

## CHAPTER III.

### THE VILLAGERS.

THERE were three kinds of folk in Kenneth-crook—the guid, the bad, and the Morrisons. This classification was made by the village poet, Saunders Denovan, and it was generally understood that he allied himself to the first of the three classes. How the idea came to Saunders, to thus divide the villagers, I was never fortunate enough to learn, but I know that it was widely accepted at the time as being characteristic of its author and expressive of the dispositions which went to the composition of the village. By a continuous use it has worn itself into a proverb, and enjoys a life in common with the other localisms and sayings for which Kennethcrook is famous. Only the other day I saw it cooked up with other humour in the racy column of a well-known Scotch newspaper, and located in a village far from the place of its birth. Doubtless it is still going the rounds of the press, receiving an additional local colour as it goes, and, if you have not crossed it, you may find yourself reading it ere long. If you do, reflect for a moment on the place to which it affects to belong, and, if you find it in surroundings alien to those I have given it, remember it is the distinctive badge of the inhabitants of Kennethcrook.

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 25*

Thus it was that the villagers pursued the even tenor of their several ways. The great majority were content to be considered as those the poet recognised as "the good." A few, a very few, and it is only human to think so, considered themselves as those whom the seer must have had in his mind's eye when he characterised a certain portion of the inhabitants as "the bad." The rest—indefinable—were the publicans and sinners—good men not to be remembered with their brothers; bad men for whom the second grade of distinction had no association; all united in the common bond of one common birthright—all of them Morrisons.

For a long time the Morrisons held undisputed sway, but a night came when their prerogative was challenged. It led to one of those discussions which helped to wile away the evenings at the mouth of the Parliament Close when the session at St Stephen's had closed and politics were relegated to a corner for a season.

One night when the conclave of weavers and nailers were met after the last ring of the eight o'clock bell had died away on the still evening air, voices, as if in warm discussion, broke out from the Parliament Close. It was Johnny Jaffray and Peter Morrison again—warm friends and warmer foes. Seeing eye to eye in all things in the ordinary business of life, these two were ever ready to cross swords in the arena of debate. They were those who sustained the reputation of the village as a debating society in all matters ecclesiastical or political.

Johnnie Jaffray was heard to say that he believed the Jaffrays were as numerous as the Morrisons. This, admitted in undertones, caught the quick ear of Peter Morrison, and he was on the speaker in a moment.

“What’s that ye say, Jaffray? That the Jaffrays is mair commoner than the Morrisons? Never, man, never!”

The Morrisons were ever jealous of their distinction. Since the day that the verdict had been passed, they walked the village as no common people. Nor were they to be set down without a bold defence. Peter Morrison might have been a Campbell or a Macgregor, so jealous was he of his name, and so the work of refuting the allegation of Johnny Jaffray lay in hands peculiarly suited to the task.

“Saunders Denovan,” said Morrison, and he waved his hand as was his wont when in the heat of controversy, “Saunders Denovan’s a man abune a’ prejudice, an’ he said lang syne that the Morrisons rankit first.”

At this outburst of clannish spirit the defender of the Jaffrays was a little discomfited; but, feeling that it was necessary to say something in justification of the position he had assumed, he dealt a blow at the credence of the village poet—

“I’ll no be positive”—and Johnny was always a cautious man—“I’ll no say Saunders was wrang; I’ll no say he was richt; an’ as for argy-bargying, its oot o’ a’ question; but I’m gey an’ share that gin ye were to count, ye’d find the Jaffrays a hantle sicht nearer ye than ye think.”

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 27*

A privilege was at stake. For many years the Morrisons had reigned supreme, but their day had come. So thought the excited listeners as they heard this later outburst of Jaffray's, and began to consider how many of that name were in the village. So far did the discussion go that an appeal to numeration was made in order to settle the disturbance. A Jaffray and a Morrison was trotted out alternately—Lang Jamie, Soutar Sandy, Cripple Patey, Kirsty's Maggie, and many others known to the villagers by their various *sobriquets*. At last, however, the champion of the Jaffrays began to experience some difficulty in finding kinsmen to balance the calculations of his friend, and after repeated attempts to find a companion to one of the Morrisons of Redhaugh, Johnny intimated that he would let Peter claim the victory.

"I was maybe a thochtie quick," he said, adding in a voice that was just toned with sarcasm, "an' of course Saunders Denovan's a man abune a' prejudice."

Here ended the last attempt to traduce the glory of the name elect. There are three kinds of folk in Kennethcrook to-day—the guid, the bad, and the Morrisons.

