

Johns THE *Leeds*

WITTY AND ENTERTAINING

EXPLOITS

OF

Mr. Geo. Buchanan

Who was commonly called,

THE KING'S FOOL.



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George Buchanan

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MR. GEORGE BUCHANAN.

MR. GEORGE BUCHANAN was a Scotsman born; and, though but of poor parentage, made great progress in learning. As for his understanding and ready wit, he exceeded all men then alive in that age, that ever proposed questions to him. He was servant or teacher to King James VI., as his Private Counsellor, but publicly he acted as his Fool.

1. There was a bell at Dalkeith, which the Popish Clergy made use of to extort confessions from the ignorant people. They told the persons whom they suspected guilty that the bell would rive, at the touch of a guilty person; but, if not guilty, it would not. By this means they generally frightened the ignorant into confessions, for, if the bell rive, the person was then to be condemned to death. But they managed so, that the bell was never put to the trial, till George did as follows. He was taken up for saying, That the Pope was fallible himself, and could not pardon the sins of others.—

George owned he said so, but would refer to the bell, whether he was guilty or not. The Priests, tho' unwilling, were obliged to comply. George touched the bell, repeating as before. The Pope is fallible and cannot pardon sin; and, moreover, added the Pope and Popish Clergy are impostors and thereupon touched the bell, referring to it for the truth. But the bell not rung, the priests were disgraced as impostors, and he was honourable acquitted, and the bell was laid aside.

2. George desired a member of the College of St. Andrews, to lend him a book, the other told him, that he could not possibly spare it out of his chamber; but if he pleased, he might come there and read all the day long. Some time after, the gentleman sends to George to borrow his bellows, but he sent him word, he could not possibly spare them out of his chamber; but, that if he pleased, he might come there and blow all day if he would.

3 A Scholar, at the Grammar-School of St. Andrews, coming into a room where his master had laid down a basket of cherries for his own eating, the waggish boy takes it up, and cried aloud, I publish the hands between these cherries and my mouth, any one know a just cause or impediment,

why these two should not be joined together, let them declare it. The Master being in the next room, overheard all that was said; and coming into the School, he ordered the boy who had eaten his cherries to be taking up or as he called it horsed on another boy's back; but, before he proceeded to the usual discipline, he cried out aloud, as the delinquent had done, I publish the bands between this boy's backside and my taws; if any one knows a just cause or impediment why these two should not be joined together let them declare it. George passing by in the mean-time overheard this proclamation, and cried out, I forbid the bands. Why so, says the Schoolmaster. Because the parties are not agreed, said he. Which answer so pleased the Master, that the boy was set down without punishment.

4. A young Gentleman, that wanted to be witty on the Scriptures, eating some cheese full of mites, one night at a tavern. Now, said he, I have done as much as Sampson, for I have slain my thousand and ten thousands. Yes, replied George who happened to be in the company and with the same weapon too, the Jaw-bone of an ass. Which answer set the whole company a-laughing, to see the young fellow beat with his own weapons.

5. George being in a company where three Bishops were present at dinner, they knowing George to be a real scholar, and comical withal, they put upon him to say the grace, which he did as follows:

*Here are three brethren of the coat,
Who for thy blissings thank thee not:
Curse them all, and bless them not. Amen.*

All on, gentleman, said George, the cause is good. This grace made the Bishops look like fools to one another, and George laughed heartily at the great confusion they were in.

6 A Candlemaker having had some candles stolen from him, was telling it in company where George was present: a friend, says George, be of good cheer, for in a short time they will all come to light.

7. George being sent to Paris about some business, went from thence to Versailles, to see the French king's Court; and being known there to several of the Courtiers which had been at the English Court, one of them took occasion to tell the French king, that George was one of the wittiest men in England. Upon which the French king desired to see him, and he was accordingly introduced to his Majesty's presence

but George, it seems, was out of humour, or at least seemingly so, and spoke but very little to the purpose; so that the French king told the Nobleman that commended him for such a wit, that he looked upon him as a very dull fellow. But the Nobleman assured the King, that whatever he thought of him, George was a very witty and ingenious man. Whereupon the King was resolved to make further trial of him, and took him into a great gallery, where there were abundance of fine pictures; and among the rest, shewed him the picture of our Saviour on the cross, and asked him if he knew who that was? George, pretending ignorance, answered, No. Why, says the King, I'll tell you, if you don't know: this is the picture of our Saviour on the cross, and that on the right hand, is the Popes, and that on the left is mine own. Whereupon George replied, I humbly thank your Majesty for the information, for though I have often heard that our Saviour was crucified between two thieves, yet I never knew who they were before.

