When Lint was in the Bell.

By ARCHIBALD MILROY.
THE AUTHOR'S ACCOUNT
OF HIMSELF.

A GREAT preacher and orator once remarked, that however much people may boast about birth and breeding, we must all trace our descent to a certain gardener and his wife, both of whom were dismissed from their situations for bad conduct. Remembering these wise words, and also that as we all spring from the earth so must we be gathered to it again, I feel some degree of pride in announcing that my ancestors, so far as I can trace them on both sides of the tree, belonged to the farming class, and were not specially distinguished for anything, except that most of the male sex were ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church, while their womenfolks ruled them and their own houses well.

I have often heard my mother say that she attributed whatever share of blessings we may have enjoyed in great measure to the prayers and godly influence of her grandfather, who lived through the troublesome times of '98. This old man was remarkable for his piety and the amount of good work which he accomplished throughout the neighbourhood. It is told of him that, on a certain night, whilst the country was in the hands of the soldiers, who ransacked and pillaged without mercy, a company of them arrived at his door, intending to go in and plunder the dwelling. Hearing a voice within, they stopped to listen. It was the old man engaged at
worship with his family; and so earnestly did he pray for the afflicted land, for the misguided rebels, for the soldiers, and all who were trying to bring about peace, that the men were arrested in their object, and stole away from the door without giving the slightest trouble.

The son of this old man—my grandfather—was of a very humorous turn of mind. His forte lay in the telling of countless most amusing anecdotes and in the singing of comic songs, which he accompanied on his fiddle. He was much sought after for parties and country dances; and I have often been told that when he got “well warmed up to his work”—with, perhaps, the aid of a glass or two of “punch” (there were few tea-totallers in those days)—he was the life and soul of the company,—his feet, head, and whole body moving in time to the music and to the motions of the dancers, while his countenance beamed with enjoyment and good-nature.

My mother was also musical, but of a very retiring disposition. She had the good fortune to receive part of her education at the Moravian settlement of Gracehill; the high tone of which left a marked influence on her future life. She was gifted with a wonderful memory and also a rich vein of humour. Her gentle, resigned disposition and sterling Christian qualities had a great effect in moulding my life. My father, also, was a man of upright character, and of an unusually shrewd turn of mind.

I was born near to the village of Ballyclare, in the year 1859—the memorable year of the Great Revival. I must have been rather a puny baby, for my mother used to say that, when I was a fortnight old, an uncle of hers, who had the gift of plain speech, asked what
name I was to receive. On being told, he remarked:
“You need not much mind what you call him for all
the time he will be with you.” My mother often
referred to this as a most heartless, unkind speech.

I survived, however. In those days children
were not too much pampered—especially those born
on a farm—so that at an age when youngsters now-
adays have not left the nursery, I was out in the
fields working at hay, herding cows, or busy in the
harvest rig. The old people believed that the best
training for a child—next to oatmeal porridge and
the Shorter Catechism—was to keep him constantly
employed.

I was what was called “an old-fashioned child,”
with a proclivity for talking to workmen, stonebreakers,
etc., from whom I heard strange stories and caught
many ideas, some of which I have lived to work out
in my books. I also picked up a perfect knowledge of
the dialect. I was very impressionable and full of weird
fancies. There were gruesome tales of kidnapping in
those days—hearses drawn by horses with muffled
shoes to be met with on lonely roads when nights
were dark, into which little folks were “chucked,” and
heard of no more. One night I met a cart with
creaking wheels; it was covered over with a white sheet.
Curiosity overcame me, so I clambered up behind and
lifted the sheet. With a scream I dropped down and
almost fainted—a dead body lay within! I was after-
wards informed that it was only a carcass going to the
butcher’s; but I used to lie awake at nights thinking of
that cart with the creaking wheels.

I used also, as a child, to take delight in listening
to the wind sighing among the trees or wailing in the
chimneys, imagining I heard voices in it, and that the
Banshee was going round about the house. There was an old mill-wheel convenient which worked on my imagination strangely, especially in winter, when all nature was held in the iron grip of frost, and the wheel, now ornamented by huge icicles, turned slowly on its sockets with a dismal, wailing sound. This, in the night-time, was melancholy and weird in the extreme.

I was early made acquainted with death—a brother and a sister, both a few years my senior, were smitten by that fell disease consumption, and passed away within a year of each other. This double sorrow my mother never got over. It saddened terribly her already sad life. Within another year my grandfather, who lived with us, also went the way of all flesh. These deaths and funerals coming in such quick succession, made, as might be expected, a deep impression on my mind, bringing on a period of sleeplessness and nervous excitement which, but for the elasticity of my constitution, might have had serious results. I used daily to dread the approach of night. In time, however, nature triumphed over the disturbed imagination, and I got rid of the trouble.

I ever cherished a deep longing to see "the big city," thinking the dwellers therein were indeed blessed. I used to gaze on my father's carts with something akin to reverence on their return from Belfast—the very mud which covered the wheels seemed almost glorified. I was great at day-dreaming (I would not say that I have quite got over it yet), my imaginings ever carrying me away to the city, believing that nothing but happiness was to be found within its walls.

The chapter entitled "The Sound of a Voice that is Still," in When Lint was in the Bell, gives a pretty accurate description of the first school I attended in the village. The schoolmistress was a pretty and attractive woman in those days, and much in request at parties and social entertainments; but when she reached middle life, and retired from the active duties of the school, she developed certain weaknesses which were a matter of grave concern to her friends.

My next school was that presided over by the renowned "Fractions"—a teacher who was quite as erratic and wayward as he is represented, while all the time possessing considerable ability. He was most slovenly and untidy in his habits. A description of the sanitation of the school and its surroundings would hardly be believed at the present day.

Not having made much progress at this seminary, I was at length transferred to another seat of learning in the village, nick-named "the Wooden Box," the principal of which was a complete contrast to "Fractions." He was a man of deep religious convictions, and of a meek and retiring disposition; and, while not possessing half the ability of the other, more than made up for the loss by his steadiness of aim and high-toned moral character. "The Wooden Box," I may say, was a small erection built during the '59 Revival, and in which the people worshipped for a time while the fine new Presbyterian meeting-house was being built. A miserable, unsanitary, badly-ventilated little hovel it was, with an earthen floor, and a stove in the corner which rendered the atmosphere most unwholesome. More than one scholar's death was attributed to the various atmospheric changes which were experienced in the "box." If a window got broken, it was allowed to remain so, or else was patched by a piece of cardboard or an old
slate. On wet days the rain trickled through the roof, the damp earthen floor being often in puddles; the close, unwholesome stove, the while, rendering the temperature unnaturally high. It was a good day for the village when the fine new schools were opened for instruction.

After some further changes, which I need not dwell upon, I at length, in the autumn of 1875, obtained my heart's desire in being sent to Belfast, and was enrolled a pupil, first at Mr. James Pyper's Mercantile Academy (the healthy tone of which I have always remembered), and then at the Royal Academical Institution. This was certainly a great advance for me; but, alas! I soon found out how far I was behind in the race for knowledge: the mere smattering of learning which I had received at village schools formed hardly even a basis for a sound and practical education. I "buckled to," however, and suppose it was in some degree creditable to me that, inside twelve months' time from my entering these schools, I passed successfully an examination for a clerkship in the Ulster Bank. I must add that it was not altogether with my own will that I was thus launched upon a commercial life, for I had the idea at that time of preparing for college, with a view to entering the ministry, but yielded to the persuasion of others.

Being ever of an imitative disposition, I was no sooner installed behind the polished counter of the bank than I abandoned all my studies, and became a clerk of the out-and-outest type, part of my first month's salary going to the purchase of a cane, a stand-up collar, and a pair of gloves—the latter, by the way, were two sizes too large; but I solved the difficulty by carrying them loosely in one of my hands, as I saw others do.
The ten or twelve years spent in the service of the bank I cannot but look back upon with feelings of regret: the work was mechanical drudgery; the tone anything but ennobling or satisfactory. I saw a good deal of "life" after hours, being always of a sociable disposition, and fond of music and company, also of amusements and travel—so much as my slender means would afford—all of which have, no doubt, had their effect in moulding my character, and giving me some insight into human nature; but I ever thought, within myself, that I was to some extent losing my time, and often caught myself longing for some wider future of usefulness.

The way seemed opened up soon after my marriage, as I began to realize something of the difficulty of housekeeping on a salary that was small, though sure; and I bethought me as to the entering on some line of life more remunerative, and at the same time more congenial to my inclination. I therefore took the bold step of resigning my situation, and launched forth to the picking up of crumbs in the commercial world. This seemed to be the turning point in my life. All things prospered. I worked hard, watching every chance, so that in the course of a few years I was in the possession of a comfortable income, and had established a good business connection.

It was about the year 1897 that, feeling myself in a position to ease off a little from the pressure of business, I took to the cultivation of literature. The circumstance which led directly to that object is already pretty well known, but it may be no harm to tell it over again. Our little five-year-old boy, having an insatiable appetite for stories, had exhausted my whole stock over and over again. Still there was the
demand, far exceeding the supply, until at length one
evening I undertook the writing of a short tale
entirely for his benefit, and the sketch entitled "The
Sound of a Voice that is Still" was the result. More
were called for, and so by degrees the book grew: its
reception far exceeded my most sanguine expectations.
The title was in its way a happy hit: it occurs in that
exquisite poem, "The Cotter's Saturday Night." In
the bringing out of this book and the following one,
I must pay a passing word of praise to Mr. John
Stevenson (of the firm of McCaw, Stevenson & Orr)—
himself an author—for the friendly and painstaking
interest which he took in the ventures. It was in a
great measure owing to his influence that some of the
works were published in America. Encouraged by
the success of the first book, The Auld Meetin'-Hoosie
Green appeared in 1899, which was also accorded a
hearty welcome. By Lone Craig-Linnie Burn followed
in 1900, which was favourably criticized by The Times
and other high-class London papers. Then came my
first continued tale—A Banker's Love Story—which
drew forth a considerable amount of criticism regarding
the salaries of clerks. The publisher (Mr. Fisher
Unwin) issued a circular concerning it, which was
posted to every bank and branch bank of importance
throughout the Kingdom. The Humour of Druid's
Island is my latest venture, which has also had a
favourable reception; The Academy classing it
amongst those books which "add to the gaiety of
nations." Besides these works, I have been privileged
to write many articles for The Witness, and other
papers, magazines, etc.; also Christmas stories and
descriptions of travel.

To Mr. J. M. English, general secretary of the
Central Presbyterian Association, must be given the
credit (if any) of introducing me to the lecture plat-
form. I well remember that my first attempt in the
Assembly Hall, Belfast, was a miserable failure. The
subject, "Allan Ramsay," was hardly known to anyone
present, whilst the views were meagre and not too well
arranged. The audience, which was large, had some
expecting to hear something in the line of my writings,
and I could see that they went away disappointed.
The next season, however, I worked hard to improve,
bringing out "The Chief of the Cameron Men,"
accompanied by a fine set of views; many of them
having been taken direct from the neighbourhood of
the conflicts. This was well received; favourable
comments appeared in the press, and applications
came in from the surrounding towns—even from
Dublin and Londonderry. I had a busy winter,
having, on an average, two lectures each week—
sometimes three, and even four; and, all the while,
being engaged in business during the day, conducting
a week evening Bible class at home, and doing a little
literary work in spare moments.

The public, while appreciating "The Chief of the
Cameron Men," still hankered after a lecture dealing
with the subjects which I had treated in my books;
so the following year I set to work, and produced
"Life and Love in an Ulster Village," illustrated with
a large number of views, some of them of a very quaint
description. It was also interspersed with many
characteristic anecdotes and droll sayings, culled from
many quarters, and its popularity was unbounded.
I could only accede to a selection of the applications
which came in. Its "run" even extended to England
and the south of Ireland. In later years I brought
out "Wit and Wisdom," designed in the main for young people's guilds; and also "The Market Place," which, in my opinion, the most literary of all my efforts. I may say, in this connection, that I have never charged a fee, though often recommended to do so; but my rounds have brought me into touch with a great many people; and as all my lectures, like my books, have an instructive and elevating aim, I trust that my efforts have been the means of accomplishing some good. If such work be done with an object merely to amuse, without carrying home an occasional lesson, it is more or less a waste of time and material. My writings have also brought me into touch, either directly or indirectly, with some of the master minds of the day, such as the saintly Dr. Whyte of Edinburgh, "Ian Maclaren," Dr. Robertson Nicoll, J. M. Barrie, John A. Steuart, etc., etc. Most of these men have presented me with autograph copies of some of their works, which, needless to say, I count among my most treasured possessions. The latest addition to this collection is Mr. John Stevenson's *Pat M'Carty*—a book rich in the folklore of our native northern land.

Perhaps the chief reason why I have taken an active part in land reform, during the past few years, is that I had the misfortune to be brought up under bad landlordism. My childish mind was filled with tales of tyranny and injustice which my ancestors and their neighbours had suffered at the hands of landlord and agent; while, as I have oftentimes related, one of my earliest recollections is of standing beside my grandfather one day, when the lord of the soil and his bailiff came round to solicit votes. The old man claimed the right of voting as his conscience directed, with the
result that the rent of his holding was substantially increased at the next term. The dawn was approaching, however, even in those days, and the first land bill conferring the historical three “F’s” was near at hand, but the people were still trembling from the effects of the nightmares of the dark night through which they had come. I have lived to see the passing of the land bill of 1903, the provisions of which surpass the wildest dreams of people of thirty years ago. Dual ownership is now recognised to be an existing evil, and every encouragement is held out to bring about the happy period when every man will be not only the occupier but the owner of the land he tills. My experience of the political platform has also been, with a very few exceptions, of an agreeable nature; and I felt deeply grateful at being allowed to lift my voice on behalf of the class from which I am sprung—a class which is not, as a rule, much gifted in the way of pleading its own cause. I am, and always have been, an Imperial Liberal, because I believe that, under Liberal leadership, the greatest reforms in Church and in State have been effected.

It will thus be seen that, with writing, lecturing, public speaking, and teaching, my time—especially in the winter months—is fully taken up, so that when the summer comes round I feel ready for rest and change. One delightful holiday I enjoyed, accompanied by my wife and boy, in Paris and its suburbs, a few years ago.

Then in the summer of 1902 I went alone on a tour through some most interesting parts of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium. Little did I think that within a few months I would again visit the Continent under very different circumstances.
About the end of the autumn of the same year I went to fulfil a lecturing engagement in Lismore, the beautiful place where the Duke of Devonshire has a palatial seat. I somehow caught a chill, which hung over me for long, and soon after Christmas-time I found myself completely run down and in the doctor's hands. Rest and change were recommended, so I was obliged to cancel all my engagements and start off in mid-winter for Davos-Platz—that bourne from which many travellers never return. My experience during this somewhat lengthened tour I shall never forget; and may say that, in my opinion, there cannot be imagined a more complete change than from our damp, cold, foggy climate to one in which almost perpetual sunshine reigns. Davos-Platz is a plateau (as its name implies) situated in that part of the Alps which goes by the name of the Engadine. It is over 5,000 feet above sea level, so that continual snow and ice may be counted upon from October till the beginning of May. The wild grandeur of the scenery almost beggars description; whilst everything, from the tinkling of the sleigh bells to the mournful baying of the great St. Bernard dogs, reminds one forcibly that he is in an Alpine village, far removed from the dwellers in the plain. A goodly proportion of the health-seekers go in for active amusements, such as skating, tobogganning, ski-ing (pronounced shee-ingen), etc.; but there are hundreds of others who spend their days in lying out on the verandahs of the hotels and sanatoriums, wrapped up in furs and rugs, patiently trying for weeks and months, and even years, to woo back strength and vigour to weakened lungs. The sunshine is so warm during the day that people are to be seen wearing straw hats, which they replace by
fur caps immediately the sun goes down behind the mountains, leaving the western sky suffused in splendour. Then there is the cheerful dinner, with its accompaniments of music and gay laughter, a couple of hours spent in indoor amusements, or an interchange of visiting with the residents of neighbouring hotels, and another day is done.

After a few weeks spent on the mountain-tops, we descended again to the plains, travelling by the great St. Gothard route into Italy. This was like a change from winter to summer. The sunshine continued, but instead of the snow-capped mountains we were in a fertile valley, where vine-dressing was proceeding vigorously, and the land was well under cultivation. A trip across the plain of Lombardy is something which will not soon be forgotten. The cities, too, are of great interest and beauty. Milan, with its famous cathedral and its memories of Leonardi di Vinci; Verona the ancient, with its vast arena dating from the second century; Venice the beautiful, sitting so gracefully in the waters of the Adriatic; Florence, the home of Art; Pisa, with its leaning tower; and Genoa, the great Mediterranean port—we saw them all, and revelled in the beauty of their scenery—their marble palaces and cathedrals rendering them unique among the cities of the world. Rome and Naples we were obliged to forego till another time.