While multiplicity of one name may be a good thing, it sometimes leads to a deal of perplexity. The Morrisons did not enjoy their position alike with ease and honour. There were Peters in abundance, and some plan of distinction had to be resorted to. Tarry Peter is a standing memorial of that order. It was proposed that they should be numbered Peter I., Peter II.,

Peter III., and so on, but Kennethcrook was never behind when dignity was at stake. It was the practice of kings to add these numerals of distinction to their respective names, but that was no reason why the Peters of this village should be so designated. Their desires lay in more pronounced Latin. The Latin ordinals were called into use, and the Peters were thereafter known as Primus Peter, Secundus Peter, Tertius Peter, and so on *ad infinitum*. But the classic vocables were too great for the rusticity of Kennethcrook to grapple with, and into quaint provincialisms the titles descended. Dog Latin you might have termed them, and even at that found it difficult to have proved your assertion. Tarry was more familiar in the mouths of the villagers than Tertius, and whatever may have been the claims of Peter the Third to distinction by means of the language of Cicero and Virgil, he was forced to content himself with the less dignified but more homely epithet Tarry.

The preacher with his usual three heads and conclusion finds it necessary to say something on each head, and I suppose it is incumbent upon me that I should say something of the two other classes of folk who found a habitation in Kennethcrook, after having said so much on the merits and demerits of the Morrisons. It is, however, much more difficult to write of the good and the bad than it was to tell you of the Morrisons. Somehow or other a villager awoke to find he was a Morrison, and to realise that there was no getting away from the fact. Not so was it with the good

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 29

and the bad. They existed pretty much in the minds of their fellows, and while every one was decided on those who went to form the *Morrison's*, everyone had but hazy conceptions of the *guid folk* and the bad.

The *Anti-Burghers* were the *guid folk* when I first came to the village. They said so, and the *Parish Church* folks liked to encourage them in their opinion. Some years after 1843, however, they were forced to recognise the *Free Churchmen* as a party which had claims to their brotherhood, and for the past thirty years the *seceders* have been, according to their own ideas, the *guid folks* of the place. For one thing, they take life more seriously. The *Free Kirk* folks have broken three bells already, so zealous are they for the cause of Christianity. A weekly prayer-meeting is an institution for which they are responsible. The example was followed by the *Anti-Burghers*. I believe these communions had a joint proposal to hold a daily service, but dismissed it on the ground that it savoured more of Romanism than religion. It was with reluctance, however, that they give up the idea, for it deprived them of so many chances of praying for the redemption of their fellows of the *National Church*. Yes, do not misdoubt me, they were the good folk of the village.

I can speak with some measure of freedom on this point. I am classed among the bad folks—I sit in the *Parish Church*. For a long time the most of us have gone beyond redemption. We agreed to the introduction of a hymnal. After that the *guid folks* of the village lost hope.

For a time we lived in peace, but a day of retribution came. For the past ten years they have been seeking our conversion by drastic measures, and even as I write these lines I see the result of their work. Yonder is the Free Kirk mission hall lighted. The guid folks have been holding a series of meetings to consider the practical benefit of Disestablishment. Yes, but even angels have been known to sin. The Free Kirkers themselves have a hymnal to-day.

Thus did church connection and family name mark us out. The Morrisons might be members of Free Kirk or Parish Kirk it mattered not: they were a mixed class. All others were known by their churchism. We seemed to take kindly to our titles. They came to us as a matter of course. I never heard of anyone joining the seceder's communion in order to be considered good. Our designation may have been a touch of martyrdom, but we all seemed pleased to bear it. On the part of many there was a touch of innocence in its application. They never seemed to realise that the epithet meant anything. These were the really good. They were those who did not come within the general bounds of the term; those who were recognised as somewhat higher than the best of our designations would allow. Yes, when all has been said and done, I believe, there were more than three classes of folk in Kennethcrook. "It taks a wheen folk to mak' a world, and it taks a guid pickle to mak' a village."