8. A sharper, who had acquired vast riches by cheating, told George, that such a thing as a good name was to be purchased, he would freely give ten thousand pounds for one. Sir, said George, it would certainly be the worse laid-out

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money in your life. Why so? said the sharper. Because, answered George, you would lose it again in less than in a week.

9. One asked George, Why men always made suit to the women, but the women never to the men? Why, says he, because the women are always ready for the men, but the men are not always ready for the women.

10. George went into the mint one day, when they were melting gold. One of the workmen asked George, if he would have his hat full of gold? George readily accepted, but it burnt the bottom out of his hat, as they knew it would; and for that time they laughed at George. However, to be even with them, George bought a fine large hat, and caused a plate of copper to be put betwixt the hat and the lining, and returned next day. They again, jestingly, asked him, if he would have another hat full of gold? George said he would; and they poured it red hot into his hat; and now George began to laugh at them in his turn, telling them, that this new hat was a good one, and stood fire better than the old one, and so carried it off honestly. And being afterwards prosecuted for to return it, he excused himself, telling the Judge, that he took nothing but what was given him; and there-

fore he was honourably acquitted, and the others were heartily laughed at.

11. In the reign of King James the 6th, George dining one day with the Lord Mayor, after two or three healths, the Ministry was tossed; but when it came to George's turn to drink he diverted it some time by telling a story to the person who sat next him; the chief magistrate not seeing his toast go round, called out What sticks the Ministry so? At nothing cries Ghorge; and so drank off his glass.

12. George being one day along with the King and his Nobles a-hunting, and being but very sorrily mounted, when he was spurring up his horse, he observed the horse have a trick of falling down on his knees, George immediately thought how he should make use of that very thing to divert his Majesty; therefore pretended that his horse could set hares: and knowing some hares'-seats, rode that way to show the truth of what he affirmed. So when he had found the hare, by giving his horse a spur, he immediately clapped down: this he repeated several times, till he put the whole company in belief that what he had said was true. Then one of the Nobleman being charmed with the performance of George's horse, would have him change

with him. George, at first, seemed unwilling to part with his horse but, as last, was prevailed upon to part with him for the Nobleman's horse and a hundred guineas about. But afterwards riding thro' a pretty deep river, the Nobleman spurring his new horse, he clapped down on his belly; which George seeing called out to the company to return with the dogs, for the Nobleman's horse had certainly set a hare; which set the whole company a laughing. The poor Nobleman was obliged to leave his horse set in the water and waded through on foot all wet to the shoulders.

13. A Scotsman being reduced to povety made his court to George, to put him in a way to get some money; who told him he would, providing he would do as he directed him. There was an old miser, an usurer and money-changer, hard by; George ordered the fellow to pretend an errand to the miser, and when he came to the table where the heaps of money lay, to thrust his hand among the gold, but to lift none, and run off. This the poor fellow did, and was chased by the miser and his servants, who ran after him into the street, calling, Stop the thief? The poor fellow was stopt, (for George had desired him to let them catch him.) George appeared in the mob, and went along with the poor

fellow, who was carried before a Judge where he was searched; and nothing being found upon him, he was acquitted, and the miser fined in a large sum for accusing him. Afterwards George desired him to go to the same place, and thrust in both his hands and lift up as much as he could, and run off. This he did, but the Miser told him, he was not such a fool as to fellow him, for he knew he only desired to play the fool, to have him fined again. By this means the poor fellow was enriched, and afterwards lived well.

14. George being at dinner one day where the broth was very hot, burnt his mouth, and at the same time letting go a loud fart; it is very good for you, says he, that you made your escape, for I should have burnt you alive, had you staid.

15. A young Curate, with more pertness than wit or learning, being asked in company, how he came to take it into his head to enter into the ministry of the church? Because, said he, the Lord had need of me. That may be, replied George, who was present, for I have often read, that our Lord had once need of an ass.