Journeying on to the Riviera, we rested for a time by the shores of the Mediterranean. Cannes, Mentone, Nice, San Remo, we visited, basking beneath beautiful sunshine, the colours of sea and sky vieing with each other in beauty and loveliness. The famous Monte Carlo we looked in at, as a matter of course; entered its dazzling gambling-halls, and saw gold changing
hands in hundreds and thousands; the tables crowded by an eager throng, from boys and girls not long out of their teens to old gray-headed men and women, all with the one desire written on their countenances—the overwhelming greed of gain. A few days spent in Paris brought a delightful holiday to a close.

I may say, in connection with my lecturing and other public work, that I am, and always have been, much hampered by nervousness. For half an hour previous to my facing the public, my heart palpitates painfully, my nerves feel utterly relaxed, and for the first few minutes of my address I am terribly conscious, although the feeling soon wears off, and I have been told it is seldom apparent to the audience. The same applies to even the most unimportant speech which I may deliver at a meeting. I have battled with the infirmity for years, and I generally force myself on to my feet on every occasion when I think my words may be of any service or usefulness, and must admit that as a rule I manage to get through somehow without breaking down or without my thoughts wandering from the subject; but no one suspects what the effort costs me. I have ever done my utmost to cultivate lucidity in public speaking, and have also often perhaps erred on the side of brevity, lest by any means I should drift into tediousness—a quality from which I have suffered much in others.

I will not deny that I had a long-cherished ambition of at some time entering Parliament, so that I might have an opportunity of seeing something of the inner working of that vast machinery which exerts its influence over the whole world, as well as being able to lift my voice on behalf of the farming class.

Strange to relate, I had advanced so far towards the realization of my dream, that at the very time when my health gave way arrangements were being completed for my nomination as the representative of an Ulster constituency. It was not to be, however; and I have seen another selected for the place without a single shadow of regret. I am content to think that my work lies in quieter channels—even in lanes and by-ways obscure—doing my best to follow where the path of duty leads.

In the work of the County Council—to which body I had the honour of being elected unopposed—I have a lively interest, as well as a congenial occupation. For so far, my experience has been that the Council is composed of capable and pains-taking men, who give of their time and talents ungrudgingly, in order that they may carry out the work that has been entrusted to their hands. From the chairman and all the members I have received the greatest courtesy and consideration at all times; and it is pleasant to be in a position to lend a hand in the carrying out of much-needed improvements throughout the country at large.

This courtesy and consideration has been extended to me in a marked degree in connection with my literary work. The press has been indulgent, as have been on the whole all my critics. Many letters of commendation and encouragement from public men have helped to cheer me on my way. From the members of our own General Assembly especially I have received many marks of esteem. The present and some of the former Moderators have shown me tokens of friendship which I am not likely to forget.

And now, what shall I say more? I have a
comfortable home situated on the breezy heights overlooking the city, near enough to be within easy walking distance, and yet far enough removed to be free from its bustle and noise. The country is interesting enough to form the resting-place of a poet, not to speak of a 'prentice hand. There is sufficient space surrounding the house to permit of the inmates indulging in their hobbies, whether these be horses, dogs, fowl, or other things that creep or fly: besides, there is a certain den, containing a cosy inglenook and a favourite collection of books, the which I would not exchange for all the accumulated treasures of the British Museum.

I have just one brother, who is engaged in commercial pursuits in the busy Midlands of England. He has been an ardent cultivator of music from his earliest days, having gained considerable proficiency in the art, and possessing a rich baritone voice of much power.

My wife, as is well known, is a daughter of the late Rev. Adam Montgomery, a minister of the old school, whose memory, as the years go by, seems to be more and more cherished by the members of his late congregation and a wide circle of former acquaintances. In the chapter entitled "A Minister and a Man," in *The Auld Meetin'-Hoosie Green*, I have endeavoured to draw a rough sketch of his life.

May I be allowed, in conclusion, to express the hope that these brief and perhaps somewhat rambling autobiographical notes of a life well crowded with work may act as a stimulus to the young, in whom I have ever a deep interest, to endeavour to make the most of their time and opportunities; to put their talents to usury, and not to abuse. Even if they
are possessed of but one talent—and many of us have not been entrusted with more—that one must be used to best advantage, seeing that the man who rendered it up as he got it was condemned. Whatever little success I may have achieved has been due to strenuous toil and persevering effort. I will not deny that I have gifts, but my advantages were of the most meagre description. Instead of a complete set of tools, I have had little but a jack-knife, with which I have endeavoured to whittle my work into shape. May it pass the Master's deep-searching eye! For, as Kipling says:

"And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame—
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,
Shall draw the thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are."

I do not think I could conclude more fittingly than by setting down the sentiment expressed by the great Sir Thomas Browne, and which was characterized by Addison as the most admirable in English or any other literature. It is this:

"Every man truly lives, so long as he acts his nature, or in some way makes good the faculties of himself."
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THE VILLAGE ITSELF.
What is now a brisk market town was, some fifty years ago, but a sleepy, old-world village. It is now well supplied with what the local directory calls "Public Institutions," comprising churches of various denominations, schools, town-hall, reading-room, banks, and post-office. Two great railway companies have also considered it worth while to run their lines into the very centre of the place, competing with each other as to which will grant the cheaper fares.

The general appearance, too, of the town is much changed for the better. Electric light may not yet have been introduced, or even gas manufactured and retailed; but there are lamps at corners and on the bridge, concreted pavements, well kept streets, and slated roofs.

There are also some fine shops in The Square, displaying their handsome new season's goods in large plate-glass windows—shops, the proprietors of which "furnish their accounts monthly," have periodical "stock-taking" sales, and get their goods direct from Paris.
The town may not yet have become a Borough, with the privilege of returning one or more Members of Parliament; it has not even, so far as we know, a regularly-appointed council; but, all the same, its affairs are by no means badly managed, and there are those amongst its inhabitants who could worthily fill the offices of commissioner, alderman, or Mayor itself, so far as qualifications are concerned.

These things being conceded, we have only again to repeat that, at the time of which we write, the place was neither more nor less than a quiet and comparatively secluded country village. Railway trains were only heard from afar—the shriek of the whistle coming to us over miles of quiet country. As children we were sometimes awakened from sleep during the night by the sound of this lonely, weird whistle, as the engine was engaged in shunting operations at the distant station, and we were wont to imagine that it betokened distress.

Railway travelling was not popular with our villagers. We preferred making the journey to and from the city by Johnny Glenn's post-car, which covered the distance three times each week—the horse, a veteran of long experience, being turned out to graze on the sides of the roads during the off days.

The farmers, when not requiring to take their horses on market-days, were accustomed to walk the distance (24 miles) there and back, carrying large baskets of butter and eggs, returning in same fashion with their purchases. When not convenient for the head of the household to attend market, the duty would be cheerfully undertaken by his wife or daughter.

This was before the present days of luxury and ease, when owing, no doubt, to the ever-increasing facilities of railway trains and tram cars, combined with modern diet and tight-lacing, we are able to support three doctors amongst us; while in those old times, our one local practitioner was glad to secure the additional offices of post-master and news-agent, in order to supplement his modest income.

On rare occasions the carrier would make the journey to Dublin and back, joining in with a dozen others of the same calling from different parts of the county, when they would travel together in jovial company, stop at the same inns, completing the double journey in a fortnight. On his return home the neighbours would come from far and near, anxious to hear the latest news from the Capital, and any remarkable experiences encountered on the road. The carrier was the "lion" of the place for many days to come.

The Banner of Ulster reached us occasionally—a copy would suffice for at least twelve families.
Postage was rather expensive, so we did not correspond much.

People discussed the news, congregated in little groups about the pump, or seated on the low wall of the Brig.

In summer nobody ever wore a coat except on Sabbaths or market days. A straw hat generally lasted a man ten years or more, at which time he would present it to his eldest son, or perhaps some farm labourer, who would make it last for ten years longer.

There was a style of soft felt hat which was very common amongst us. It could be doubled up and put in the pocket at church or public meetings. If the sun shone brightly we turned down the rim in front; if rain came on we turned it down all round.

A useful luxury amongst us was brown paper steeped in tobacco juice. It was more economical than tobacco itself, and could be enjoyed at times when we were too busy to smoke. This dainty, when allowed to lie in the cheek, gradually filled the mouth with pleasant juice, which had to be got rid of when speaking suddenly, answering a question, or returning a salutation. This was the reason of our customary silence when at work, and our comparative slowness in returning speech.

A stranger might have concluded that we did our business principally by leaning over the half doors of our shops, watching the traffic of the street, and commenting to each other on the passers-by. Such was far from being the case.

There may not have been any great rush of trade in the village, except on market days or Saturday evenings, and we scorned the shallow pretence of trying to appear busy when we were not; but, there were currents and under-currents not always apparent to an outsider's eye.

The shop-keepers were not to be judged by their head offices any more than a banking or insurance institution. Account had to be taken of their numerous and far-reaching agencies.

Johnny Glenn, besides his hotel and grocery establishment, owned two farms of land in the country. He was also proprietor of a stud of post horses, undertaker, timber and slate merchant, and agent for artificial manures.

The leading draper was also petty sessions clerk, auctioneer, and commissioner for the taking of affidavits.

Felix Dinsmore, the tailor, figured as an emigration agent, while Sandy Lowry, possessing, perhaps, the most unpretentious shop of any, zealously followed up the vocation of money-lender—his bonds and securities accumulating rapidly with the passing years.

Could the stranger aforesaid have been amongst us when we were preparing for the May
fair, or getting ready for potato planting, he would have formed a different opinion of our energy and zeal. The former operation somewhat resembled a present-day house cleaning, with this difference—that it was the outside of our premises we brightened up, not concerning ourselves much with the inside.

Potato-planting time found every man up and doing, bargaining with the neighbouring farmers as to ground space suitable to the extent of his midden. Then there was the carrying out of said midden through the kitchen or hall into the street, from whence it would be put into carts and conveyed to the fields. People followed behind their loads, with shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows, their whole attitude expressive of determination and resolve. There was no rest for man or horse until the work of planting had been completed; but when that was successfully accomplished, they waited with patience till the crop grew.

It was through no fault of our own that the contents of the middens had to be carried through kitchen or hall, the cattle going and coming the same way: it was before the back road was made.

We retained a lingering affection for the "auld style" calendar, and also for the former coinage—oftentimes catching ourselves speaking of "tenpenny-pieces," "fi'pennies," and "auld Geordies," the latter being our name for spade guineas.

We calculated time from one or other of three notable events—"the year the meal was so dear," "the year o' the big wun" (wind), or "the flood," the latter having no reference to the Deluge, but to a memorable three-days rain which occurred sometime in the "forties," when the villagers stood up to the waist in the river, fishing for corn stacks and hay ricks with pitchforks, before they got through under the arches of the Brig.

We talked much of the Rebellion or "turn-oout," taking pride in the part which some of our forefathers had played in it. Nothing could have made us so angry as hearing our ancestors jeered at and called "pike men," or to be reminded that the gallant patriots had gone to battle provided with grindstones for the occasional sharpening of their spears. It was a base calumny and unworthy of credence—almost as insulting as to be told that the brave men had fired on the soldiers from the insides of houses and shops.

Some of our most pleasant childish recollections are associated with Jamie Miskimmon, shoemaker, and Felix Dinsmore, tailor. The latter was passionately fond of children, although not having been blessed with any of his own. When he came round to work at country houses
he would sit cross-legged on the kitchen table, we youngsters clustering round amazed at the dexterity with which he plied his needle.

Felix was fond of hearing us sing the little songs we learned at school. To encourage us, his pockets were always well supplied with sweets, which he offered as rewards for our performances. We were naturally bashful, and it was hard to induce us to sing before strangers, but those little red and yellow fishes were irresistible. Our whole portfolio would soon be exhausted, and Felix would coax us to go right through the collection again, which we did, so long as the fishes lasted.

Jamie Miskimmon's principal charm for us lay in his "whangs." We cannot recall a time when Jamie was so busy that he would not lay aside the work on hand, and taking up a piece of fresh leather, would proceed, after his own manner, to manufacture for us a pair of these useful accessories. He never seemed to tire of our running in and out of his workshop.

On one memorable occasion Jamie narrowly saved us from a terrible disappointment. New boots were on order and had been promised for Saturday night. We sat pretty constantly in the shop from Thursday, joining him and Sally at their homely meals, but were compelled to leave on Saturday before the boots were finished, Jamie promising to bring them to our house during the evening. Eight o'clock came, but no word of Jamie; nine, but still he did not appear, and we were obliged to go to bed—we cried ourselves to sleep. It was a time of snow, and a fierce storm was raging. At ten o'clock the family retired to rest: the front door was fast being snowed up. About midnight the whole household were wakened up by a loud knocking. Thinking it to be some belated traveller who had lost his way in the snow, the door was opened with some difficulty, only to find Jamie with the boots. He was "afeared the weans wad be disappointed."

That was the night of the "big drift," when Sammy Ramsay of Tildree was found dead in his own stack-yard: having gone out to convoy a friend, he was unable to find his way back.
"FRACTIONS."
"FRACTIONS."

Chapter II.

The school-house faced the Market Square. It was a dingy, dilapidated-looking building, both inside and out.

A few rude desks and forms, well worn, and diminishing in size, owing to well applied and constant whittling with jack-knives; the master's desk in the corner, together with the usual wall covering of maps and alphabetical charts, completed the furnishing of the apartment.

There was a distinct air of disorder and untidiness about the place—the same might be said regarding not a few of its inhabitants.

The master, David Grahame, commonly called "Fractions," owing to his recognised ability for land measuring, and the puzzling calculations connected therewith, was a tall, well-built, fresh-complexioned man, with a somewhat marked cast of features, keen grey eyes, prominent nose, and a firmly set mouth. His age may have been fifty-five.

Many were the stories told of his talents and versatility—all going to prove to what heights he might have risen, had good luck appointed him to a wider field.
Not only had he laid the groundwork of some eminent scholars, and accomplished not a few wonderful geometrical and algebraical feats, but he also possessed a smattering of legal knowledge, which enabled him to be of much service in the drawing up of wills and agreements. Added to all this "the Master" displayed a distinct aptitude for theological argument and debate, having had more than one wordy tussle with the minister himself: the minister, it is said, coming off a good second.

Like other great men, "Fractions" had some weak points, one of which was his almost daily references to the brilliant men who had passed through his seminary.

"Jest think, boys," he would say, "o' Tam Forsythe—noo a professor in Cambridge University—writing tae me regularly, an' tellin' me he attributes a' his success tae the guid grindin' he got frae me, an' tae my discernment in finnin' oot what wus in 'im."

"Ay, Tam had a heid, an' sae has some o' ye, but ye lack his perseverance."

"It looks as if it was only the ither year since Tam was rinnin' aboot the streets, bare fittit' and bare legget', like the rest o' ye; but he respeckit' his teacher, an' was guid tae his folk."

When delivering himself in this fashion, "Fractions" was wont to clothe his sentences in half English, half vernacular; but when excited by the worries of his calling, or, more generally, by the stupidity or mischief-loving qualities of the scholars, he would lapse into pure vernacular.

"Fractions," if he happened to be in good humour, would make the announcement that, did we
work diligently during the day, and display good conduct, a battle would come off in the afternoon.

This announcement would be received with hearty cheers. The "battles," which were eagerly looked forward to, and much enjoyed, were arranged on the following principle:

Two of the best boys were selected—one Napoleon, the other Wellington. Each general chose his men, accepting or rejecting volunteers as he felt inclined. The armies would then confront each other; the men, in turn, asking questions of their opponents. Those who answered best stood longest up, and the victory fell to that general who had most men on the floor when time was called. "Fractions" watched the contest with keen interest, maintaining a strictly neutral position between the Powers.

Events frequently took unexpected turns, calling for interference, prompt and decided. The contending armies, worked up to the highest pitch of excitement, would often descend from a contest of knowledge to one of threats and blows, turning the school-room into a scene of the wildest disorder. It was then that "Fractions" stepped in as an outside Power, thrashed French and English alike, bringing the war to an abrupt termination.

Hostilities had been known to break out afresh immediately school was dissolved, to prevent which the "English" would sometimes be detained until the "French" had got home, or vice versa.

If "Fractions" cherished a partiality for any one branch of learning more than another it was certainly Geography. To that interesting study he bestowed more than usual time and attention, although in many instances parents rather discouraged his honest endeavours, when instructing him as to the lines on which their offsprings' education were to be conducted.

"Keep him at readin', writin', an' coontin', bit dinna waste his time on jography; for, efter a', whor's the use o' his learnin' the names o' a wheen o' places 'at he's niver likely tae see."