The good, the bad, and the Morrisons. Within the term is gathered much, although you

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 31

may not think so. I have seen the day when things were different from what they are now, and when no smile crossed the face of the villager when he made this remark anent the inhabitants of Kennethcrook. There was this much about the phrase that no one persisted in its application. You, if you had belonged to the Parish Kirk, could have used the term so that the seceders would have been the bad folks. But if you had belonged to the Parish Kirk you would not have done so. The Parish Kirk folks never did seem anxious to use the epithet at all. They smiled when it was repeated. With the Anti-Burghers and the Free Kirk folk it was different. Their whole life seem to be bound up in the phrase, and I sometimes think that their virtues hung upon its use. Once the Anti-Burghers almost wept for joy. To their communion belonged only one family of the name of Morrison. That family removed from Kennethcrook, and with it went every suspicion of evil. In the mixed class who found refuge in this patronymic there was the doubt of existent evil, but when the only members of the name lifted their lines the Anti-Burghers made good claim to be recognised as the "guid." For some time all went well, but things come and go, and very shortly afterwards another Morrison came to the village, and, alas, for the righteous! he belonged to the Anti-Burgher kirk. And so their term of virtue came to an end. I do not know that they ever had a similar chance of becoming famous. Certainly there are Morrisons in the United



Presbyterian communion to-day. As for the Free Kirk folk such a state of blissful existence was never given them. Their ruling elder is a Morrison. The Parish Kirk—the belated Zion—fared worse at the hands of fate. Its minister is a Morrison. But the Parish Kirk folks are content with their minister, and their minister is content with his name. So the tides of virtue and vice—sometimes ebbing, sometimes flowing—bear public opinion on their breasts. The changes in village life have been many, but amid them all there still survives the distinctive features that stamped the Kennethcrook folks so very long ago. There still are in the village “the guid, the bad, and the Morrisons.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VILLAGE COMMERCE.

THE principal shops in the village were in the Main Street. Kennethcrook was not a whisky-loving (though Sabbath-keeping) place, but it boasted three public-houses. These were for the most part dependent on strangers. One of them—the “White Horse” it was called—was a grand source of revenue, before the abolition of the toll levies. Its yearly rental went as high as £800. It stood at the south entrance to the “Main Street,” guarding the village from that point, and the “Black Bull” took up its situation at the other extremity of the street. It cannot be said that the “White Horse” lacked its due grazing because of the “Black Bull,” or that the “Black Bull’s” pasture was encroached upon by the “White Horse.” So long as you were in the village you were between two evils. I say evils ; but, of course, everybody does not agree with me. Ingress and egress in either direction meant the passing of a place of refreshment, and it was generally said that a visitor refreshed himself at the one end of the village and made himself ready for the continued journey at the other. The third public-house was in the centre of the street, and raised its head a little above its fellows in matters moral ; it had only

a porter and ale license. The two inns were distinguished by hanging signs. Something with a distant resemblance to one of "the mightiest of all the beasts of chase" arrested your attention and led you to suppose that you were at the "Black Bull," but I would not have considered you very stupid though you had scratched your head, and tried to wipe imaginary dust from your eyes, as you gazed at the device of the "White Horse." Peter Morrison might not have dealt with you leniently; but, then, Peter was the proprietor. I am not aware that even yet the village takes Peter seriously with regard to that device. The truth is this. The inn was known as the "White Horse" long before any hanging sign tried to add confirmation to the fact. One night, however, it was suggested to the host that a sign would be a good thing. Happening to be in Glasgow, Peter Morrison saw a crowd in the High Street, with a man offering something for sale. It was a publican's stock that was being put up to auction. Making his way forward to the crowd, Peter suddenly found himself bidding excitedly against some others of the trade for a sign-board which had been hoisted for purchase. After some spirited competition the board was knocked down to Peter. Then Peter, no man was prouder, as he stepped from the mail coach with the sign-board on his shoulder. By and bye it came to be hung. An anxious crowd stood awaiting the event. Peter's brother, Alec, who carried on business as a joiner and undertaker, was entrusted with the work, and

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 35

after some considerable difficulty the board was got into position.

Peter was a publican, but he was also a man of method. The erection of a sign-board was not a thing of every-day occurrence, and Peter felt that it was his duty to signalise the event in some special way. A free table was provided. The crowd regaled itself in anticipation of the ceremony, and it was part of the arrangement that a second supply was to be served. Amid a burst of applause Mrs Morrison drew her apron from off the board, and revealed the long-looked-for design. The crowd smiled. It was its turn.

"A horse!" exclaimed Weelum Martin, "that's a strai<sup>k</sup>et ezebra!"

And so it was. Peter's desire for a hanging signboard enjoyed a greater part of his nature than his knowledge of animal life, and, mistaking a zebra for a horse, he bid with hearty competition against his many opponents with the afore-said result. Peter's horse has been the subject of much jocular<sup>l</sup>ity, but its owner takes it all in good part. Not once, but often, has the publican had to defend himself against the jesting of the villagers. Many arguments has he used in favour of his purchase, but his reasoning never reaches a higher altitude than this, and you can take it as Peter Morrison's logic if you like:—"If," he says, "there's siccan things as spottit horses, what ails ye at strokit anes?"