16. George being sent with the British Ambassador into Italy, by the way of Paris; as they were viewing the beautiful statues

and large building of that spacious city, the King and many of his Nobles in company, as they were walking through the King's garden, among the Images of the Saints, they came to the image of the Virgin Mary who stood in a melancholy posture, with a babe in her arms : One of the Noblemen said to the British Ambassador, Dont you think she looks as if she were angry ? O yes, says George, she is angry when she sees Englishmen and Frenchmen in friendship and unity one with another. No, no, said the French King, she loves nothing better then the reconciliation of enemies ; peace and unity is her delight. Then George sets in below the statue, and looking up, O, says he, I see now what is the cause she looks so angry-like, somebody has driven a great nail in her backside, I see the head of it sticking out ; it would vex any living be's a piece of wood. At this the King was greatly enraged against him, for calling her a piece of wood ; and nothing would satisfy the King, unless that he would fall down and worship her, and crave mercy of her for the blasphemous reproaches wherewith he had reproached her. Then George cried out, O may it please your Majesty to omit it at this time, I dare not look her in the face, she frowns on me with such an angry countenance ; this dutiful command of yours must be delayed until

I return from Italy, and then I shall obey your command, in paying all dutiful respects and worship to her, according to what she is. So the Ambassador stood bound for him, that he should perform this piece of worship at his return, according to the King's pleasure.

17. During their stay in Italy, they chanced to be in a Nobleman's house where they kept but few servants, because of a spirit that did haunt the house for the space of two hundred years before that time, so that no servant could work any kind of labour in or about the house for it except cooks, for what they vulgarly called a **Brownie**, did all itself, and would allow no fellow-labourer to work along with it.— In the morning George got up pretty early and called for water to wash himself; then directly comes the **Brownie**, with a basin of water in the one hand, and a clean cloth in the other, George perceiving him, by his pale ghostly countenance, not to be an earthly creature, said, Of what nation art thou? To which it answered, in Gaelic or Erse. A countryman of yours Sir. The Ambassador smiled, and joked George, telling him it was a devil, and how could it be a countryman of his? O, says George I'll show you the contrary of that, the devil dare not stay in our country.

George having washed himself, it came again to take away the basin and water. Then said George, And how long is it since you left your own country? About two hundred and fifty years ago, says it, Then, certainly, says George, thou art a devil, and not an earthly creature. To which it answered,

I am what I am, and a Christian too.

Then, says George.

I am what I am to conjure you.

George taking a handful of water, and throwing it upon the old withered face of it, repeating the form of the words of baptism, in Earse, saying, If thou be'st a Christian, thou art old enough now so be baptized — No sooner had George done this, but it set off weeping and crying, O! let never a rogue put trust in his countryman after me. — Now, says George, I told you the devil dare not stay in my country, nor yet look a Scotsman in the face in his own. What, says the Italian Lord, do you imagine that this is the devil's own country? It appears so, says George. for he is the oldest residenter in it I know; but my Lord said he, and if it please your grace, I think the Clergymen are very scant in this country when you have kept the devil so long for a Chaplain. The Nobleman, unto this

gave no answer, but expressed great sorrow for the loss of his Drownie.

18. George having been long abroad, after his return, he thought to go and visit the King and his court in disguise; and meeting with an old man driving two old horses, loaded with coals to sell, George makes a bargain with the old man, for the loan of his clothes, his horse, coals, whip, and every thing, for to complete him as a real coal-driver. So, away he goes in this dress, until he came before the King's Palace, where he began to cry with an audible voice, Buy coals, buy coals! better buy than borrow. Now, the King being in company with his young Chaplain, who was a foundling, so that none knew his original, and had been fostered and educated out of charity by the King's father, yet he was become as proud as Lucifer, and as high in his own conceit as the King himself. The King knowing George's voice, though he was in a coalman's dress, desired the Chaplain to ask the coalman why he called so loud, making such a terrible noise?—The Chaplain opened the window, and with a great air called unto him, You, sir, why do you cry so for? Why, says George, I cry for people to come and buy my coals, and give me money for them; but what do you cry for? What, sir, says the young

Priest, I cry for you to hold your peace.—
 Then, says George. come here then, and
 cry for me, and go sell my coals, and I will
 hold my peace. Sell your coals! says the
 Priest; do you know to whom you speak?
 Yes, I do, says George, but you do not.
 What are you? says the Priest. I am
 a mortal, and so are you, says George,
 What is your father's name, since you will
 not tell your own? says the Priest. You
 may go and ask my mother, says George,
 for I was not capable of knowing him when
 he got me. What! says the Priest, do you
 not know your own father? I know my
 mother, and my mother did know my father,
 says George, and that is sufficient, and per-
 haps more than you can say. The Priest
 thinking he was coming too near him,
 thought to put him off with a Scriptural
 question by asking him, if he knew who
 was Melchizedeck's father? Indeed Master
 Priest, says George, Melchizedeck's descent
 was not counted, neither is yours; then
 who can declare your generation? The
 Priest, at this answer, would stand the argu-
 ment no longer, but closed the window in
 great haste, while the King, and all who
 knew the Priest to be a foundling, were like
 to split their sides with laughing, So George
 went off with his coals, and the Priest became
 more humble than he formerly was, for he

thought that every body knew who he was, when the coalman knew so well.