On one memorable occasion we achieved a signal triumph, though geography was by no means our strong point. A competition was going on as to who could most quickly point out on the map the places selected by the master. The locality of the Carpathian mountains proved too much for even the cleverest. One after another tried in vain. The master, at first disappointed, became furious, causing the whole class to tremble beneath his withering glance. It came our turn; so, taking the pointer, we walked boldly to the map, pointing at random straight before us. By strange good luck, we, like "Homocea," touched the spot. "Fractions"
was ecstatic. “Good boy: cleverly done: go to
the head of the class. You’re a credit to your
teacher and yourself.” We bore our honours
calmly—met, unblushingly and unflinchingly,
the suspicious glances darted in our direction by
our less fortunate classmates. Had we been
asked to substantiate our superior knowledge, by
indicating the whereabouts of the adjacent
countries of Galacia or Moldavia, we would in all
probability have found ourselves in our usual
place in the class.

Elocution was another art in which “Frac-
tions” took considerable pride.

“Hold up ye’r heads, like men,” he would
say, “an’ dinna be fear’d tae let oot ye’r voices.”

Somewhat fierce was the expression of his
countenance, and dangerous the attitude, as he
would proceed to demonstrate to the school the
manner in which “The Burial of Sir John Moore”
ought to be most effectively rendered. Vigorous,
though by no means ungraceful, were his ges-
tures, and uncertain his positions, making it
safer for those of us especially who were bare-
footed to admire the performance from a
respectful distance.

It was, perhaps, in “Lord Ullin’s Daughter”
that his full oratorical powers were best dis-
played. Catching up the spirit of the piece, he
was wont to give full play to his imagination,
his voice at times melting with the agonized
pleadings of the maiden, or ringing out in the
hopeless entreaties of the grief-stricken father.

A certain wintry afternoon will ever live in
our memory. There had been a heavy fall of
snow. All nature was hushed. Men and horses
passed and re-passed the school-room windows,
making no noise. Great banks of clouds hung
suspended in the air; already the feathery flakes
were again beginning to fall.

Such a day always gave us a weird feeling
of melancholy, accompanied by a longing desire
to get home to loved ones, cluster round the
bright fire-side, curtains drawn, doors and win-
dows barred. The piece chosen for recitation
on this particular afternoon was another favourite
of the master’s, beginning with the lines:

“On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow.”

Graphically was the piece delivered. When
it came to a close there was a hushed silence in
school, which almost immediately dispersed.
The boys made off, leaping and bounding,
boisterous in the enjoyment of their freedom,
and were soon engaged in active snowballing.
As for us, we hurried home, our minds filled with
strange pictures of snow saturated with blood,
corpses lying with ghastly upturned faces, and
the dark river “rolling rapidly.”

We would awake at midnight and hear the
fierce wind roaring in the chimneys, and imagine
we heard the "beat of drums," and saw rude graves dug in the snow-covered ground, the bodies of the brave fellows who had fallen, their martial cloaks around them, being lowered into them, and we would bury our heads in the clothes and lie trembling for hours.

Schoolmasters, one and all, require a more than ordinary endowment of patience. "Fractions" was deficient in that quality. His changes of mood were frequent as they were unexpected.

"Boys, will ye learn? What can a' dae tae coax ye tae pay attention? Wull a' go doon on ma bare, bended knees, an' intreat ye tae keep ye'r eyes on ye'r books?" Suddenly he would detect a grin on some not too intelligent countenance, which would produce the same effect as a red rag on a bull. With eyes aflame, face purple with rage, "Fractions" would brandish his pointer in the air, and break forth into maledictions.

"Ye rascally set o' dunces an' idlers—for ye'r naethin' else—wastin' ye'r ain time, an' ye'r parents' money: a'll mak' ye learn, or ken the reason why. If fair means hae nae effect, we'll try hoo the rod'll agree wi' ye"; and suit the action to the word he would lay round him vigorously, causing the now cowering malefactors to fly right and left.

The storm would subside as quickly as it arose, and the poor man, knowing he had gone too far, would set about trying to make amends.

"Now, boys, ye know a' dinna mean a' that a' say, but ye'r ongoins are sometimes like tae drive me mad."

"Frankie Todd, you an' Nattie Crowe, tak' this penny an' buy half a pun' o' apples, an' divide them roon' as far as they'll go."

"Bring me, as weel, a pennyworth o' 'black lumps' tae be given round the infants' class—if they a' behave till the afternoon."

Matters thus assuming a more pacific aspect, we would apply ourselves with diligence to our tasks, in anticipation of the expected treat in store for us later on.

Half an hour before closing time the longed-for and ever-welcome "black lumps" would be brought forth from the hidden recesses of the master's coat-tail pockets, and handed round the class. The process began with the head boy, who was allowed to suck the "lump" for an all too short period, when he would be required to relinquish it to his next neighbour; "Fractions" watching the while that no boy detained the luxury too long, or sank his teeth in it.

Many and various were the pranks played on the master by his frolicsome subjects; his every little weakness being considered fair game for their skill.

Runaway knocks were, perhaps, all things considered, the most harmless of these boyish
freaks, although quite sufficient to put the master into a state of temporary excitement. The manager felt it his duty to occasionally visit the school, as also did the rector. On such occasions it was only natural for "Fractions" to wish to appear in his best aspect; but waggish hands could imitate to a nicety the knocks of these functionaries, which would bring the master to the door, wearing his most bland and respectful demeanour, only to find no person in sight.

"Please, sir, the Inspector's comin'," was an intimation startling to master and scholars alike, causing a hush, distinct as it was unusual. The master would be the first to recover himself.

"Are ye sure it was the Inspector ye saw?"
"Yis, sir."
"Where was he when ye saw him?"
"Comin' up the street in the direction o' Miss Hopkin's school."
"Could ye no be mista'en?"
"A' knowed him by his lang coat, an' the black bag, hinging from his shuther by a strap."
"Well, boys" (good English was now indispensable), "we must not be disgraced. He cannot be here for an hour, so let us set to work and tidy up."

"Gather up all stray books, slates, and ink-bottles, which put in their proper places. Remember: 'a place for everything, and everything in its proper place.'"

"Sprinkle the floor, an' sweep it clean. How often have I told you that this should be done first thing every morning."

"Davy Lindsay, go off home as fast as your legs can carry you, get your mother to wash your face, an' redd your hair. You, Bobbie Simms, live too far away to go home: run to the pump and wash yourself, and take my handkerchief with you for drying."

"The roll has not been called for a week: while I enter it up, all get your copy-books, and work diligently. If ye do me credit, ye'll get off at two o'clock, as soon as the Inspector leaves the toon."

When all preparations had been completed, it would be intimated to "Fractions" that a mistake had been made. The person taken for the Inspector was just then passing down the street, and was discovered to be a tea traveller on circuit. The relief thus caused to all concerned made it easy to establish a plea of "mistaken identity": but more than one boy knew better.

A more inhuman practical joke, and one which had the effect of drawing from "Fractions" language not expressive of blessing on the heads of the perpetrators thereof, was called forth by the good man's nervous dread of fire. There was no calamity he so much feared; making a point of raking out the embers from the grate
every afternoon, the moment school was dismissed. In anticipation of this, the handles of both poker and tongs would be carefully warmed between the bars, and it was only natural that the culprits should be inclined to linger for a moment outside the door, in order not to miss the “blessings” which would be fervently invoked on their heads and hands.

The most notable of the many surprises ever given to “Fractions” happened on the day following a big storm, and its successful accomplishment required co-operation. A good-sized tree was trailed from the brig—where it had been blown down—by a dozen willing hands, and skilfully propped up against the school-room door. A polite knock was then given, which brought the master, wearing his most genial smile. What followed when “Fractions” and the tree got disengaged had, perhaps, better remain unchronicled.

The sympathetic side of the master’s nature was prominently brought out by his kindness to and care of his only child, a crippled girl of eight summers. Some undue exposure to cold had brought on the fell disease from which the poor child suffered almost from infancy.

The grief of the parents was pitiful to witness. All that medical skill could suggest was done, but the limb remained crooked, and the constitution frail.

Homely remedies were recommended by neighbours, consisting chiefly of herbs and sea-weed. “Fractions” spent days on the hill-sides searching for the herbs, and walked each Saturday some sixteen miles for the purpose of procuring the sea-weed. Vigorous and long-sustained hand rubbing was said to have worked wonders in similar cases. The master took the child into his own bed, denied himself rest or sleep, so assiduously did he apply the process of rubbing, soothing the little sufferer with a mother’s tenderness. Remedies were unavailing. The little feet would never again patter through the house or up the stairs. Never more would the little form be seen bounding merrily along the garden walk, in order to be the first to catch the father’s kiss, or clamber on to his knee before he had got well seated. The life was spared, however, for twelve years, though it was a life of much suffering; and in stature the child never attained much beyond that of an infant.

A day came, at length, when the fettered spirit became free—the tired, worn-out little form was laid to rest. The coffin, measuring scarcely four feet, was carried by the heart-broken father himself to a quiet corner in the old graveyard.

Soon after this “Fractions” retired from the active duties of teaching, spending the remainder of his days with his faithful and devoted wife in the management of their little farm. Their one
and only treasure which had been lent them for a time was gone before, and their only desire was to comfort each other through life, and rejoin their loved one in that “Better Land” at God’s appointed time.

The wife was taken first, and “Fractions,” now that all his props were gone, lingered behind her for only a year. His funeral was the largest that had been seen in the neighbourhood for many years.

A modest headstone, beneath a yew tree, contains the schoolmaster’s family history in the following lines:

Here lie the bodies of
David Grahame,
and his devoted wife, Susannah;
also their daughter,
Mary Priscilla Grahame.

“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.”

Hab. xii. 6.
THE QUAIN T PASTOR OF A QUAIN T CONGREGATION.

Chapter III.

THE Rev. Patrick M'Allister, minister of the Seceding congregation, was an old man, of a type that has altogether vanished with the past.

Social, kind, benevolent, merciful in his judgment, he was altogether lovable. The villagers summed up his character and put it in a nutshell when they said, "He's a man ye canna help baith likin' an' respeckin'."

Mr. M'Allister had, besides, what was, perhaps, the rarest grace of all—in those days, as well as now—a contented disposition: contented with his lot in life, his church, and congregation. His income was at no time larger than that of a handy man-of-all-work; yet, who ever heard him complain? Good health, plain diet, congenial work, an attached people—all these he possessed, and wanted nothing more.

He was one of the handsomest old men it has ever been our lot to meet. Complexion ruddy, features pleasing; his hair and beard were white as wool, the former curling gracefully about his neck and shoulders.

Affable and courteous to all, even the veriest
tramp would have received nothing worse from his lips than a word of good advice.

There was about him, withal, a certain dignity of manner and bearing which protected him from the inroads of the forward—as Jamie Miskimmon often said: "Ye jest feel'd that ye cud go sae far, but nae farther wi' him."

His style of address and pulpit delivery were somewhat cramped and hesitating, but we willingly overlooked these trifling defects in face of his many sterling qualities.

Eccentric he may have been, but to our minds his little peculiarities only lent grace to his actions, and had become so much a part of himself that we ceased to regard them as eccentricities at all.

"A wee thocht odd," or, "No jest like ither folk," were the worst that were ever said concerning him.

True, he talked to himself when walking about his fields (there was an acre of ground attached to the manse, which was divided into four plots) or in going along the road—generally repeating, it was said, the sermon under preparation—but, where was the better way of occupying spare time, or dispelling worldly thoughts?

He had a habit of carrying his hat in his hand if the weather was at all mild, so that we were quite accustomed, on rounding a corner of the road, or even in the village street, to meet him engaged in animated delivery, gently "laying it off" with his right hand; but nobody thought it anything strange. We took no notice of him at such times—he would not have noticed us if we had, for his thoughts were afar.

One thing Mr. M'Allister never did—preoccupied though he might be—he never refused a beggar an alms. If he had not the money about him he would borrow it from a neighbour passing—more than likely never again remembering the debt—but the needy would not be turned away empty.

He often went an errand to the village, and came back having completely forgotten what he went for, and, in consequence, would be obliged to return for it. In this way the village saw him generally four or five times each day.

Pastoral calls would be made on these occasions, and he had been known to take tea in three different houses of an afternoon, joining his wife, as usual, at their five o'clock meal—never remembering what had gone before.

The manse was distant only two fields from our house, so he often found himself at our door instead of his own, only detecting the mistake when endeavouring to find the place for his latch-key, which our door did not boast of. On such occasions we expressed no surprise if we happened to be sitting at the window and saw him hurrying away.
He was accustomed to pay us two visits each day—sometimes more. Seldom had he much news to communicate, yet we were always glad to see him. His very presence seemed to put us in good humour. Though coming so often, he was never wearisome, nor did he ever grow too familiar. We could never forget he was a clergyman, and a gentleman.

When he went with his wife for their customary week at the sea-side each summer, we called to say good-bye on the evening before departure, on which occasions he always gave us his blessing, but we knew we had not seen the last of him. He would be sure to drop round later in the evening, and also just look in for a moment next morning before finally setting off.

As the distance from home was only twelve miles, he was certain to come back at least once during the week's holiday, to see that all was going right in the parish.

Possessing a rich fund of anecdotes, the old minister had the gift of bringing them in on the most opportune occasions—enjoying their humour every bit as much as his audience. The stories were, to our minds, enhanced by the names, dates, and localities being mostly supplied.

We always felt as if he had a kind of fatherly affection for the characters he played with.

One story relating to his native place he used to tell with great glee. It was at the time when railways were first introduced amongst us. Some country fellows having got into the train for the first time (the third-class compartments had no roofs in those days), were not a little nervous regarding the journey. They all sat with eyes closed, with the exception of one, Sam Jameson, more daring than the others, who kept a sharp look-out ahead. The carriages were felt to be rocking considerably, and they were approaching the mouth of a tunnel. Sam, losing control of himself entirely, shook up his companions, crying out: “Rise boys! we may hae tae jump, for, bi ma sang, am 'feared she'll miss the hole.” He generally took his leave before the merriment had subsided.

While rehearsing his sermon, Mr. M'Allister was accustomed to walk round and round the manse fields bareheaded, and often without coat or vest. A stranger would have been puzzled at the sight, but we who had known him so long did no more than bestow a passing glance—even the mill workers were too well-mannered to betray the least surprise or curiosity.

The sermon was, of course, preached extempore—nothing else would have befitted a Seceding minister, or a Seceding congregation. No pretence was made to much study, nor did the method demand much. There may not have been a great flow of original thought in the
discourse, but plenty of Scripture; and that was, after all, the main point, in our estimation.

A favourite text was from St. John, 3rd chap. and 3rd verse: “Except a man be born again,” etc.; and we would be at once referred to the third chapter of the Book of Genesis—the greater part of which would be read, as showing how sin first entered into the world. Then would follow a number of connecting clauses, gleaned from various other Books, all bearing on sin. Next in order our attention would be directed to several lengthy passages in Exodus and Leviticus, pertaining to the Mosaic Laws of Sacrifice and Atonement. The whole of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah would be read as foretelling the Saviour to come, and this also would be supplemented by frequent references to the minor Prophets—thus bringing us to the end of the first “Head.”

We would then be carried back right through the Bible—this time commencing at Revelations, for the purpose of introducing the second “Head,” and finding out something about the Kingdom of God. If these two heads were properly expounded at the end of an hour and a half, we felt that the subject had received clever handling, and were ready for the “application” following, in which we were warned against certain vices—such as theatre-going, gambling, and Sabbath-breaking.

With that generosity peculiar to sermon hearing, we thought we could well afford to bestow these well-meant admonitions to our neighbours in the large cities. Few of us had ever seen a theatre—much less entered one; and as for card-playing, we never played for money, but only for hens and ducks. In the matter of Sabbath-breaking, we would have been ashamed to have been seen even in the fields on a Sabbath afternoon; for, by the time we had committed to memory six questions from the shorter catechism, together with the “proofs,” also from three to four parts of the 119th Psalm, we were glad to refresh ourselves by reading a few chapters from the “Saint’s Rest,” or Boston’s “Fourfold State.”

Any account of Mr. M’Allister’s sermons would be incomplete without honourable mention of a few pet words and phrases which were always added, for the purpose of raising the tone of the discourse above the level. We not only knew these all by rote, but were accustomed to use them as milestones—judging pretty accurately from their occurrence how far we had advanced in the discourse. Thus: “Like an oasis in the desert” we knew as almost always coming in near to the close of the first “Head.”

“Prosopopeia” was an immense favourite, exciting both our admiration and wonder. It was never by any chance omitted; and, indeed, a sermon would have been considered tame and
incomplete without its appearance. Like good wine, it came near the last of the third "Head," we hailing it as the weary voyagers the first sight of land.

None of the neighbouring clergymen ever got beyond the word "Mesopotamia," which was considered very poor in comparison—though, for aught we knew to the contrary, both words might have had the same meaning.