In recent years the system of co-operation has found much sympathy among the working classes, and nearly every town and village in Scotland have establishments worked on its principles.

There is no such institution, however, in Kennethcrook. The societies of Rockburgh and Rangholm and Merlestone seem to regard the village as a place on which they have some claim, and extend the workings of their several establishments to Kennethcrook. They seem to have the idea that it will yet become co-operative. In point of fact it might be father to them all. I have told you that it has no society to-day. It had one many years ago. That society taught the villagers a lesson. I believe there are some in Kennethcrook who are members of one or other of the societies which find existence in the towns I have named, but they are incomers to the village. No one whose mind can survey the years so far as to take in our miniature Darien Scheme has any sympathy with the system. The idol of co-operation was smashed in a few years. I have every faith in the institutions as they are worked to-day. I believe them to be a source of good to many, but I will never look with favour on any such creation as that which catered for the sympathy of our villagers.

The society was organised by a number of the weavers, and was, I believe, another outburst of that social equality which characterised them during the Chartist movement. Only those who were moderately well-to-do could join. Shares were taken in the scheme, and when sufficient money had been launched to procure the necessary stock-in-trade, the "store," as the villagers called it, was thrown open for custom. It paid no dividend on goods bought. Its claims

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 37*

for trade lay in the statement that it sold a better article at a lower price. It was to pay a dividend on its shares at the end of its first financial year. For a time all went well. Those of the village folks who were members were enjoying the better goods at the lower figure, and were looking forward to a huge dividend at the end of the year. I believe there were some who did not know exactly what a dividend was. The whole episode of the working is now an old story, but I think it was in three years that the establishment fell. No dividend was ever paid, and at the end of the third year the Executive—two weavers, three nailers, a drystone-dyke builder, and a ploughman—called on the shareholders for more money to carry on the enterprise. The bubble was burst. The shop continued open for some time until much of the stock was cleared out. Then the fittings were put up to auction. I think there was a dividend of three-and-sixpence to the shareholders. One night in the gloaming the signboard was taken down. Jeems Jamieson and Davie Paterson added to their dividends by taking it for firewood. And so Kennethcrook tried to bury her misdeeds. The village poet composed an elegy. In "Doric Lilts" you will find some verses, and I believe they are to the memory of the society. They bear the significant title, "A Nightmare."

Co-operation is, therefore, the worst blot in our commercial history. The villagers have long since recovered from the disaster, but they have no sympathy with the system. Burnt bairns dread the fire.

During the existence of this Society, the other shops in the village suffered. There were three grocers when it was organised. Only one was left to smile at its downfall. There is only one to-day. The village gave little encouragement to grocers. Their trade was so monopolised in part by other shops, that there was really no excuse for Duncan MacAdam and his fellow provision merchants. The baker supplied much that might have been more fitly sold by the grocer. The dairy, too, entered into the competition of the thing, and left the provision merchant with little to depend on. When the Store came to its undignified end, an attempt was made by one of the former grocers to reopen his shop. He closed it a few months later.

There was one shoemaker in Kennethcrook. His place of business, too, was in the Main Street. He had entered the craft in the usual way by being what the villagers called a "snab." He was somewhat successful, however, and when the Co-operative Society failed, he took its shop and set up as a "Boot and Shoe Maker." The business is carried on to-day by his son. It seems to be a paying concern. The villagers are heavy on leather.

There is only one other shop that I will mention here. It is Luckie Jack's. Like "The White Horse" and "The Black Bull," it is still in Kennethcrook, though Luckie has long since gone home. It stood just in the centre of the village—the most suitable spot for the purpose it was intended to serve. Luckie's was in some measure a Government institution. But, while

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 89

such is the case, I am at a loss to tell you what was the exact line of business she followed. This may give you some idea.

