Points on, to the four corners of the world.

R. J. T., 1925.





MISS BAIN



MR ALEX. PATON