We lost much of the good of the closing exercises by over-anxiety in regard to being first out. Although taking the precaution to lift our caps from under the seat before getting up to sing the last psalm, and also unbuttoning the seat door before the commencement of the Benediction, still there was a risk of our not being the first to reach the outer door, and we often felt ourselves forced to join the stampede before the closing words were said.

Our manner of going into the meeting-house also differed considerably from that adopted now-a-days. We always remained on the green, or about the porch, until the first psalm was being read; when we would march to our seats in companies of six or more—our speed increasing as we gained the front of the building. Nobody ever heard the reading of this first psalm. Once a strange minister stopped in the middle of it and steadily looked at us as we filed in. We, in turn, glanced up at him for a moment, when we had got inside our pews, and before sitting down, when seeing him still regarding us we concluded that he was absent-minded.

Nancy Carmichael, the sextoness, embraced the opportunity, while we were all bowed at the first prayer, to rake out the bars of the stove, and empty in a bucketful of coke.

The last of us had generally come in with the rush that followed the ending of the first prayer, excepting "Scobes," who hardly ever made his appearance till almost the commencement of the sermon. "Scobes" was a "natural"—uncouth in manner and dress—his nether limbs being always encased in plaited straw.

"Scobes" never wore any head covering—wet weather or dry. Both hair and beard grew long and matted. A loose swag of a coat covered his person, tied round the waist by another rope, in which he always wore a rusty shearing hook, which came in useful when boys were inclined to be too familiar.

The old man cut a grotesque figure as he shambled up the aisle, taking his seat on the lower step of the pulpit. During service he amused himself by looking over the congregation; but during the interval in which the collection was taken up, he was in the habit of venturing some personal remarks—mostly concerning love affairs, in which he took a keen
interest, apparently gathering much gossip in
his travels through the country.

People sometimes shook their heads at him
on such occasions, and threatened expulsion,
but he could never be induced to forbear these
uncalled-for remarks.

Only once during sermon time had “Scobes”
been known to lose command of himself, or in
any way interrupt the harmony of the service. It
was on a sultry summer day—a day in which
even the most interested listeners had difficulty
in keeping themselves awake.

A timid little mouse had crept out shyly from
its hole under the pulpit, and finding all quiet,
commenced to gambol about the floor. “Scobes”
ever knew until he saw the little animal between
his feet—attracted no doubt by the said straw
bands which ornamented his legs. With a wild
scream the poor “natural” started up, crying:
“Oh Lord, Mr. M’Allister, a moose! a moose!”
The minister merely paused for a moment in his
exposition, trying to look severely at “Scobes”
over his spectacles, but it was Humphrey Barr,
the precentor, who leaned over his box and gave
the idiot a sharp crack on the crown with his
psalm book; and thus was order restored.

“Scobes” was not without a fair share of
mother wit, as shown in the following anecdotes:

Mr. M’Allister once tried to rebuke him for
his dilatoriness in coming into the meeting-house.

“Weel, yer reverance,” answered “Scobes,”
“a’ may be last in, but a’m maistly first oot.”

On the occasion of the death of an old Arch-
bishop of Canterbury some wags informed
“Scobes” that he should apply for the vacancy.
The old man met Mr. M’Allister and sounded
him on the subject.

“Is’t true, yer reverance, that the Arch
Beeshop’s deed?”

“Quite true, ‘Scobes’; the good man has
passed away.”

“They tell me a’ micht get his place, an’
that you cud bespeak it for me.”

“Well, ‘Scobes,’” answered the minister
good-naturedly, “I was seriously thinking of
applying for the office myself.”

“Dis no the body need an assistant?”

“Undoubtedly—more than one.”

“What’s the nixt below an Arch Beeshop?”

“I should say a Bishop, ‘Scobes.’”

“Weel then, yer reverance, if ye get me the
place, I’ll mak’ ye my assistant.”

Mr. M’Allister was accustomed to repeat this
anecdote of his eccentric parishioner with much
enjoyment.

The congregation felt satisfied if the service
ended any time about three o’clock, which was
thought to be a respectable hour for “skaling.”

One of our most humiliating experiences took
place on a rare occasion when Mr. M’Allister
was necessitated to engage a "supply." The said supply was a newly-fledged probationer, who, not content with completely altering our form of worship by adding on extra psalms and intermittent prayers, put us off with a sermonette lasting only three-quarters of an hour, thus bringing the service to a close a little after two o'clock. We left the sacred building slowly enough that day. We could not go to our homes, for we would have been ashamed to meet the Braehead or Tildree congregations three miles from the village, instead of less than half that distance; so "we just waited aboot," as auld Gawn Brannion said, "till the bit whupper-snapper o' a body had whusket through the gate, an' awa doon the street in the direction o' Johnny Glenn's inn; an' then we daundered through amang the graves, sat doon on the toomstanes, or the dyke backs, crackin' or smokin', an' sae pit in the time till the hour cam' when it wus befittin' for us tae gang hame."
EXT in order to Mr. M'Allister came Humphrey Barr, the precentor—at least, so thought he himself, although we were in no way disposed to pay him that undue deference which he seemed inclined to expect. He never could impress us with awe in the way he would have liked, although when in his official capacity in the box he put on superior airs (no pun intended)—looking down at us in a most condescending fashion.

We merely looked on Humphrey as the raiser of the tunes; for which we paid him five pounds a year; but once on the tune, we reserved to ourselves the right of singing it in our own way, and in our own favourite keys. We allowed Humphrey time to take his breath at the end of each stanza until we came up with him. On old Mattha McGavick the whole congregation had to wait; for, Mattha being "a wee hard o' hearin'," was deprived of the benefit of our unison—whatever it may have been worth—and kept singing on by himself until he felt the old woman tugging at his sleeve. Eventually, Mattha gave up singing entirely—complaining that
"atween the auld wife dunchin' on the yin side, an' Betty Ann [his daughter] pookin' his coat tails on the ither, it was impossible tae get peace tae sing wi' ony degree o' comfort."

We always suspected a deeper reason, for Mattha was known to be much prejudiced in favour of the "Twal Tunes," while Humphrey had of late, on his own responsibility, introduced new ones having "repeats," which indeed were not much relished by any of us.

Mattha denounced these innovation melodies in no gentle terms:

"A wheen o' lilts, no fit for the hoose o' God; we micht as weel be singin' 'Rory o' More' or 'Nora Creina.'"

"It's little short o' Popery, expeckin' sober folk tae join in the rantin' o' sic whurlygigs, that are mair befittin' cirquis dancers."

Although we refused to be guided altogether by Humphrey Barr, yet we could not help entertaining for him a certain amount of respect—at least for his musical genius. We were ready to admit that he could "licht on the richt tune" more frequently than most of us. We had also seen him in cases of emergency warding off complete failure by sheer pluck and perseverance.

On one occasion he led us through four double verses of the 83rd psalm, never having got settled on any tune in particular. Starting with "New London," we changed on to "St. David's," finishing up with a mixture of "Balerma" and "Martyrdom." It was "Artaxerxes" he wanted to be at.

Perhaps Humphrey's greatest triumph happened on a certain Sacrament Sabbath, when he had the misfortune to start the concluding stanzas of the 116th psalm to the tune of "Old Hundred" instead of "Coleshill," just as we were preparing to go forward to the first table. We trembled for Humphrey that day, but by extra careful management he brought us successfully through.

Had the psalm been the 67th or the second version of the 143rd, the task would have been more difficult; although, after that performance, we had got to believe that under Humphrey's guidance we could have accomplished anything in Church psalmody.

What might be likened to a musical competition took place on a certain Sabbath, when Humphrey had the misfortune to raise "Arlington" exactly an octave above the authorized note. We tried our best to follow him up the scale until even our best "falsetto" efforts came far short of attainment. Jamie Miskimmon was in the habit of singing an octave and a half below the ordinary at all times, so one half the congregation joined Jamie's lead, whilst those more venturesome, or of stronger lungs, kept up with Humphrey so far as they were able. We
hoped for a compromise; but Humphrey was on his mettle, and Jamie was determined, each holding his ground till the end.

We were, on the whole, a contented, harmonious people all during Mr. M'Allister's ministry; but after his decease—when the "new man" had been installed, Sabbath schools, paraphrases, and prayer-meetings introduced, and the old pulpit replaced by a railed-in enclosure called a platform—we thought we would get rid of Humphrey and form a choir.

It was a somewhat hard matter, the broaching of it to the old precentor; but, of course, we got up a presentation for him, said complimentary things regarding his past service, and felt sure he would see eye to eye with us in this question of modern improvement.

Humphrey said little. He accepted the presentation—May rent was fast approaching—but during the ensuing week he went to the meeting-house, brought away his books and cushion, and on the following Sabbath went over to the Covenanters.

Nothing in this world completely comes up to our ideas of perfect felicity—not even a meeting-house choir. The schoolmaster of Tildree undertook the responsibility of forming and training the new choir, but it took us a long time to get accustomed to his rapid and slipshod method of hurrying over the stanzas. We were often at a loss to recognise even the most familiar tunes, so different did they appear under the schoolmaster's modern execution. Mattha McGavick was dead some time before—we were thankful for that.

At times there was friction even amongst the choir's own members. The schoolmaster, on an occasion, found it necessary to point out some trivial fault to the tenors: next Sabbath he was three members short (the tenors are believed to be the most sensitive of all a choir's component parts). One or two of the females had to be gently spoken to anent their habit of coming in late, as well as considerable giggling during sermon time. Not a single soprano or alto put in an appearance at the evening service; and it took the schoolmaster a full week apologising, coaxing, and entreaty, before he could prevail on the young ladies to return. Finally, the schoolmaster himself received a severe reprimand from the pulpit on account of the prolonged attention he bestowed on the trimming of his finger-nails, from the time the text was given out until the close of the sermon. This time it took the session and committee almost a fortnight to make up the breach.

Some of us were almost inclined to follow Humphrey to the Covenanters. Others would have joined the Methodists, only for the hymns and harmonium.
A CONVERTED CALVINIST.
AMIE MISKIMMON was one of the deepest thinkers and keenest controversialists the village boasted of.

A trifle bigoted he may have been, but we overlooked that in face of his strictly conscientious principles and general consistency, according to his lights.

In appearance, Jamie was tall and of spare build, with shoulders slightly stooped. His features were plain, but relieved and lit up by a pair of most kindly brown eyes. The mouth, too, was expressive of much humour, though, when its owner was engaged in absorbing thought or meditation, it was wont to assume a rather severe and puckered-up aspect. His hair was black as a raven's wing, worn long over his ears—probably on account of his deafness.

Unlike most deaf people, Jamie's voice was soft and low, with a musical ring in it that was very pleasing.

Hard-working and thrifty, the shoemaker was said to be in comfortable circumstances, having a goodish bit of money past him, laid up for old age.
He was never the same man since his only son took to foolish habits and bad companionships, ending up by his going off to America. As a child, this son (he was an only child) had shown much promise, giving cause for high parental hopes. On reaching man's estate, however, he became impatient of restraint and home influences, finding the roof of a "guid auld Seceder" too low for his increasing stature.

Some would have it that his mother was too indulgent, to counteract which the father felt it necessary to be rather severe. There is often a time in a young man's life when an extra yard or two of line may secure him better than a too sudden jerk, and this the best meaning of parents often overlook.

Anyhow, young Miskimmon decided to emigrate—requesting his father to give him the portion of goods which he considered should fall to his share. This Jamie flatly refused to do. He offered to advance the young fellow his passage money, together with a small sum to provide for his wants in the new country until such times as work would turn up, but further he would not go.

"The money a' hae sweat for," he observed, "ye'll neither drink it nor smoke it. Ye'll ken best the value o' money gin ye earn it": and on these terms they parted.

Jamie said little to anybody, but it was plainly to be seen that a burden lay heavy on his heart. He tried to comfort the old woman by reminding her that "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth"—that they, perhaps, were guilty of idolatry, and this was the Almighty's way of bringing them to see their sin; besides, who could tell but that the erring one might, in God's good time, be brought to himself, and find out by worldly experience the value of evil companionships in comparison with a father's and mother's unselfish love. They could only commit their child—he was still their child—to that Father, without whose permission "even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground."

On the first night of his departure, young Miskimmon maintained a careless, buoyant demeanour. A new and enlarged world was before him—the old, narrow, cramped associations were left behind. There was no end to his ambition and wild dreams of success. At twenty-one the world is for him who goes forth to conquer. Others had prospered—why should not he? Could he have seen at that moment the grief-stricken couple, left lonely and desolate, bowed at their lowly altar, and pleading, wrestling, with their Heavenly Father, that He might have pity and compassion on their wandering boy—might bring him to a sense of his ingratitude, and, most of all, check him in his present career, that could only end in destruction.
—surely he would have paused and reflected even then. Dearly bought is the cup of pleasure in which is mingled the blood of a father's or mother's broken heart.

Time went on. The youth landed on strange soil, having, as it were, a new world before him. Loosed from old companionships and associations, he had a renewed chance of turning over a new leaf. His improvement or retrogression depended, to a large extent, on himself.

The old couple, taking up their cross, pursued, with blighted hopes and saddened spirits, their customary occupations. They were cheerful withal, and trustful, remembering that their boy, go where he might, could never get beyond the bounds of a Heavenly Father's love, or the privileges promised to a child of grace.

Jamie, being "an auld Seceder," was, as a matter of course, a confirmed Calvinist. He had been an elder of long standing in the old meeting-house of the First Congregation during Mr. M'Allister's ministry, but lifted his credentials when the "new man" was installed, who did not believe in the eternal destruction of infants unbaptized into the fellowship of the Church; and who also held loose views on the question of marriage—that is, had been known to perform the ceremony outside the sacred building of the meeting-house.

Jamie now worshipped with the members of the Second Congregation, but was non-commisioned, and found much to disagree with in the recognised forms and ordinances—much that was to his mind, at variance with the "code."

He would undoubtedly have found still more deficiencies in the matter of doctrine, had it not so happened that this minister was of weaker voice than he of number one congregation, whereby Jamie's deafness came in opportunely to save him from hearing much of the objectionable modern new school theology. This minister also believed in paraphrases, but used them with discretion—merely giving one out occasionally at the closing exercises, on which occasion Jamie lifted his hat and quietly walked out.

 Asked by a friend how he enjoyed sitting under the present minister, Jamie answered, "Weel, it micht be waur, but a' hae a heap tae thole."

On another occasion he ventured an opinion of Mr. Spurgeon in the following terms: "He's a cliver body—weel inclined, an' wi' a rare gift o' the gab, but, a' wudna gie a fig for his theology."

Jamie waxed eloquent on occasions when he was requested to take part in the Wednesday evening prayer-meetings. His ideas were clothed in language that would have done credit to a college professor.

A somewhat defective education, combined with an inherent nervousness, often led him into
curious complications when expounding a chapter or delivering an address at a prayer or cottage meeting.

"My freens, a' wud direck yer attention to the 3rd chapter o' the Epistle o' Paul tae the Acts o' the Apos'les," was an announcement he made on one such occasion.

He often worked himself into a state of intense excitement when finding it expedient to hold us over the mouth of the pit, for our warning and ultimate good.

"The lake o' fire, can ye imagine it, brethren? I can. If a' the seas, an' rivers, an' lakes in the hale warl' wur emptied intae it, they wud hae nae mare effeck than that on a het griddle" (licking his thumb and portraying an imaginary rub).

That which lingered long in Jamie's memory, causing him much conflict, and, who knows, humiliation as well, was a heated argument he held with Felix Dempster concerning Revival work. Felix, originally a Seceder, had come round towards the Evangelical school; whilst Jamie, as we know, had not the slightest leaning in the direction of new-fangled ideas—no matter in what form they appeared.

Felix had read much and seen much of the wonderful effects of sudden conversions, which went a long way towards opening his eyes and enlarging his mind.

One morning, in conversation, he boldly announced to Jamie that he saw nothing in conversions—even the most sudden and unlooked for—incompatible with the teaching of Scripture.

Jamie was first incredulous and then indignant. "Man, the hale thing's incompatible wi' Scriptur' teachen, an' wi' common-sense as weel."

"Am a' tae yield ma' judgment an' forfeit a' that iver a' haelearnt, by acceptin' the doctrine o' a' when o' rantin', hime-singin' fanaticks—throwin' up their hans, fallin' doon on the grun', rowin ower ither a time or twa, an' then jumpin' up, shootin' 'Hallelujah'? They're blin'ly led, an' niver beyont the gall o' bitterness, an' the bond o' eneeky."

"No bit what thir impident, blasphemous teachers ir' mair tae blame than the silly dupes themsel's; bit, the hale thing's the wark o' the deevil, such as hes been propheseed as tae come in these latter days."