Sandy Powrie was a clever hand at the brush as the villagers put it. He was engaged once a year, about the Fair time, to whitewash some of the walls of the houses. He had, however, studied art in some of its higher branches : had attempted heraldry in his leisure hours. One day Luckie Jack commissioned him to paint the front of her shop, and gave him instructions what writing to put thereon. Sandy was a fair speller, but points of interrogation, commas, and other curliewurlies of punctuation were all alike intelligible to him. He set to work, however, and in due course produced a sign on which some of the more intelligent villagers used to gaze and then smile. At Luckie's death the signboard was sold along with her other effects. It was bought by Andra Johnston when he set up in business as a shoemaker, and may still be seen hanging above his door. But another painter was called in, and the sign, that had come to be recognised as one of the attractions of the village, was wiped forever from the eyes of man. Sandy peppered Luckie's signboard with punctuation. I have no doubt it was his intention that the result should be a work of art, but many a good intention has come to nought. The sign, as I have already told you, has now been painted over ; but there were some folks in the village as capable artists as Sandy. I was calling for a friend the other evening and saw a copy of the sign in his scrap-



book. It will, perhaps, be difficult for the printer to find type battered enough to render a complete reproduction, but what I give can hardly fail to convey some idea of the original. A point of exclamation here and there, a comma now and then, a misdivided word occasionally, and a significant point of interrogation at the end equipped the signboard with its mission to the world. It ran as follows :—

<p>J! JACK! GREEN, GE          OGER, <i>and</i>, GENERAL, ME          RCHANT! <i>and</i>. POST MISTRESS?</p>
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I am not aware that the Antiquary of Sir Walter Scott was ever a visitor to Kennethcrook. If he was he must have looked strangely on the curious signboard. I have no doubt it would be as intelligible to him as the Roman vessel with its peculiar inscription, A.D.L.L., and perhaps the reading of it no less interesting than the translation of these letters into "Aiken Drum's Lang Ladle."

But Luckie Jack was pleased with her signboard. It helped to convey to many an idea of the trade she carried on, although, I think you will admit that, so far as points of interrogation went, Luckie's was a questionable calling.

Her window was a source of amusement to the children. It was well stocked with things toothsome to young folks. It was not a very large window, and it was filled with twelve panes of knotted glass. Some care had been taken in arranging the panes, for it so happened that the four which one was accustomed to look

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 41*

through were almost free from knots. On the framework was arranged a goodly assortment of ginger-bread horses and Californian rings. These were calculated to draw odd coppers from the pockets of indulgent mothers. On the sill of the window Luckie arranged her stock-in-trade. Needles, buttons, laces and tapes, were neatly sorted in one corner; various kinds of nuts in the other, while the centre was occupied by pan-drops, peppermints, conversations, and other sweets.

One branch (and that the most distinctive of her business) was the postal service. Now-a-days our village matters of correspondence are worked from Rockburgh, and postal and telegraph messengers from that town do us service; but in those days Kennethcrook was a post-town itself.

There was no postal delivery at that time. Letters were things that did not come to Kennethcrook folks every day. Every villager knew when to expect a letter, and was usually on the outlook a week before it came. Luckie's shop stood in that part of the Main Street at which it was impossible for a heavy vehicle to halt. The driver had to lash his horses down the brae and trust to Providence and the weavers to take it up the brae. The weavers were, to some extent, Government officials. The Mail Coach was the only conveyance that demanded their assistance. The driver blew his shrill horn and twenty weavers were at his command. These put their shoulders to the wheel in very truth, and slowly the lumbering carriage

7

mounted the brae. Once there the weavers returned to their looms, contented with the work they had done. As the coach came thundering down the brae, the mail-bag was hurled unceremoniously from the driver's box, and usually fell within a few feet of the post-office. Constant practice made the driver proficient. After the coach passed, Luckie lifted the bag and began the work of examination. The letters were arranged over the boxes of sweets and up against the window. Within a day or two they were claimed. One villager was in the habit of telling another that a letter was addressed to him, and so the news was carried through Kennethcrook, and Luckie's window emptied.

The office of postmistress was held to be doubly remunerative. I have heard it said in Rockburgh, and by strangers, that the villagers were forward; but this remark was due wholly to appearance. The Kennethcrook folks were shy. To lay themselves under a debt of obligation to others was what they tried to avoid. They had curious ideas regarding the postmistress, and could not see why delivery of letters was anything less than obligation. Thus it came to be that receipt of a letter meant the making of a purchase. Luckie Jack made a fortune in her time.

"A bawbee's worth o' number three needles, blunts, and no very sharp o' the e'e," one would inquire, throwing in as a casual remark that there was a letter "named" to him in the window.

That was one form of approach, and it was:

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 43

diversified according to the needs of the time. Little purchases, some of you may say : but these were what Luckie depended on. They went a long way towards making her comfortable, and enabled her to leave a good many pounds behind her. Quite a number of the village folks made application for the office when it was vacated at her death.