19. One night an English 'Squire, who pretended to be better versed in poetry than George, laid a wager with another gentleman five guineas against one, that George could not metre the first words he would say to him in the morning, when newly awaked out of sleep. So the Gentleman went the night before, and told George of the wager, and warned him to be on his guard, for in the morning they would certainly come, and that right early. At midnight and you will, says George, I'll order my servant to let you in. So the English 'Squire sat up all night conferring with his friends, whether to put a high verse to him, or mean and simple words; thinking that George would be sitting up all night meditating on an answer. So they all agreed, that mean and simple words he would not be thinking on, and therefore have no answer provided for such. Then away they came in the morning very early, with several gentlemen in company, to hear the diversion. George's servant opened the door, according to his master's orders. The 'Squire entered the room first, and wakened Geogage out of his sleep, then said,

*Rise up you madman,
and put on your cloaths,*

To which George answered,

*O thou hast lost thy woad man,
For I'm none of those.*

The English 'Squire confessed he was fairly beat, and would match with him no more. Then, another gentleman would hold five guineas, that he would give him a word or line, that he could not metre at the first answer, and to answer it directly as soon as he had done speaking. But George ordered him first to table the money, and then to proceed; which he did in all haste and said as follows:

My belly rumb'd, and them I farted.

George, gripping to the money, answered,
A fool and his money is soon parted.

Then they all cried out he was fairly beat, and what George had said, was really true. So they never would lay any more wagers concerning poetry.

20 A Bishop sent a letter to George, to let him know that he was coming to visit him, and take dinner with him in his lodgings, George sent an answer, that he would wait upon his Lordship on the day

appointed. But well did George know, it was not for any love he had to him, that he was coming to visit him, but spy fairlies; therefore he thought he should give him something to talk about, So George sent his servant to a Bookseller's shop, to buy a dozen of small pamphlets, about a halfpenny a piece; such as, A groat's worth of Wit for a penny; the History of the King and the Cöbler; the Exploits of Thomas Hickathrift, and such like pieces. And taking all his own books away, he put the pamphlets in their place; which he presented to the Bishop, when he asked for a sight of his library. What, says the Bishop, have you no more books but these? No more, says George, but my Bible. O, says the Bishop, I wonder how you can either speak plain, or write a perfect sentence, when you have no other books than these. O says George, do you think that I am a Clergyman, to borrow other men's Sermons to beautify my works? No, no, not I; all that I write, I dite; I meditate out of my own brain.— This check, concerning borrowing, put the Bishop in a cold sweat, yet he concealed his passion. Then George called to his servant, is dinner ready yet? To which he answered, Come, master, come, the pot is on the boil! get out the meal-pock. Then Geoge went into the

room where the servant was, and set the Bishop at the out-side of the first, and sat down on the other himself, while his servant made a great bowl full of milk-brose, and sat them down between the Bishop and George. Then George desired his Lordship to ask a blessing to what they were to receive. The Bishop not knowing what he meant by a blessing, it not being usual for the English to do so, asked at George what it was. Then George took up a great rams-horn spoon, and put it in the Bishop's hand, saying, There it is, my Lord. What, said the Bishop, call you that a blessing? We call it a spoon. O my Lord said George, it is the best blessing you can ask, if it do not come empty. Well, says the Bishop, and how do you call that scalded meal. Why, said George, we call it Scotch brose. O, said the Bishop I cannot eat any of it. O, said George, the thing we cannot eat, we sup ; my Lord ; since you are in a Scotchman's house, you must partake of a Scotchman's victuals. Then said the Bishop, I always thought the Scotch lived well until now ; I would not be a Scotchman for the world. O, said George, if a Scotchman live twenty years, and get but nineteen years meat, he'll not reckon himself badly off. What! said the Bishop, not badly off, and want a year's victuals? Upon my word of honour, if I wanted one

day's victuals, I'd be sure to die the next. O said George, we drink water when we cannot do better, and that puts us in remembrance of wealth, for a dish of contentment is good cheer. Then said the Bishop I'll drink water too, if it be good for the memory, Ah, do said George, and you'll remember me when you do so.—So, after dinner, the Bishop took his leave of George, and invited him to come next day and dine with him.—Next day, according to promise George went to the Bishop's lodging; but no sooner did the Bishop see George, than he saluted him with these words.