"But, Jamie," said Felix, "what div ye mak' oot o' the great time o' Pentecoost, whor thoosans wur converted in yin day?"

"Yin day wi' the Lord is as a thoosan' years."

"Ay, but, Jamie," said the tailor, in nowise staggered, "what say ye aboot Saul o' Tarsus? Wull ye no alloo 'at his conversion wus instan-tannious?"

"A'll alloo," answered Jamie, "that the Lord can work wunners an' mericles, whun it shoots
Him sae tae dae—settin’ yin up, an’ inither doon—a’ for His ain glory an’ oor guid; but, dinna tell me that His way o’ bringin’ in the lost sheep o’ the hoose o’ Israel ‘ll iwer be by ony sic play-actin’ displays as we see amang us noo-a-days.”

“Sic things as election, predestination—even conviction itsel’, an’ repentance—are har’ly yinst name’t amang them. Man, Felix, ye micht as weel try tae read without kennin’ the A.B.C’s.”

“But, Jamie, ye’ll admit these meetins are no sae much for the like o’ you or me, that hae had a godly up-bringin’, an’ wur rooted an’ grundet in the faith—har’ly minin’ a time whun we were outside the fold—sae gradual wus oor conversion brung aboot; but, they are for the ignorant an’ the outcast, an’ why shud ye puzzle them wi’ doctrines, the very names o’ which they maybe niver heard tell o’.”

“Converted they ir, without doot; an’ wud ye keep them ootside the gate o’ the kingdom till sic times as they hae learned a’ aboot an abstroose doctrine like predestination?—a doctrine that hes puzzled the deepest thinkers—even you an’ me cud har’ly understan’ a’ its meanen’ unless we tak’ it wi’ ither connections.”

“Why, Jamie, man, it’s yerseil’ that wud expeck these cratur’s tae read, without kennin’ the letters—ye wud expeck them tae read even Latin an’ Greek. Na, na, first let them intae the meetin’-hoose, an’, whun inside, if they happen tae see ‘Election’ prented in big letters up above the pulpit, they may then begin tae inquire the meanen’ o’ t; an’ ’ll likely fin’ oot that if they hadna been elecket, they wud a’ had nae inclination tae come in ava.”

“Ye can hand on tae ye’r ain opeenion, Felix, although a’ thoicht ye’r hopes wur built on a sounder foundation; but, gie me the man that rassles an’ groans under conviction, then consults the elders, wha wull let him hae a sicht o’ himsel’ in the luckin’-gless o’ God’s ain word, that’ll maybe mak’ him seek for mony a day a place o’ repentance, before it please the Almighty tae mak’ plain tae him the way o’ salvation.”

“Well, Jamie, ye may be richt or ye may be wrang, but it’s possible for a man tae dae a’ that ye say, an’ yet be trustin’ sae much in his ain pairt, an’ sae little in God’s, that he only hinners the work o’ grace in his heart; while these puir craters jest tak’ the Almichty at His word, an’ yield up tae Him their burden instead o’ carryin’ it aboot till they can carry it nae langer.”

Jamie was in no way convinced. Many stories reached him about the spread of the good work over all the land, and of the wonderful results having taken place on the most unlikely subjects, but he only shook his head in a half-scornful fashion—betaking himself the more to an earnest study of the Prophecies and the Confession of Faith.
One Sabbath morning Jamie and the “auld wummin” were on their way to the meeting-house (they were always early in order to have a quarter of an hour’s quiet meditation before the commencement of service), when, meeting the postman in the middle of the street, he handed Jamie a letter. Without the aid of their glasses the old couple saw from the handwriting on the envelope that it was from their son.

No wonder they both trembled, for the boy had now been away for three years, and this was the first letter they had received from him.

It was with unsteady step the couple gained their pew; but the meeting-house was empty—the Sabbath school having just dispersed—so there was no one to observe or criticize.

“Wull ye appin it, Jamie?—am sure it can be nae harm, when it’s frae him.”

Jamie hesitated. He had never in his life opened a letter received on the Sabbath until Monday morning. The struggle was keen, but Nature triumphed. With trembling fingers he opened the letter. Sally drew herself close up to him, clasping one side of the sheet.

The writer began by expressing deep regret for a long course of undutiful conduct, and went on to say, what he knew would gladden his parents’ hearts, that he had been brought to see matters in a different light—had resolved, by God’s grace, to turn over a new leaf, and endeavour to lead a better life. He related how the change had been brought about by his going in with one or two roistering companions to have some fun at an Evangelistic meeting in a Methodist chapel, on New Year’s eve; and how the preacher’s words struck direct home to his heart; the result being that “he who came to scoff remained to pray”; and he left the chapel, resolved, in some measure at least, to redeem the past, and lead a life more pleasing to his Heavenly Father; and one that might shed a ray of sunshine on the eventide of his parents’ days. The letter closed by the hope expressed of some day being permitted to see his dear ones face to face, and, on his knees, to ask their forgiveness for all the wrong he had done to their hearts.

Before Jamie and Sally had finished the reading of the letter their tears were dropping fast on the page. The minister had risen to give out the opening psalm, which, strange as it may seem, was the one beginning with the lines:

“God’s mercies I will ever sing.”

Everybody thought Jamie had a bad cold in his head that day—his handkerchief was hardly ever from his face. As for Sally—she just drew down her thick chenille veil, and wept quietly behind it.

A genuine surprise was in store for the congregation that afternoon, when Jamie sat still...
while the closing paraphrase was being sung. He did not rise with the congregation—that would have been too much to have expected at first—but he found the place, and kept his eye on it while the people sang:

"Ye heavens, send forth your song of praise;
Earth, raise your voice below;
Let hills and mountains join the hymn,
And joy through Nature flow.
Behold! how gracious is our God;
Hear the consoling strains,
In which He cheers our drooping hearts,
And mitigates our pains."

The news soon spread through the village that the Miskimmons had received news of their son—that he had been converted, and had turned over a new leaf.

Amongst the very first to offer congratulations was Felix Dinsmore; but with the inherent delicacy and good taste of a true gentleman, no matter in what rank he may be found, never a hint did he drop regarding former differences of opinion.

"Man, Jamie, a' was mair than gled tae hear the news."

"A' ken it weel, Felix; the Lord has been very merciful' tae us in our afflictions, turnin' our mournin' intae joy."

"Ay, Jamie, it's truly a matter for rejoicin'. A', haen had nae weans o' ma' ain, canna be expecket tae fully unnerstan' the feelin's o' a faither's hert—especially in the case o' an only son, an' him biddin' fair tae become a castaway. Oor great Faither in heaven knows it a' though, Jamie, an' can truly sympathize wi' a' oor afflictions."

"You an' Sally's prayers wur constant an' earnest, an' ye see they hae na been in vain."

"We'r gled an' rejoicin', Felix, as only they can wha' are parents in the Lord; but, as far as I mysel' am concerned, a' hae had an humblin', an' it wur much needed."

"The main pert o' the tribble was, mair than likely, brought on by my ain pride an' presumption; for a' ha' been little mair than a self-righteous Pherisee—settin' masel' up tae judge the Lord's work, an' attempt tae cry doon His means o' bringin' His wannerin' sheep tae His fold."

"Hummil' an' subdued shud a' be, a' ma days, on accoont o' ma pride an' hardness o' hert."

"Weel, Jamie, ye hae been a consistent body a' yer days, endeevin', sae far as in ye lay, tae carry oot God's wull, an' act accordin' tae yer conscience. They're few among us that michna', wi' profit tae oorsels, tak' example b' ye in maist wys; an' am only speakin' for the hale toon, whun a' tell ye hoo pleased we a' feel at hearin' the guid news frae a far country."

"Pray for us, Felix; an' am shair we feel
thankfu' to you an' the nibers: but, tak' exemple by the Mester Himself, but wi' unco few o' His servan's."

"What'll ye think o' me whun a' tell ye that 'mid a' ma joy, an' wi' a' the grace a' hae been blissst wi', a' fin' mysel', mony a time, inclined tae grummill that ma boy's conversion—the thing that's dearer tae me than ma very life—wus, unner the Almichty, brocht aboot by the Methodies."

"Nixt tae ' self,' Jamie, a' think aboot the last thing a Christian gets rid o' is prejudice."

Jamie, to have been a saving man, turned prodigal, so far as his money was concerned, in his latter days. He was continually drawing from the bank, and remitting to America.

In time it came out that the young convert had entered college, with a view to serving God in the Mission fields.
A MORMON INVASION.

Chapter VI.

SINCE the black year of the potato famine, we had no direct visitation which caused us so much dread as the threatened Mormon invasion.

The Plymouth Brethren had been amongst us for some time; but they did nothing worse than split up churches; whereas the Mormons, it was understood, divided families—making sad havoc of homes. Many thrilling stories had reached us of their evil influence in other places—principally large cities; but we were quite at a loss to understand what had induced them to single out our peaceful neighbourhood for their work of proselytism.

When, at length, the representatives of the notorious organization made their appearance in the village, our fears were to some extent set at rest. The missionaries, as they called themselves, did not look so formidable as we had been led to expect. They were young men of pale complexion and thoughtful exterior, looking in no way much different from ourselves. In fact, they had been amongst us for some little time before we were aware of their presence.

They did not seem inclined to make much
noise in the market-place, or proclaim their principles abroad, but seemed to be of rather a retiring disposition—not inviting discussion—although, it was said, that having been led into argument once or twice by some of our people, more bold or more curious than the rest, these quiet-looking apostles showed themselves well skilled in argument, and wonderfully grounded in the Scriptures—proving themselves more than a match for those who had attacked their principles. They claimed to hold their commission direct from Heaven—were assured that Mormonism was the only existing religion that had not a flaw or a blemish.

Johnny Glenn was one of those who had endeavoured to "draw" the apostles into argument, on an occasion when he was driving them on his car. Johnny heard, for his enlightenment, much about "Latter-day Saints," "Visions," and "the Sacred Law of Marriage." Before parting with him, his instructors offered to present to him a pamphlet, entitled, "The Pearl of Great Price: an Account of the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith," which Johnny respectfully refused, on the ground of his "not being much of a scholard."

How it came about that Harvey Douglas and his wife were the very first to show an inclination to embrace the "New Gospel," nobody seemed able to explain. There appeared to be no doubt, however, but that the apostles had good reason for looking on these two as probable converts to Mormonism at no very distant date.

The missionaries lodged with Harvey and his wife every time when visiting the district; in fact, made his house a sort of head-quarters for the transaction of business, holding of meetings, and seeing inquirers.

It soon became rumoured that the Douglases had decided to dispose of their house and farm, join the brotherhood, and hand over their money to the common treasury.

The news created quite a sensation in the neighbourhood. Of all people, Harvey Douglas seemed the most unlikely to take such an unlooked-for step. He was a quiet, douce, hard-working man, who, by dint of good management and close economy, had succeeded in raising himself into a fairly comfortable position; having, it was commonly reported, money in the bank.

Some averred that his wife was more to be blamed than he in the matter. The couple had not been blessed with any children, and, it was said, did not live together on the most harmonious terms. It was well known that Nancy had a sharp tongue, and could command an extensive and rapid vocabulary, the benefit of which Harvey felt when occasion required it.
It looked very like as if the missionaries had got round Nancy first of all, and that she in turn was bringing her influence to bear on her good man. Harvey had all the appearance of a man who was being persuaded against his will.

The members of the fair sex especially were hard on Nancy, and expressed much pity for poor Harvey in the circumstances in which he was placed. "Just a caleeried notion of Nancy's," they affirmed; "she'll be waur afore she's better, am thinkin'."

"A fu' cup's hard tae carry. When she was workin' her day's work she had little time for sic' nonsense; but noo that she an' Harvey hae cleared the bit farm, an' hae twa or three pun' in the bank, there's nae end tae the airs she pits on."

This is an example of the esteem in which Nancy was held by her own sex.

That which most strongly favoured the view of Harvey's disinclination to take the important step, was the difficulty he seemed to labour under in the disposal of his farm.

At Autumn-time the sale was announced to take place in the following Spring; but when Spring came round there was another postponement till Autumn, and this went on for several years.

Meantime, the missionaries kept coming and going at regular intervals—often arriving at Harvey's on Saturday evening and staying till Monday morning. Meetings would be held on the Sabbath, when neighbours were invited; but few there were who availed themselves of the privilege of attending.

The pioneers of the new religion did not appear to be making any headway in our neighbourhood, outside the Douglas family.

Little wonder that Harvey felt reluctant to bring matters to a close, for he was getting to look upon himself as a man of some note—if not in his own country, at least in the great settlement at Utah. Not only were the frequent visits of the missionaries felt to be almost entirely on his account, and that of his wife, but they often brought him communications purporting to have been written by the very head members of the organization—the President and Priesthood themselves—all for his express benefit, and for the purpose of assisting him to make up his mind.

One day he received a book from the Salt Lake City, entitled: "The Book of Doctrine, and Covenants of the Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints"; the book was edited by Joseph Smith himself, who had received the revelations contained therein direct from Heaven. An accompanying letter advised Harvey to study well the volume, as in it were contained the true doctrines on which the Church was founded.
Withal, Harvey was hard to induce to part with his property and cast in his lot with that pure religious body, who held all things in common. It was evident that if he were ever to become a thorough "Latter-day Saint," he had a considerable amount of worldliness to get rid of before properly meriting the title.

Only on one single occasion did the missionaries show a disposition to extend their influence in our neighbourhood.

They could hardly, for very appearance's sake, allow it to be inferred that all their time and energy were being spent over the conversion of one man and his wife.

A great public meeting was, accordingly, announced to be held in the Market-house, on a certain Sabbath afternoon, at the hour of four o'clock; thus delicately conveying the hint that it was not intended to interfere with the stated hours of worship in other churches. In this respect the Mormons showed more good taste than the Plymouth Brethren; for that body not only held their diets of worship at the same hours that we did, but hurried through their service in order to be ready to hold an open-air meeting opposite our meeting-house gates as we were dispersing.

The Mormon meeting was looked forward to with no small degree of interest. We now felt little terror regarding the Body—this partly, no doubt, owing to the harmless appearance of the delegates themselves. The feeling with which we looked forward to the meeting was more one of curiosity.

The time appointed came round. The people assembled from far and near, but the meeting could hardly be said to have been a success.

The pioneers of the "New Gospel" got through short opening exercises, and were just beginning an address on the subject of "The Golden Plates found by Joseph Smith under God's Revelation, on which were inscribed the writing of the ancient Prophets, and the means used for the translation thereof," when the proceedings were brought to a somewhat abrupt termination.

There is a certain powder-like mixture, composed, if we mistake not, of one part sulphur and three parts Cayenne pepper, which, when burned outside the door of a building—the fumes directed inside by way of the keyhole—has a distinctly telling effect upon those congregated within, and will materially interrupt attention, no matter how important the character of the meeting, or how impressive the subject under delivery.

It was the judicious application of this recipe by the hands of willing youth that had the effect of bringing the Mormon meeting to an untimely close. It, in fact, very nearly
accomplished more than was intended; for, there being amongst the hearers a number of females of a highly-strung, nervous temperament, who, immediately the smell of sulphur filled the air, associated it with the very worst that could happen, a state of excitement verging on panic was produced.

Sundry words of advice, emphasized by vigorous gestures, from a number of our right-minded married women, directed to the preachers themselves as they left the building, completely discouraged them from ever attempting to hold a second meeting.

By way of endeavouring, in some degree, to cover their ignominious defeat, the missionaries threw out a challenge, offering to debate the question of their divinely-appointed mission with any who felt inclined to undertake the task.

Jamie Miskimmon and Felix Dinsmore accepted the challenge, leaving it with the other side to arrange the time and place.

A certain evening was intimated; the meeting to take place in Harvey Douglas's kitchen. Jamie and Felix were advised to make themselves up in such subjects as "the existing errors of all religious sects"—excepting that of the Latter-day Saints; also to prepare themselves for discussing such forms of religion as Pantheism, Dualism, and Mohammedanism. To this the elders replied that they knew little of these things; but one thing they knew, and that was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," and were prepared to meet all arguments from that standpoint.

The night of the expected debate arrived, and many gathered in to hear the discussion; but on the arrival of our two old friends—their Bibles and Matthew Henry's Concordance under their arms—they were informed that, during the afternoon, the missionaries had received an urgent telegram calling them away on important business, and much regretting their inability to remain for the discussion. They left some pamphlets for Jamie and Felix, bearing on the history of the American continent from its first colonization after the dispersion from Babel until the present day.

Everything, it has been said, comes to him who waits.

Harvey at length finally disposed of his house and farm to a neighbour; although possession was not to be given over for another six months. He and Nancy occupied the intervening time by making preparations for the contemplated journey. Neither had ever been on board ship before, so it is not to be wondered at if they were filled with anxiety and misgivings.