Luckie's window was screened off from the shop by song-sheets and story-books. These were suspended from a cord in such a way as to give a look of compactness to the window, and at the same time afford easy access to the goods displayed on the sill. In the selling of this literature she had to cater for the public taste as in the other branches of her business. Her song-sheets were for the most part adapted for and purchased by, the youth of the village who intended "guizarding" when the "daft-days" came. The story-books—such as "The Babes in the Wood," "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper," and "Bluebeard"—were got up in covers of glaring colours, and were bought by parents as birthday presents for their children.

Luckie Jack's shop was the one light in the commercial world of Kennethcrook after the eight o'clock bell rang. The inns kept plying their trade without fear of a closing order, but they had no lights which shone to the street. The other shopkeepers ceased work when the bell rang. The postmistress kept an open door. Nor did she do so in vain. Many were the little purchases that were made during the evening. I have sometimes heard it said that

Luckie was greedy, because she kept an open door till late at night. Her action, however, sometimes proved useful. Castor-oil was required for some sleepless child ; Luckie sold medicine. Salt was asked for—someone had been burnt ; Luckie sold salt. It was on occasions such as these that Luckie's characteristic of greed seemed to disappear.

It was a dim light that shone through Luckie's window when I first came to the village, but, by-and-bye, it grew brighter. One solitary candle, affixed to a wooden socket, which was suspended from the ceiling by wires, was all that enabled the children to see the wares and play at guesses with their names. One night the candle fell from its position, burnt some song - sheets and wasted some peppermints. This was a big loss to Luckie. There was no insurance company to make it good. She determined that the same would not occur again, and so resolved to get a lamp. There was quite a crowd round the window that night the new illuminant was tried. It cast a strong light out into the street, and everybody deemed the new departure a success. The postmistress was delighted. She was exulting in her achievement of paraffin over candle, when the outer world was beginning to recognise the superiority of electricity over gas.

## CHAPTER V.

### INDUSTRIES.

THERE were three industries that gained favour in the eyes of the villagers—nailing, weaving, and watchmaking. I have already told you something of the decline of two of these industries. The other has also fallen away. For the last ten years watchmaking has had no representative resident in Kennethcrook. But, although the bellows have ceased to blow, and the shears have been laid past as ornaments, and the lens has failed to reveal the intricacies of the time-keeper to our villagers, there are memories hovering round me of days when these things were not. I remember, as though it were but yesterday, of the ruddy glare that shot out from the smiddies frightening the horses after nightfall. The smell of caddis is still familiar to me as in the palmy days of the weaving industry. Yes, and although he has slept with his fathers for one decade and more, I still fancy I see the old Antiquary standing at his shop-door in the middle of the brae, and hear the jingle jingle of his clocks as they strike.

Nailmaking is the most time-honoured of our manufactures. I have no means of learning when it was begun in the village, but existing evidence takes me back for a very long time.

Duncan Watson, of whom I have already spoken, is one of the hereditary nailers of Kennethcrook. His grandfather, he tells me, was a nailer in the same shop as he himself was engaged in, and that breaks the back of one century at least. He says he remembers that grandfather telling him in turn about his own grandfather, and that he had had a nail-shop just at the foot of Flint's Brae. That breaks the back of another century. But there the tales of these grandfathers end. At this rate I might have gone back through the centuries to the time of the Flood, and proved that Noah bought the nails for the ark in Kennethcrook, but even oral tradition fails me, and I must perforce content myself with two hundred years. That, however, gives a respectable antiquity to the industry.

Two miles below Kennethcrook the Lunarty becomes navigable, and four miles below the village it falls into the Forrie, by which its waters are conveyed to the sea. Just at the point where it joins the Forrie stands the little town of Merlestone. This was the sea-port of Kennethcrook. To Merlestone the iron was shipped from England, and thence carted to the village. The material from which the nails were made was, generally speaking, scrap iron. Taking the import in a stricter sense, it contained a quantity of steel. The scrap iron, as it was called, was brought in barrels to Merlestone. There the barrels were unloaded of their contents, and the iron, thrown into carts, was brought up and emptied in a heap at the nailers' doors. It was an interesting material that scrap

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 47*

ron. It was imported from the Continent. There is quite a number of swords hanging above mantle-shelves in the village. These swords were picked from among the scrap iron, and may have done service in many of the wars famous in history. Hoops, too, were often found, and they proved of good use to the villagers. "Girds," they were termed, and were employed in the carrying of water by stoups in the days when a public well supplied Kennetherook. Skates were occasionally picked from the scraps. These were at a premium. Skates were common enough in the village, a corner of the Drum Park supplying everything necessary for their use, but the kind that occasionally turned up among the imported "scrap" were of a style and cut not usual in the place, and were treasured on that account.