*Your servant, master wise-man,
And yet you have no books!
How can one have knowledge,
That no man instructs?*

*George answered,
Your servant master Bishop,
Your salutation's good;
Your knowledge is in your Library,
While others is in their hood.*

Then, after a sumptuous dinner, the Bishop took George into his Library, and showed him a great collection of Books; which George praised very much: Among the rest, was an old Hebrew Bible, which

George taking up, he asked the Bishop what book it was? The Bishop, looking at it very earnestly, said he could not tell. Why, said George, do you keep a book you don't know the name of? It may be the Book of Black Art, O no, said the Bishop, I don't think it is that; but can you tell me what it is; Yes, says George, it is the Bible, the best book for a Bishop I know, if he had eyes to see the inside of it. So the Bishop desired George to read a piece of it; but when he did the Bishop could not understand it; therefore he desired him to explain it; which George did: The passage happened to be in Isaiah ix. 19 "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led by them, are destroyed," To which George added, This is the blind leading the blind. So George taking his leave of the Bishop, he parted with him, saying these words:

*Good night, now master Bishop,
Of Books you have great store;
Yet cannot read the half of them,
Then what use are they for?*

21. George being one night in company with some English Noblemen, in presence of the King, they began to demonstrate what a fine country England was, both for

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beautiful building and fruitful fields!—
One gentleman said, he knew a place in it
where if they cropt the grass even with
the ground at night and lay down a Crown
piece on it, before a hundred witnesses,
against to-morrow morning you would not
know where to find it. That may seem
very strange to some, says George, but it is
no mystery to me, knowing there would be
some who saw the Crown-piece laid down,
ready enough to come back and take it up
before to-morrow. But, says George, I
know a place in the West of Scotland, where,
if you'll tether a horse at night, against the
next morning you will not see him. What
a pox will take it him away? says the Noble-
man. Only such people, says George, as
will take away your Crown-piece. O, says
the Nobleman; I see you know what I mean.
But, says George, you talk much of towns
you have in England; I know three towns
in poor Scotland, for properties you have
none such. Pray, says the Nobleman,
what are these properties? Why, says
George, I know one town where there is
a hundred bone-bridges in it; another,
where there is fifty draw-bridges; and
another, where, tho' a man commit mur-
der, treason, or owes never so much money,
if he runs to that town, and gets in below
a stair, no laws nor justice can harm him.

e Nobleman offered immediately to stake
 undred pounds, there was no such towns:
 Europe, besides in Scotland. They
 ired George but to tell the names of:
 se towns, for they would find him out,
 I know whether he was a liar or not.—
 en George told them their names; and
 o men were sent to Scotland to see them.
 e first was Duddingstone, near Edinbúrg
 ere they came and asked for the bone-
 dges there. The people shewed them
 os almost between every door, of the skulls
 sheep-heads, which they used as stepping-
 nes. The second was a little country
 age between Stirling and Perth, called
 chterardoch, where there is a large
 and, which runs through the middle of
 town; and almost at every door there
 long stick of wood or stone laid over
 strand, whereupon they pass to their
 osite neighbours, and when a flood came,
 y would lift their wooden bridges, in
 e they would be taken away, and these
 y call their draw-bridges. The third
 s a village near Cambusbarron, which
 y past through from one end to the other,
 t could not see a stair in it all. So they
 urned to England, and told what manner
 bone and draw-bridges they saw; and
 w there was not a stair in all the village
 ar Cambsubarron, for a man to get below.

George being now advanced to years and finding his natural strength and health daily decaying, he petitioned King James to let him return to Scotland, to visit his friends, and the land of his nativity, which he most willingly granted, not thinking his design was never to return. For George had a great desire to resign his soul and breath in that place of the world where he received them, and that his bones might be laid among his ancestors, which was counted a great honour in former ages.— So accordingly, George came to the Parish of Buchanan, in the West of Scotland where he visited all his friends and relations before his death. During which time the King sent several messages for him to return with all the haste he could, but he absolutely refused, and told him he would never see him again; which grieved the King very much. After this, the King sent him a letter, and threatened, if he did not appear in London in the space of twenty days, he would send his Lion-Herald's for him—To which George sent the following reply,

*My honour'd liege and sovereign King,
Of your boasting great I dread nothing;
On your fed and favour I'll fairly venture;
Or that day I'll be whee few Kings enter.*

FINIS.