The day of the auction came round, when stock, crop, and chattels were all sold off; and the couple, being free from encumbrances, were ready for the journey.
The missionaries had exceeded their former friendliness during this time, and nothing could have surpassed their kindness and attention. They offered to take charge of the money which had been realized by sale of the estate, and also offered to look after the purchase of the tickets—they having had some experience in that way.

Harvey allowed them to look after the ticket arrangements, but did not part with any money—giving as his reason that he had some "wee scores to settle up." The obliging Mormons advanced the amount from their own purses, knowing it would soon be all in the common fund.

The ship was to sail on a Saturday afternoon. Only one or two of the more immediate neighbours came to the station to see the couple off—the step they were taking not meeting with general approval. One of the missionaries had been deputed to accompany them on the passage.

Grand and majestic did the big ship appear as she lay close in to the harbour, her white decks glittering in the sunlight, and flags flying from the mast-head. It all seemed like a fairy palace to the Douglases, as they were conducted on board by their friendly guide.

The time for sailing was fully up. Loading of cargo had been completed, gangways were closed, and visitors warned ashore.

Just as the passenger footway was in the act of being hauled in, Harvey declared he had left a small bag behind him on the pier; and, like the ignorant landsman that he was, made as if he would go ashore for it. Nancy and the Mormon tried to detain him, but Harvey rushed past the sailors who were already in the act of hauling the footway, and had gained the land before anyone could stop him. The order to let go had been given, and already the big vessel was moving off from the pier. Did Harvey imagine the State Liner would wait for him till he got the missing bag? Onlookers both on board and ashore could have laughed, the proceeding was so ridiculous, had not the tragic side of the position appealed to their better nature.

Those on deck nearest to Nancy were loud in their sympathy. The poor woman seemed dazed, and almost unable to realize the situation. The Mormon was gesticulating frantically—partly, it may be imagined, on account of the money being still in Harvey's possession. Harvey was, all things considered, the coolest of all concerned.

Inside the next fortnight he was offering to any intending emigrant a second-class cabin ticket to New York for half price.

Nancy arrived back in six weeks' time—the Mormons not wishing to separate man and wife.
—especially as there had been a disappointment regarding the money part of the transaction. Harvey and she removed to the city, and started a lodging-house. They lived long and contentedly together, but the subject of Mormonism was never more named between them.
T HE day following the fairs of May and November was called the "Auld Fair Day," and was the date on which the tenants of the Smith-Walker Estate met to pay their rents.

The river which runs through the centre of the village, though not much more than a stream, possessed some important functions. Besides the feeding of various mills and factories, and the supplying of good sport to the disciples of Izaak Walton, it also, to a great extent, determined the social status of the neighbourhood through which it flowed.

Those on the upper side held their farms under "The Marquis," which meant long leases at nominal rents, well-stocked farms, and money in the bank; whereas, those on the lower side sat under various minor landlords, who claimed their votes at election times, and, for the purpose of enabling them to appreciate their holdings, increased their rents in proportion to the draining and other improvements which were made.

If any discontented wight, more ignorant than his neighbours, ventured to grumble at the system adopted, he was informed that "the
Office" was supposed to know better what was for his welfare than he could possibly—that the only just basis on which to value a holding, or fix a fair rent, was by taking into account the condition of the land, dwelling, and office-houses; the condition of the haggard—empty or full—with a friendly inquiry as to the tenant's balance at the bank, or savings invested. If, after all this had been gone into and fully explained, dissatisfaction still existed, there only remained one other step—"the Office" would release the unappreciative tenant from his holding, offering it to some one of a less rebellious disposition. This last offer sufficed, in most instances, to restore contentment. The more sagacious amongst us were chary about having our premises in a too prosperous looking condition, and were disposed to keep our stocks low—even should we sell in a slightly falling market.

At times it did seem a bit hard to a man that when once he had got his land well drained, and thoroughly into condition, ten shillings per acre was certain to be added to his rent at the next term: but, then, without good draining how was he to raise good crops? The roof of his barn was falling in, and the old walls were giving way under increasing age; he erects a new one at fifty pounds, thus raising the rent of his land another 10/- per acre. It was hard to understand. His neighbour, who was content to allow his farm buildings to go to desolation, and on whose land rushes were becoming the main factor, was allowed to remain at a nominal rent, while he was made to pay smartly for his improvements. However, "the Office" must know best. There was such a thing as political economy, which he had not studied. Perhaps it was on that system "the Office" acted.

The whole procedure, though, as regarded land, seemed to go by opposites—not only so far as concerned landlords and agents, but also amongst the tenants themselves.

Tam Jenkins, through bad management and dissipation, was almost "on the rocks." The land, from want of draining, insufficient manure, and indifferent labour, was fast becoming a wilderness; farm and office buildings were merely hanging together; the rent far in arrear. Worst had come to worst, and Tam put up his farm for sale.

Thannie Nixon, his next neighbour—to whom Tam's farm lay well in—was a well-doing, well set-up man, known to have money in the bank. The farm in the market was worth £100 more to Thannie than to anyone else, and it was known to everyone that he would be the purchaser. In fact it was known that he had his eye on the place for many a long day. But, what said Thannie himself? From the very first notification of Tam's farm being in the market, Thannie
did nothing but cry it down on every available opportunity—avowing publicly and privately that he would not buy it on any consideration.

"Run oot, cauld lan', nether drained nor manured, an' wi' a subsoil o' pure cli [clay]—it's no worth twa hunner pun', an' it'll go at nearer five hunner."

"Then luck at the hoose an' offices—they're comin' doon—the very rats is leein' them. It wud tak' twa hunner pun' tae pit the place in condeetion. Let wha likes buy it—it winna be me."

"Am tired o' fermin'," Thannie declared, on the market day before the sale, to some neighbours; "an' hae ower much lan' as it is. My sins [sons] dinna care for it ether, an' talk aboot goen abroad; besides a' that, a' haena' the money tae buy it if a' wus inclined. Folk say 'at a' hae money in the bank, but it's all nonsense. Fermin' hasna been pyen' me for mony a year."

Thus did Thannie discourse to the very last, the neighbours smiling indulgently at the transparent pretence.

"We'r no' gan' tae pit it up on the body. He needna be sae feared o' us. We'd luck blue if the bit place wus clapped doon on us at fifty pun' mair nor it's worth. Thannie, o' coorse, is the man tae get it, an' he'll pit it intae guid condeetion; that is, if 'the Office' accepts him."

The sale came off, and Thannie did not buy the place. It was much the same however; a man from the Tildree hills—five miles distant—bought it for him. We all knew from the very first bid the man gave that he was working for Thannie; but it pleased Thannie to think that he was blindfolding us, and we just let him think it.

The price was £150 above what the place was considered worth to anyone else.

"Wha wus he, Thannie, that bocht Tammie's ferm frae amang oor teeth?" we asked, willing to humour him for our own amusement. "What'll a Tildree body dae doon here? an' dis he inten' sellin' the ferm he's in? He's a plucky cratur, whaever he is, tae gee sic' a price."

Thannie answered—probably thinking deception no longer needful—"Weel, he's a sort o' a freen' o' ma ain—at least, o' the wife's;—his half sister's meirit on a second cousin o' hers. He bocht the ferm dear, an' wus retherly inclined tae rue his bargain; so a' thocht it wus a peety o' 'im, an' offered tae tak' it aff his hans."

"It wus jest like yersel', Thannie, no tae see a freen' stuck. He little kenned what he wus thinkin' o' comin' tae. The cratur shudna' be trusted oot by himself. It's weel he happens tae coont you amang his freens, for the place, if it's worth anything, is worth it tae you. Ye can work it at aboot half the expense o' onybody else."
“Wusna’ Sandy Forbes o’ the Napperty keen aboot it?” said Thannie.

“Man, he wus that: he bid bitterly till it cam’ tae within fifty pun’ o’ what ye gied—at least what yer freen’ did.”

All Thannie’s stratagem and clever dealing did not put him into possession of Tam’s holding. Though considerably the highest bidder, the agent refused to accept him as a tenant—preferring the man from the Napperty; who, it was said, made himself useful to both landlord and agent at election times. Besides, Thannie had, on more than one occasion, audibly grumbled at increased rents, although he was known to have prospered and had money in the bank. It was intended that “the Office” should show its displeasure in some way, and now the time had come.

As has been said, all this happened in the old days, before the establishment of special courts for the fixing of fair rents—days when such things as “compensation for improvements,” “fixity of tenure,” or possibilities of “compulsory sale” were not even dreamt of—days when a landlord’s word was law; when the swearing of an agent struck terror into the hearts of the poor tenantry, causing them to crowd into the polling booths like sheep before the shearer, recording their votes in accordance with the landlord’s direction. Now-a-days, it is the landlord who quakes when the tenant swears; and an owner is afraid to let a field of grazing to a neighbour for a season, lest he may never more regain its possession.

A grandson of one of the old tenantry about whom we write, had occasion to call on his present landlord only the other day, requesting some favour, and was rather curtly referred to “the Office.”

“It’ll no be lang that ye’ll hae ony office for us tae go tae,” was the answer he received.

The farmer’s life is not a happy one, but it has its compensations. One of these was the half-yearly rent day gatherings—at least in the good old times when Mr. Bond was agent.

These reunions—save for the paying of the money which, then as now, was often hard to scrape together—were looked forward to with some degree of pleasurable anticipation.

The tenantry—some eighteen or twenty in number—were accustomed to meet at the house of Rosey M’Cartney’s Dan (so called to distinguish him from a dozen others of the same name in the neighbourhood). There was “Big Dan” and “Wee Dan,” “Lang Jamie,” “Rid Wully,” and “Mary Ann John”—the latter was originally Mary Ann’s John, but the apostrophe had long since been discarded.

After the usual routine of business had been transacted—money paid, receipts given, arrears
inquired into, and all the usual formalities of such an occasion—Mr. Bond's custom was to take from his purse five shillings, which he would hand to Rosey, requesting her to send for a "quart of the best," with which he treated the tenantry, himself drinking to their healths and prosperity with much goodwill.

The tenants would then club together and send for another quart for the purpose of drinking Mr. Bond's health, by which time great good-fellowship prevailed—agent and tenants enjoying themselves sometimes far into the evening; Mr. Bond's rising to leave being the signal for breaking up.

Life is full of changes. Every agent has his day, and so had Mr. Bond. The time came when increasing age and infirmity rendered necessary his retirement, which took place amid general regret.

A successor was appointed who was a notable temperance advocate—in fact, the honorary secretary of a total abstinence association. When this news reached the tenantry, they were more than usually apprehensive. A man with such a reputation, what sweeping changes might he not introduce? People in those days professing total abstinence principles were looked upon with general suspicion.

It augured badly that the future meeting-place on rent days was changed from Rosey M'Cartney's snug parlour to an ante-room in the cold and bare court-house of the village. Had it been transferred to the county jail itself, the tenantry would not have been surprised.

On the first gale day on which they met the new agent, the proceedings were marked by a lukewarmness from first to last.

Mr. Waters was gentlemanly and civil enough, though his manner was by no means inspiring—attributable, no doubt, to his cold water principles.

When business had been completed, there was a somewhat awkward interval—no one, apparently, feeling sure what move to make.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Waters, at length, his face assuming a dry smile—"unless you have got more money to offer, I do not suppose there is any necessity to detain you longer. I am pleased to have met you all for the first time, and trust our future meetings may be marked by the same punctuality and goodwill which has been characteristic of this."

It was Rosey's Dan who took it upon himself to address the agent—"without any previous forethought," as he afterwards explained to the rest of the tenants.

"A' wud jest say, Mr. MacWatters" (we always put "Mac" before names we were not well acquainted with), "that this day's proceedings hev' not been a'thegither in accordance wi' former
customs. Since the day when Mr. Bond cam' amang us, tae the day he left, we niver yit perted company on an occasion o' this kin' without drinkin' yin anither's health, an' we had got tae luck on this guid auld custom o' a' maist as much consequence as the pyen' o' the rent itsel'."

"My good man, and my good friends," replied Mr. Waters, "while not wishing in the slightest degree to reflect on my predecessor, and your late agent, I may as well take this opportunity of informing you, to prevent the possibility of any future misunderstandings, that on the question of alcoholic liquors, or, in other words, the social glass, Mr. Bond's views and mine are completely at variance. I would hope, however, that my general conduct of the agency, to which I have been appointed, may tend to propagate amongst us, as agent and tenants, the same feelings of mutual regard and good-will which, I can easily see, prevailed during the time of my predecessor in office. Further, I will add, that if you accompany me to the coffee-house, I will be happy to treat you to a cup of that beverage, which will refresh, if not stimulate."

"Thank ye, sir," said Dan, "but coffee niver agreed very weel wi' me"; and the others, as in the parable, began to make excuses. So the matter ended in Mr. Waters going by himself to enjoy his refreshing cup of coffee; while the tenantry, after a short consultation, adjourned to Johnny Glenn's bar-parlour, where they kept up the old tradition of the occasion.

"What possessed ye tae speak tae him that wy, Dan, whun ye knowed he wus a 'tea-totaller'?" asked one of the company.

"A' had, o' coorse, nae thocht o' im yieldin'," said Dannie; "but a' jest thocht it wud be a peetty tae gee in tae sic' a change, wi'out lettin' the body ken he himsel' wus the cause o' t."

There followed a good deal of adverse criticism on the many injurious qualities of coffee; and before parting, the company were unanimous that "Mr. Bond had fauts—wha hesna'? but, tak' 'im a' an' a', he wus a cheerie body tae meet; but this caul watter cratur jest gied ye the shivvers."
THE SELLING OF
DANNIE M'CARTNEY'S FARM.
Chapter VIII.

It was on a later occasion, after rent paying, in this same bar-parlour of Johnny Glenn's, that Rosey's Dan and wee Andy Semple at last came to terms in regard to the disposal of the former's holding.

The negotiations concerning the same had been going on for many years.

Dan's farm marched with two or three of the other tenants, but lay particularly well in to "wee Andy's"; and it was known that Andy, whose sons were growing up, and who had purchased several other farms on the estate, had an acknowledged liking for "Dan's bit," as he called it, and was prepared to give more for it than anyone else.

Perhaps Dannie had some suspicion of this—at least, not keeping a horse himself, it was generally to Andy he applied when wanting horse work done. The request was generally made in this fashion:

Dannie would hirple into Andy's kitchen (he was a little lame), sink exhausted into the nearest
chair, and after some unimportant remarks would begin:

"If no' interferin' wi' yer ain arrangements, Andy, d'ye think ye cud pit in the laigh fiel' o' corn for us some day this week, an' maybe appin a wheen drills in the boag in the afternoon, while the horses wud be there?"

"We'r gien thrang oorsel's, Dan, an' a wee thocht short-handed; but a' wud like tae obleege ye if a' possibly cud, an' if we git on onyw'y weel the day an' the morn, a'll try an' sen' the horses the day efter."

"A'll be obleeged, Andy, if ye wull; an' while am here, a' may as weil say what hes been in Rosey's an' my minds for a guid lang while—that it's no' onlikely bit ye'll soon be gettin' the bit place intae yer ain hans. Rosey an' me's baith about din oot, an' we canna hau on much langer."

"Wha's for't bit yersel', Andy? The 'boys' hae their trades, an' wudna' be bothered wi' the place—they niver had ony taste for the fermin'."

"Weel, Dan, whun ye fin' ye canna dae better, let me ken, an' we may come tae some arrangement; but tak' my advice an' 'haud turrie [the pig] by the tail' as lang as ye can. It's yer hame—the only yin ye hae iver known—an' ye'd feel lainly gaun oot o't. No but what if a' git it, ye micht hae the bit hoose an' gerden—you an' the auld wumman—while ye leeved."

After this, Dan would gather himself up, make his way slowly home, and spend the afternoon "beekin'" the fire with whins, and making calculations with Rosey—carrying them over years to come.

This went on pretty much the same for almost ten years, and still Dannie, once his crop had been put in, thought he could "haud on for aboot anither year." At length came the memorable "Auld Fair Day," when the long-talked of negotiations were completed.

It is said there are some men who can make a bargain better when drunk than when sober. Andy Semple was not one of this class. Shrewd, hard-working man that he was when at home, he was not to be trusted on fair or market days, when he had imbibed a few half-glasses of whiskey. On such occasions he had been known to make presents of valuable beasts, for which he could not be prevailed upon to accept a fair price earlier in the day, before his wits got muddled; or selling for a fourth of their value a herd of young cattle, rather than take them home. Fortunately for Andy these transactions generally happened amongst his own immediate neighbours, who claimed no undue advantage when the morrow morning's sun revealed everything in its true light.