With this unpromising material the nailer had to go to work. If you had looked at the heap of rubbish thrown down at the nail-shed door, and a few days afterwards seen the product of that rubbish in the shape of many bags of nails, you would have been of opinion that a nailer's occupation was not altogether devoid of art. The work of beating the scraps into rods was the laborious part of the industry, and the number of nails produced in a day by the average nailer was something like a thousand. Only with the decline of the industry did the use of this scrap iron fall into disuetude. Some thirty years ago, England imported nail-rods, thus rendering the work of manufacture less of a labour. Half of the time of the nailer was in this



manner saved, and the product doubled. Two thousand nails represented a good day's work. By a few of the younger nailers, this import was hailed as the dawning of a brighter day, but their far-seeing fathers were not disposed to look with favour on the new manufacture. They saw in the English splitting mill by which the rods were made, the herald of that destruction that was, alas! so soon to overtake them.

When the manufacture of horse nails came to be recognised as an industry, Kennethcrook was one of the first places to take it up. This branch, however, was just attaining recognition among hand-nailers when machinery sounded the death-knell of the trade. And so the industry has passed away. Machine-nailers, as I have already told you, represent the once flourishing manufacture. Forty years ago the number was four hundred. At that trade depression, during which the Kennethcrook Band was dissolved, of which dissolution I shall yet tell you something, there were over three hundred on the nailers' society. Yes, and there was a number of non-society men at that time.

The nailer of those days was a contented soul. Happy in his little world of home, and monarch of the nail-shed, he worked on through the long day of fourteen hours, glorying in the consciousness that he was providing existence for those dependent on him. To make a wage of thirteen shillings a week meant six days' unceasing labour. This, with a frugal wife at home and the low prices then charged for the necessities

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 49

of life, rendered existence tolerable. Yes, and even made many a nailer independent. A few sent sons to college. But the world is ever changing. The other day I followed the hearse up the Kirkwynd. We were burying one of the last of the hand-nailers of the village.

As in the Nail Raw the nailing industry was represented, so in Loom Lane did the weavers find existence. Tartan was for a time the most extensive branch of this manufacture. The tartans of the Scottish regiments were woven in Kennethcreek. About a week ago, when I was standing at my door, a man approached me with a distinctive cut about him that marked him as a tourist.

"You are so-and-so?" he enquired.

I said I was.

"You know me?" he continued.

I replied that I did not.

Like Byron at Newstead Abbey, he was viewing the home of his fathers. He was Macaulay's New Zealander before his time. He remarked that great changes had taken place since he, in the fifties, had set out to push his fortune in other lands. He made an enquiry about Saunders Denovan. I said he was dead. He had a sister, the stranger remarked. I said she was still alive, and that her house was in the back of the Parliament Close. He went away to visit her.

"I mind," he said, as he moved away, and any tone of native dialect he had lost came back to him, "I mind when I used to stand and watch (a laddie hame frae schule) Saunders an'

his sister weavin' tartan i' the wast house o' Loom Lane."

Before the tartan weaving began, "harn sheets" formed one of the chief articles of manufacture. These were made of a durable though somewhat coarse linen, and found ready purchasers. When the guidwife spun a quantity of this yarn on her wheel, and calculated how many sheets it was likely to produce, she solicited orders until the required number was obtained, and then the guidman went to work and wove to order. Plaiding and blankets were other branches of the weaving industry. The former was chiefly used for suitings, and Kennethcrook tweed was known by folks who knew not where Kennethcrook lay. The weavers are difficult to describe. All of them were more or less independent. Some worked steadily for Colonel Robertson; indeed, their loom-shops might have been regarded as part of the mill. In the mill itself, of course, a number of hands were employed; some at set wages, a few working by the piece. Others, again, of the weavers, who had loom-shops of their own, were in touch with Glasgow houses, and waited the arrival of the Mail Coach for orders what to weave. A number (and these were the weavers of the place according to their own thinking) were independent.

"I'll work to no man," said the village poet, and his words formed the creed of a few.

The distance from Kennethcrook to Glasgow was nothing very great to any of our villagers.

"Fower miles at a stretch an' ye sune gang

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 51

ower the grund," was Jeems Jamieson's way of looking at it.

It meant, however, a good tight walk of from seven to eight hours.