The day on which the sale of the farm occurred, both Dan and Andy were considerably
"elevated," yet they bargained and badgered (the neighbours carrying them on) with commendable caution until nearly dark, when Andy, in the excitement and recklessness bred by good drink and congenial company, began to increase his bids by fifties—finally purchasing Dannie’s holding of four fields—"the brae," the "laigh lan'," "Maxwell’s boag," and the "meeda"—six acres and three roods in all—for the respectable sum of £700—Dannie and Rosey to have the use of the dwelling-house and garden during their lives.

The land, it must be admitted, was in fair condition; but when it is remembered that on Dannie’s "bit" there was a rent averaging £2 per acre, it will be seen that the odds were considerably on Dannie’s side.

What passed between Andy’s wife and himself when he related to her the terms of his purchase, had better, perhaps, remain unchronicled. Like many other women, Mrs. Semple had the use of her tongue, and did not spare Andy when occasion demanded.

There was just one consolation—the money had not yet been paid over; and surely a plea of "temporary insanity" would be almost justifiable on Andy’s behalf, under the circumstances.

Dannie and Rosey also "talked over" the matter of the sale that night, or rather the next morning.

It was Rosey who appeared in Andy’s kitchen at breakfast time, and, to the surprise of all present, intimated to the now sobered Andy that "she hoped he wudna' haud Dannie tae his bargain." Thus again did Fortune favour Andy Semple.

Matters went on in much the same way for another five years, at which time Rosey’s Dan went the way of all flesh. By his will he left the "bit place" to Rosey during the term of her life, and afterwards to his son, Patrick, master mechanic, of Glasgow, who holds it in possession to this day.
DAVY BEWHUNNAN'S DIFFICULTIES.
Chapter IX.

PEOPLE said that Davy Bewhunnan (Buchannan) would never marry while his mother lived. This was over twenty years ago, when Davy was a comparatively young man; but, at time of writing, the mother had been dead for many years, and still Davy showed no inclination to enter the matrimonial state.

To the verdict thus agreed upon concerning Davy, a rider was sometimes added, which signified that if Davy ever did marry, his wife would be none other than the Widow Cassidy, who kept the baby-linen and fancy shop exactly on the opposite side of the street from the Bewhunnans.

Davy held the post of breadcart driver for his uncle, by his mother's side, Duncan M'Latchie, who showed his appreciation of his nephew's services by allowing him a wage of twelve shillings per week, together with free house and firing.

To many men this would not have been considered a large income; yet, Davy, notwithstanding his being to a great extent the support of his mother, and provider of the household in
general, had managed to save money from his earnings, and had the reputation of being able to make a little go a long way. Some went further, and called him "near b'gaen," which meant close-fisted. The most successful business men, it is averred, are generally those who look most closely after small outlays; and, certainly, Davy thought twice before spending even a penny-piece. It was this system of close economy which, no doubt, contributed largely to the comfortable position in which he found himself on reaching middle life.

Strange as it may seem, it was also this very same attribute—or failing, as the case may be—which first led to his acquaintance with the Widow Cassidy—then Miss Jessie McFarland—a merry romp of a girl, serving her apprenticeship with an elder sister, Miss Rebecca, in this very same shop in which she afterwards became joint proprietor.

Davy was at this time a tall, lanky, rather awkward-looking personage, whose name had never hitherto been coupled with that of any girl in the village. He simply did his day's work—spending the evenings, as a rule, with his mother at home.

We do not mean to say that the head on his shoulders was altogether that of an old man, or that he had not a natural inclination, at times, to mingle with other young people of his class at dancing or singing school; but we do say that, when it came to be considered that all or any of these youthful enjoyments entailed cost, Davy at once made up his mind to deny himself the indulgence of same.

Well, it one day came about that merry little Jessie McFarland, seeing dutiful Davy coming and going with clockwork regularity, and never so much as casting his eye at any woman, young or old, except his mother, resolved to send him a valentine; which was quite a legitimate proceeding on the part of a bright young woman, wishing to take an innocent "lark" out of an unusually staid and sober young man.

The valentine, when selected, was certainly not intended to bring either discredit or disgrace on the recipient. It was none of the vulgar, extravagant type, reminding a man that he had the ears of a donkey or the face of a gorilla; but was a modest, delicately-scented little missive, bordered with imitation lace-work, the centre containing a pretty picture of a loving-looking couple walking arm-in-arm in sight of a venerable church, a flying cupid apparently manifesting lively interest in their conversation, and, underneath, the following verse:

"On you depends my future peace—
One kindest look, one tender sign,
Shall bid my every trouble cease:
Come, then, and be my Valentine!"
Anticipating that Davy's reputed dulness of comprehension might prevent his ever surmising from what quarter the tender message came, Jessie scribbled the letters "J. M`F." in the smallest of characters on the left-hand corner, sealed and posted it with great deliberation, and, for the purpose of enhancing the joke, and allowing the recipient to understand that he could not have such delicately-expressed sentiments without giving something in exchange, she put no stamp on the envelope, thereby concluding that the best part of the joke would be the seeing Davy pay twopence to the postman before receiving his letter.

Jessie was aware that the postman always got their distance down the street just as Davy, having got his load of bread for the country, had drawn up at his mother's door to have breakfast before starting off.

The little maiden was quite excited over the expected dumfounderment of poor Davy, and had let her sister, Miss Rebecca, and her fellow-apprentice into the secret, so that all three had taken up their positions behind the muslin curtains, eagerly watching for the postman's arrival.

That important functionary made his appearance in due course, but hesitated about giving the letter to Davy's mother—no doubt explaining as to the sum due, and that it was a cash payment.

Mrs. Bewhunnan retired, and Davy came to the door. His face got very red as he handled the missive in a gingerly fashion—looked at it up and down and across—and more especially at the corner on which should have been the stamp—exchanged some words with the postman, which the girls could not hear—put his hands in his pockets, and brought them out again, finally—(what must have been poor Jessie's feelings!)—handed back the document, refusing to redeem it.

As may be imagined, Miss Jessie was both mortified and alarmed. The anticipated joke had met with an untimely fate; but that was not the worst:—what was to become of the valentine?—into whose hands might it not fall? —and if it got noised abroad that she had sent such an effusion to any man, she could hardly hold up her head again. The disgrace would never be allowed to die. Poor Jessie! she could have cried with vexation.

Fortunately, Miss Pink, the assistant, was a young woman of a more practical turn of mind. She resolved that she would not only get back the valentine, but also make Davy Bewhunnan pay dearly for his narrow-spirited action.

Accordingly, Miss Pink, without delay, walked boldly into the post-office, proffered the twopence, and demanded the document.

"But, Miss Pink," said the clerk, "our rules are very strict as to ———"
"Never mind about the rules—give me the letter, please, Johnny Gibb. If ye dinna— a' ken hoo tae mak' ye."

"Tell me, at least, who the letter is from."

"A freen' o' mine."

"Why will Buchannan not take it up?"

"Because he's ower big agowk—he begrudges the tuppence."

"Did he ask you to get it for him?"

"He knows better. Please hand me the letter."

"Well, you see, it's a bit awkward—the postmaster-general's orders are——"

"Och, Johnny Gibb, what nonsense ye dae talk—what care I for the postmaster-general, or ony ither general; an' hoo's he tae ken onythin' aboot it? The letter was sent without a stamp by a lass wantin' tae hae a joke oot o' a boy that she was silly tae iver even her wut tae. The gowk was 'feard o' his precious tuppence; an' noo the lass wants back her letter, an' why shudn't she get it? Forbye, Johnny, the postmaster-general is no' acquaint' wi' a' that goes on in this office: an' it's maybe as weil for you that he's no'. If ye pit me tae it, a'll explain what a' mean."

Whatever may have been the nature of these threatened explanations, they certainly had a visible effect on Mr. Gibb. He took the letter from the pigeon-hole, and held it in an undecided fashion, turning it up and down.

"At least, ye'll tell me, Miss Pink, who the letter is from?"

"Maybe frae masel'—wull that dae ye?"

"At anyrate, I'll ask the chief, and let him have the responsibility."

Miss Pink clearly saw there was no more time to be lost, so, leaving the little window, she opened the glass door, and walked right into the office—marched up to the astonished junior official, and, before he could prevent it, snatched the ill-fated letter from his hand—merely remarking, as she turned on her heel, "A'll tak' the responsibility masel', Johnny: an' if a' happen tae see Maggie Louden, a' suppose ye'll no' min' if a' tell her wha ye saw hame frae the singin' class on Wednesday nicht?"

Johnny simply stared; but Susie Pink knew that she had heard the last of it.

Jessie, it may be supposed, was much comforted on getting back possession of the valentine; but Susie's work was only half done—she still had a word for Davy concerning his part in the transaction.

On a certain evening Davy had sauntered down to the Brig, and had foregathered with two or three acquaintances, who were usually to be found about that interesting quarter most evenings of the week. There were Tom Cassidy
(draper’s assistant), Joe Smith, Willie Fisher, and others. The young fellows had just settled down for a chat, when who should come tripping along but Miss Susie Pink and Jessie M’Farland, arm-in-arm.

“Guid evenin’ tae ye a’,” said Susie. “Are ye takin’ a breath o’ fresh air?”

“Jest that, Miss Susie—hoo are you?—an’ you, Miss Jessie?”

“We’re well, thanks, an’ jest stappit tae ask if ye cud a’ cum for a cup o’ tea the morrow evenin’, an’ hae a game or twa afterwards?” said Susie—always the spokeswoman—never looking at Davy.

“We’ll be pleased tae come. What time hae ye tea?”

“Aboot six o’clock.—You, Davy,” continued the indefatigable Susie, turning for the first time in his direction, “wud har’ly care tae come—at least”—she proceeded, without giving him time to reply—“ye niver replied to Miss Jessie’s last letter, an’ we concluded ye wur ower busy.”

Davy stared—“Miss Jessie’s letter—tae me?”

“Ay, jest tae you—she thocht it worth her while—though a’ wunnered at her taste—an’ sent ye a letter wi’ somethin’ in it that ye wud a’ liked tae a’ seen; but, in the hurry, she forgot tae stamp it, an’ ye wudna’ tak’ it frae the postman, because there wur tuppence tae pye; an’ the letter come back tae her—why, man, a’ wud hae lent ye the tuppence masel’.”

This created a laugh at Davy’s expense; however, that individual found his tongue, and stammered out something about having been offered a letter without a stamp, but thinking it of no importance, he—

“Oh, weel, Davy Bewhunnan, if it wur o’ nae importance, a’ can inform ye that there’s mony a young man in a better poise than you, an’ a deal better luckin’, an’ better mennered, intae the bargain, that wudna’ hae grudged giein’ the tuppence theae hae got what wur in the letter ye hadna’ the gumption tae tak’. Guid evenin’, gents; we’ll expec’ ye aboot six”—saying which, she and Miss Jessie whisked away.

“Oh, Susie,” said Jessie, when they had got beyond hearing distance, “you were too hard on poor Davy.”

“Hard on him!—the mean, miserly gowk!—a’ wurna’ half hard enough. A’ tellt ye a’ had it in for him, an’ a’ think we’re aboot even wi’ im noo.”

A strange problem is human nature, and the strangest phases of it are where the affections are concerned. There is no shadow of doubt but that Jessie M’Farland was, from this time forth, more than ever disposed to look kindly on the somewhat dull and prosaic Davy Bewhunnan. Perhaps it was from the proverbial cause of
pity’s being akin to love, or perhaps it was that she thought Davy was misunderstood. Be that as it may, the little maiden certainly felt a more than ordinary interest in Davy’s methodical movements from behind the curtains of the workshop. She even went the length, to show that she bore no resentment, of coming to the door on several occasions when he was about to start on his rounds, and request him to execute for her sundry commissions throughout the country.

Davy would blush scarlet at such times; but then he would have done the same on speaking to any girl—so Jessie thought.

Perhaps, could she have seen him when he had left the village far behind—the horse taking his breath up a hill on the quiet country road—her eyes would have been opened. Making sure that no one was in sight, he would take from his breast pocket the letter on which Jessie had scribbled the address, and gaze on it long and earnestly—an almost hungry look on his face—and then return it tenderly to his pocket. Whatever were Davy’s feelings for Jessie he kept them to himself, seeming to grow more reserved every day.
NOT long after this, rumours got afloat that Tom Cassidy was paying marked attention to Jessie; that he had, on more than one occasion, convoyed her home from the singing class; and also walked her out of an evening on the Mill Lane. It was even reported that Tom, being a well-to-do young man, was thinking of resigning his situation, and opening a shop of his own—Jessie's knowledge of the fancy end being looked upon as a likely acquisition.

It was not to be supposed that these rumours did not reach Davy's ears; but, apparently, they affected him little—at least he made no outward sign.

Some took it upon them to say that he ceased sauntering down to the Brig of an evening—preferring the taking of quiet walks by himself, and that he rather shunned Tom Cassidy's company.

Miss Susie Pink thought she would again have to interfere to some extent; although she could not, for the life of her, imagine what a bright, affectionate girl like Jessie M'Farland could possibly see in such a dolt as Davy
Bewhunnan; but so it was—there was clearly something wrong; and when Susie saw a wrong, or imagined she did, she at once set about trying to make it right. For this reason Susie took it upon herself to endeavour to bring Davy to his senses; although nothing but warm regard for her friend would have induced her to enter upon a discussion with “Davy Stum,” as she called him.

“A fine evenin’, Davy. Are ye takin’ a daunner?”

“Jest that, Miss Susie.”

“Weel, what dae ye think aboot Miss M`Farland noo?”

“What shud a’ think o’ her?”

“Ay, so ye may say. Dae ye know she’s goin’ tae be mairret tae Tam Cassidy?”

“A’ heerd them sayn’t.”

“Davy Bewhunnan, ye’r naethin’ but a great muckle sumph—a bigger fael than a’ even tuk ye for.”

“Thank ye, Miss Pink; ye’re welcome tae yer opeenion.”

“Why, in Heaven’s name, dae ye no mak’ a try for her yersel’? Ye’r nae man ava’, that can stan’ tae the yin side an’ let anither snap up the lass frae afore yer face.”

“What concern hae a’ wi’ Jessie M`Farland?”

“A fael she is that wud concern hersel’ wi’ the like o’ you; an’ yit, if ye showed yersel’ only half a man, she wud mak’ ye yin a’ oot; bit it’ll no’ be lang ye’ll hae the chance o’ her, an’ ye’r little better than a pooshey cat”—saying which, Miss Susie walked off, while Davy sauntered on, turning things over in his own mind.

For some days after this the customers noticed Davy a trifle abstracted. He did not appear to have the usual interest in his work. His horse also felt the difference—Davy not seeming to have the same consideration for the poor animal’s increasing age and frailty, but whipped him unmercifully on more than one occasion. At home he was unusually gloomy and silent.

Jessie’s engagement to Tom Cassidy was now made public, and in due time they were married. Susie Pink was bridesmaid; her partner being Willie Fisher, of the Mill. Gossip said these other two would make a match of it before long. Davy did not even see the wedding.

To his mother he confided more than he had done to any other living soul, on an evening when the old lady tried to “draw” him regarding his rumoured admiration for Jessie.

“A’ liket her weel, mother, but wusna’ in a poseetion tae offer her merrige.” What all was implied by the word “poseetion” he did not explain.

Three months after the marriage, the village got a surprise by the news that Davy Bewhunnan
had resigned his situation with his uncle, and was going off to America. His old mother was almost beside herself. His uncle reasoned; but Davy was firm, and to America he went.

In our village, the matter of a young man's going to America was not looked upon as, by any means, a final separation. He generally took the notion suddenly; but the lapse of three months often found him at home again, and at his wonted occupation. Some there were who stayed a year away, and some even the length of three years; but the latter were exceptions.

Loss of health was what induced most of them to return. After having been used all their lives to the bracing, genial air of the village, it was certainly no easy matter to get acclimatized to any other place.

Wonderful it was, though, how large an experience was sometimes gained by even a short stay in the New Country. The returned emigrants might spend the remainder of their natural lives at home, yet no one could ever forget that they had been in America, nor did the foreign accent ever quite desert them.

Davy Bewhunnan was an exception to the rule. He returned home after four year's absence; but he made no plea of ill-health, nor could anyone have told from his accent that he had ever been away.

Some said his mother's death brought him home; others that his uncle, feeling himself getting old and declining in health, had written for him to come—offering him, as an inducement, a partnership in the business. Others again—and they were the greatest number—surmised that he came when he heard that Jessie M'Farland was a widow. As usual, Davy gave no explanation, but resumed his seat on the bread-cart, as of old. And yet there was a difference. Davy had more to say about the bakery. His uncle appeared to rely on him for more than mere bread-serving. It was conjectured the nephew had put money into the firm.

Another fact, and one that was made a good deal out of by the gossips, was, that Davy was more frequently to be seen about Miss Rebecca M'Farland's shop, in which the young widow had taken up her former position. He often convoyed the sisters home from the meeting-house on a Sabbath evening, and, in fact, had got into the habit of dropping in and sitting an hour or two in the workroom almost every night of the week.

Thus did matters progress for almost twelve years. Nobody knew anything. Davy's taciturn disposition was becoming even more prominent. He hardly cared to exchange with neighbours even the customary civilities.

It was said there was just one thing could visibly change his demeanour. If, on driving past some country house, a good wife would
request the favour of his leaving a band-box at the Miss M’Farland’s shop, it was reported that Davy’s countenance would light up considerably—his face had even been known to break out into a broad smile.

The nightly visits were of a curious nature; the man was so silent—would often sit for hours without saying a word. His nearest approach to endearment or caress would be the lifting of a ball of wool that may have fallen from the neighbourhood of Mrs. Cassidy—look steadily at it for a moment, and then replace it in her lap. On very rare occasions would he retail some trifling bit of news or gossip, or, perhaps, read an extract from the newspaper. As soon as ten o’clock had struck, he would get up, bid the ladies “guid nicht,” and make his way home.

On a certain night Miss Rebecca had gone early to bed, not feeling altogether well. Davy seemed to have something on his mind. Mrs. Cassidy endeavoured to entertain him as best she could, but it was evident he was restless and ill at ease. He took up the newspaper, but as quickly laid it down again. He could not read. Once he ventured to take hold of the thread from Mrs. Cassidy’s knitting work, letting it slide gently through his fingers. He also made so free as to lift her work-basket, and look gravely over the contents. The widow did her best to keep up a show of conversation, but at length found it useless, and both grew silent.

Ten o’clock struck—Davy rising as usual. He turned round, made as if to speak, but no words came. He grasped the handle of the door, considered for a full minute; then turning towards the widow, he made this speech:

“Jessie!” (he had never called her by her name before) “what dae ye think aboot it?”

“Do you mean, Davy, that you want to know will I marry you? If so, I am ready any time you choose; and, what is more, you might have had me twenty years ago.”
"THE SOUND OF A VOICE THAT IS STILL."
THE SOUND OF A VOICE THAT IS STILL.

Chapter XI.

We never realized the full, commanding, attractive qualities of the human voice till we were almost five years old.

On a certain Monday morning, about that period of our life, we first went to school.

However so many children could be gathered together—there were some forty girls and boys—where they all came from, and to whom they all belonged, were questions which puzzled us considerably. Already we were beginning to find out that the world was a bigger place than we had imagined. The hum of voices—now rising, now falling, as the scholars conned over their lessons—greatly surprised us.

We were early, our little sister and we, and took a back seat, by reason of our not having yet been formally installed.

The door opened, and a lady entered. She walked briskly to the very top of the room. The hum of voices became more subdued. The lady, after divesting herself of bonnet and jacket, and smoothing her hair before a small mirror, turned round and faced the school.
Her age may have been bordering on thirty. She was of medium height and slight figure; the latter well set off by a neatly-fitting black dress. Her features were of a decidedly lady-like cast. She had calm, blue eyes, and a wealth of golden, wavy hair, which she wore parted in the centre, and brushed down over her ears. To our minds she was a perfect vision of loveliness. We were prepared to worship her and become her slave.

She spoke, and it was then that her voice filled us at once with wonder and awe. It was distinctly a musical voice; but there was also blended with that a fine tone of command and control. We thought it the voice of a queen.

"Children! answer to your names." The veriest infant was attentive during the roll-call. We sat as if in a trance.

At length her eye rested on us. She was beside us in a moment, asking as to our pedigree. We could hardly speak. An angel from heaven could not have caused us to be more awe-stricken. Our little sister answered for us.

The angelic creature spoke some kindly words to us, and patted our head. We were her slave for ever and ever.

Classes were formed; our sister left us; all was activity and bustle.

For the first time in our life a dreadful feeling of loneliness came over us. We thought of home; and the dear ones, we imagined, were longing for us. We had never been so long away from them before. Everybody seemed busy with their own occupations; we were shut out and alone—alone for the first time. A lump was gathering in our throat, our breath came and went in an uncertain manner, but we fought bravely with the weakness. Our sister was in the room—that was comforting—and the beautiful, kind lady. We still think we could have overcome and won off victorious but for an unforeseen circumstance. We looked under the desk, our eye catching sight of a packet containing our luncheon—two thick slices of bread and butter, and on the top some biscuits, put there specially for ourselves we knew. It was this that overcame us. We could hold out no longer.

The angel came again, and tried to soothe us with comforting words. To hear her speaking of our dear ones as if they were personal friends, it was wonderful. We began to feel fresh courage. While she kept with us we could have endured anything.

She took us on an excursion round the room, pointing out the maps and objects of natural history. She then resumed her position in the class, allowing us to sit beside her. We saw our sister amongst the other girls, as bright and happy as any, and wished we could feel the
same; but then our sister was almost seven, and had been out in the world over a year.

The first day passed fairly enough; our feelings were divided at its close. We were full of joy at getting home to loved ones, but also felt regret at leaving the angel. We paid her the highest compliment a child could pay a woman—we adored her next to our mother.

Short time elapsed before we found out that our angel possessed other qualities besides beauty and kindness—she could be severe. Our love was not diminished, but our respect increased—with perhaps a grain or two of fear added on.

We witnessed more than one case of corporal punishment. Angel though she was, she did not flinch for their crying.

Within a week we were almost paralyzed with fear. Miss Hopkins (that was the angel's name), standing on a chair, opened a trap door in the ceiling, and brought therefrom a "spider's cap."

She then proceeded to recruit the inmates by fresh captures from round the corners of the ceiling and floor. This was the extreme penalty; and, it is only fair to say, was never resorted to except when every other means had failed.

It was rumoured there was a good deal of pretence about this form of punishment, after all; that, in reality, no spiders were put in. All the same, it is fortunate that it was never meted out to us—we would have gone stark, staring mad.

After a time, home sickness began to wear off—a questionable benefit, though perhaps necessary—and we began to like school. Our advancement was rapid till we came to figures; after which it was more gradual.

We had heard blood-curdling accounts of "the Inspector"; and, one day, he actually arrived—big beard, long Ulster coat, and black bag strapped over his shoulder. Our heart sank; it was as if a thunderbolt had fallen on a summer's day. We were thankful Miss Hopkins was there to stand between us and the awful personage; but we imagined her voice, for once, had not the same tone of command.

It was said he did not always stay, but contented himself by merely examining the roll book, asking a few questions, and hurrying off. At such times he did not take off his coat or hat. We watched him closely; but, on this occasion, he relieved himself of both, and unstrapped his bag.

We did not get rid of him for full two hours, but were granted a half-holiday after, when he was reported to have cleared away from the village.

One day Miss Hopkins took suddenly ill in school, and had to be assisted to her lodgings.
Again her voice was softened. This time it had an almost plaintive ring, as if pleading for sympathy. Many of us were in tears. She did not resume her post for nine weeks.

Once during this illness, and when she was known to be convalescent, a deputation was appointed to pay her a visit of condolence. We were amongst the chosen ones. How we all looked forward to that visit!

Each one had some little delicacy to offer. She was fond of sweets—more than one chose these. One boy carried a bunch of flowers; another, two fine carrots and a turnip. Johnny Glenn’s little grandson brought a bottle of port. We took a chicken, three fresh eggs, and a pat of butter.

In bed she looked more angelic than ever. How pale her complexion—how snowy-white her wrapper and small frilled cap. Everything about the room and couch were so white. We thought we detected some white amongst the golden clusters of her hair.

She wept convulsively on seeing us and our gifts; talked a little; and then, being still weak, gently dismissed us.

On coming back to school she was only able to stay an hour in the day. The first day there were nothing but congratulations. The second was spent in looking over the list of those requiring punishment. On the third she administered same, and we felt once more under control.

Some time after it got noised abroad that Miss Hopkins was going to be married; and, sure enough, she was to be seen of evenings walking on the Mill Lane with a big bearded man—a master carpenter and builder—a widower with three children. People said he had not treated his first wife well. They expressed surprise regarding Miss Hopkins’s choice.

Once again we heard her voice lose its firmness. It was on an afternoon when she brought the big man in to see the school. She spoke in quite a subdued tone, which sounded strange to us. She must have been fond of him, for she wore his likeness in her brooch.

After marriage she continued teaching for a time; but we soon left. Somehow she seemed to have changed both in appearance and manner. Her looks were careworn, and at times she seemed actually unhappy. People said she was beginning to find things out.

Five years worked a wonderful change in the schoolmistress. She who had once been so neat began to grow quite careless—sometimes appearing out without gloves, her hands looking as if she did kitchen work. Her dress also was decidedly shabby. Some teeth were gone, and
had not been replaced. The voice was still musical, but no longer commanding.

She appeared glad to see us; but we could not hide from ourselves that our idol was falling from its pedestal.

We met her once more, and by that time we had almost grown up.

The schoolmistress had become an old woman—old before her time. Her voice was broken, as was her heart: the music had gone from both. The hair was still wavy, but thin and almost white. We hurried away. Our idol was completely shattered!

We never saw her after that, but merely heard a few scraps concerning her latter days.

Matters grew worse between her husband and herself. Upbraidings, grumblings, even threats, were the order of the day. His children, it was said, turned their forces against her. She had none of her own: which was, perhaps, as well.

When matters assumed an alarming aspect, friends interfered, requesting her to leave him, as her life was in danger.

The well meant interference only received the usual reward.

The end came suddenly; the weaker vessel giving way before the stronger demon. It was said the corpse had a black eye.

THE PASSING YEARS.
THE PASSING YEARS.

Chapter XII.

"The teeth o' Time may gnaw Tantallan."

Burns.

"T mun' hae been a fine biggin' in somebody's day," was what we often remarked about the ruins of the old castle which were located quite close to the village—not the Marquis's castle; it was several miles away: this one had stood on the lower side of the river, the ruin coming into view immediately on turning the corner of the Rookery road.

To this self-same old castle it is more than probable that the village owed its existence—at least its formation—the castle, once formidable and imposing, now hopelessly laid waste, walls crumbling in decay, rank weeds and nettles growing over its desolated hearths.

In Ireland, as in other countries, there had been times of raiding, smuggling, and outlawry. The peasantry, in terror, would drive their sheep and cattle for shelter under the castle's protecting walls, and, in time, houses would cluster round about, and the foundations of the little town would be laid. Centuries pass—the lordly castle lies waste, whilst the village has grown
and become a market town, caring as little for the mansion that had protected and nurtured it, as do the quickly maturing chicks for the mother hen who gave them life.

The majority of our inhabitants knew as little about the old castle and its traditions as they did about the siege of Troy, or the history of Cleopatra's needle.

Had any of us been questioned as to our knowledge of the late General Tumulty, we would have confessed our ignorance as to such a person's ever having existed; but that if he did, he had probably belonged to a circus; and, yet, that same General Tumulty—"The Galloper," as he was called—was the last of the race of those who had been lords of the soil, owned the castle, and fostered the village.

A wild race they were, those Tumultys. Drinking, boxing, gambling, cock-fighting, Sabbath-breaking, were the order of the day; in fact, Sabbath was the day on which was held their greatest carnivals—feats of the ring and the cock-pit. "As wild as a Tumulty" became a bye-word in the neighbourhood.

One of the old stock, it was said, sold himself to the devil for a chest of gold, the ponderous black iron chest remaining in the castle for many generations.

"The Galloper" was only carrying out the traditions of his fathers when he boasted that he preferred his present seat to a seat in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The nickname was applied owing to his furious riding.

The oldest inhabitant informed us that he had heard his grandfather tell of how that mothers had only to tell their children "The Galloper General's comin'," to bring them like chickens under the maternal wing.

The said grandfather described the sight of the General's riding thus: "We saw in the far distance a cloud o' stour, an' afore we knewed he cam' whuzzen past, an' we lost sight o' 'im in anither cloud o' stour. A' can liken his appearance tae naethin' short o' a madman, an' ye wud a' heerd the roars o' the puir beast a mile awa'."

Were we writing a romance it would only be proper to say that the ghosts of these defunct Tumultys were wont to pay nocturnal visits to the ancient ruins of their ancestral home on moonlight nights, and that the sound of horses' feet could be heard at times galloping—now near, now far—but neither horse nor rider ever became visible.

We are not romancing, however, but merely detailing facts. At the same time, it must not be supposed that we were altogether destitute of occasional gleams of influences supernatural.

The road leading to the "Rookery" got the name of being haunted. On it ghosts had
frequently made their appearance to benighted travellers; even the devil himself, it was said, had on more than one occasion obtruded his unwelcome presence.

Some who had not actually seen his majesty had distinctly heard the rattling of his chains. The middle brae was the loneliest part of the road, and it was in that neighbourhood that most of these visitations occurred. When we had got over it, and began to ascend the next hill, we soon came in sight of the "Rookery"; and from that onward the country was more thickly populated.

Some, at least, of the strange sights witnessed may have been imaginary, and others exaggerated; but two or three of the Rookery people who were going home late on the night of a certain November fair, got a scare both real and impressive.

These neighbours were making their way slowly home, arm-in-arm, covering the road from side to side, as well as forward, enlivening the time by jest and snatches of song. They had just reached the top of the middle brae when they were considerably startled by a distinct rattling—not exactly of chains—had it been that, they might have put it down to some sheep or goat having drawn its stake—this rattling was different from anything they had ever heard. They could easily localize it as being directly over the hedge. Coming to a full stop they looked at each other in blank amazement—all the traditions of the place rushing into their somewhat muddled recollections. There is, however, safety in numbers; and wonderful courage is born of a few glasses of "Mountain Dew." They resolved to investigate, and heroically scrambled over the ditch.

Something white and shiny could be plainly seen, close to the back of the hedge; and, nothing daunted, the brave explorers went on. The sight that met their eyes was nothing more nor less than Jean Baxter, the tinker’s wife, who, making her way homewards, carrying the unsold portion of her tins and toasters, had wandered into the field to sleep off the effects of too-frequent imbibings at the fair.

"The Cadger's Close" is the name still applied to a number of houses branching off from the main street of the village; yet how few—if any—could impart the least information regarding "the Cadger" from whom the close took its name; and yet "the Cadger" was a notable personality in his day—probably a protegé of some member of the Tumulty family, for he was a famous prize-fighter, and the strongest man the village had ever seen. His time could not have been wholly taken up with drinking and
boxing, seeing that he built and owned the close, and, possibly, other property as well; but, when in his cups, "the Cadger" was a terrible sight, as he paraded the street up and down, stripped to the waist, and challenging any four men to come out and fight with him twelve rounds. People barred their doors and windows—the street being quite deserted—when "the Cadger" was known to be in one of his "moods." He was wont to boast that he feared neither God nor man. His chest was covered with hair—equal to what grew on another man's head—his arms displaying "bunches" of muscle to a marvellous extent.

(We may have more to say regarding "the Cadger" and other "characters" at another time; but the shuttle is flying, and Christmas fast approaching. These rambling chronicles would never be perused by sensible people, when the serious business of life has again been entered upon at the New Year.)

Nearly everything has changed with the passing years. What has become of the early springs which used to prevail, when we would picnic in the woods during April? or the dry summers, in which we saw no rain from "Auld Mie" (12th of May) till 1st of August? or the six weeks' snow storms, when the roads had to be cut for vehicular traffic, and boys went to school right across country, the snow piled up high as the hedges, and frozen hard.

We cherish a longing for the old familiar scenes, and rush away from the busy city, only to enter another of a lesser degree, but aping its larger sister.

A railway engine is snorting at the entrance to the little town, and another is puffing under the Brig. The meeting-house is modernized; so is the school-house. We look in vain for the old familiar names on the signboards. We feel like strangers in a strange land; and, before leaving the place, wend our way to the old graveyard—there, surely, the improvement craze will not have entered. We would not be surprised though to find the old walls replaced by others of red brick; the rusty gate gone, and replaced by one of polished pine; the interior laid out in walks or drives. But, no; time has wrought few changes here; everything is much the same as when we saw it last. We go through the creaking old gate, shut it after us, and find ourselves all alone with the quiet dead.

In one corner, beneath the shadow of a weeping ash, lie the remains of the schoolmaster, his wife, and their crippled child. Not far distant, Mr. M'Allister and his faithful partner are peacefully laid to rest amongst many members of his flock. Wandering about we come on a modest
stone bearing the names of James and Sarah Miskimmon—"erected by a loving and sorrowing son." Felix Dinsmore's resting-place is only marked by a slate; notwithstanding, there lies beneath the dust of as honest and upright a man as ever the village possessed. Andy Semple is near neighbour to Dan M'Cartney and Rosey, as they were in life. Here, truly, are to be found the relics of a bygone age. We turn to a plot of ground containing five headstones, all in a row, which is the spot of more than ordinary interest to us, and there we linger awhile.

THE END.