When these independent weavers finished their web, they carefully packed it up and laid it aside for the Mail Coach on Friday. I have known them on a Wednesday, if they thought they would have a difficulty in being ready for Friday, working on through Wednesday night and into Thursday, through Thursday night and into Friday, with only sufficient time for meals and a two hours' sleep to break their stretch.

"Weeting the Wab" was one of the customs of Kennethcrook. This was a dram given by the weaver to the driver of the Coach, for which the driver was expected to be as gentle with the cloth as possible during its journey to Glasgow, and over which he pledged the weaver's health and wished him a speedy sale.

Friday afternoon saw the Mail Coach lumbering up the Main Street with the web among its luggage. In the grey dawn of the Saturday morning, the weaver set out on foot to find a merchant for his goods. Never very difficult to procure a purchaser, it was seldom that the seller was not back in Kennethcrook that night. With a light heart, and his money tied up in a corner of his napkin, and the napkin then placed in a pocket in the inside of his shirt, the weaver turned his face towards home. Leaving the grey stalks of St Mungo behind him in the early afternoon, he reached Kennethcrook between eight and nine in the evening.

It was seldom that the weaver would come to any terms other than "siller doon." Credit was almost an unknown system with the villagers. Jeems Aitkenhead was about the only weaver who sent out his web and did not demand immediate payment. He was employed by a merchant in Rockburgh, and sent on his goods as soon as they were woven. If, however, Jeems never suffered for the want of payment, he suffered much in conscience through payment. From Rockburgh to Kennethcrook is a pleasant enough walk for a Sabbath afternoon, and it was generally on this day that the merchant from Rockburgh came out to the village to square the account. Jeems abhorred Sabbath traffic. Sitting ben in his room, and studying his time worn copy of "The Scots Worthies," his face lengthened when Mr M'Martin was announced. Ushered into the pious old Anti-Burgher's presence, the merchant entered into a conversation which was only joined in by Jeems so far as seemed to him in keeping with the sacred day. The account squared, the merchant rose to go. "Marget," Jeems' wife, showed him out. Then followed the scene of repentance. With that righteous indignation (which can only swell the breasts of Anti-Burghers) heaving within him, Jeems collected the money which had been paid and dashed it from him. The coins found their way into any odd corners of the room they chose, and were allowed to lie there till the following day, when Marget instituted a vigorous search for the money. I do not know but that some of you may be inclined

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 53

to smile at my story. Yes, and I have smiled too. But if you care to look below the outward eccentricity of the incident, you may, like me, see something of a stern unbending devotion to a higher will in the act.

The obnoxious Sabbath payments are at an end. Four weavers, where as many hundreds have been, are not particular as to the day of reckoning. Do not think, however, that they are Sabbath-breakers. Working in the old way and in the old place, they have many of the traits which distinguished their fathers. But, I am forgetting, I have to write of other days.

Forty years ago the weaver's life was a pleasant one. The rate at which the loom was working was an indication of how trade stood. The noise of the loom was suited to two sayings. There was a music in it for the weaver's wife, and I have oftentimes heard wives at doors congratulating each other in their own homely way when Sandy's, or Tam's, or Jeems' loom was working at high pressure. Wives might congratulate each other, but the boys kept the sayings going. Three or four of them would set out on a march through Loom Lane, stopping at the door of every shop. Pausing until they caught the rickety-tic of the loom, they suited it to a phrase. If the loom was working slowly, then in measured tones went up the chorus—"A—her—rin—the—day, —a—her—rin—the—day"; but if the loom was working at a high speed, the band shouted "Twa herrins the day, Twa herrins the day," ever keeping time with the weavers. Boys pass and repass the weaving-

shops in Loom Lane to-day, but there is nothing to call for their attention.

Kennethcrook was famed for clocks and watches. The manufacture of these was the third industry the village boasted.

Long ago, as now, when a couple settled down to the responsibilities of married life, the first trial that met them was the plenishing. In humble life the necessities were got first. Every wife had to procure a chest of drawers, the other expensive furniture was got by times. No one, however, was content until her house was furnished with a clock. In these days timepieces are bought for shillings, in those days they were bought for pounds. Some thirty years ago the American clock was introduced and was largely taken advantage of by the working folks. Before that the coffin-clock was the article that was aimed at. If a father presented a son with a coffin-clock as a marriage present, the woman was considered to have made a good marriage. If a woman's vanity allowed her to choose a timepiece in preference to some other and, perhaps, more useful piece of furniture, she was voted a senseless hizzy, and solid, douce, old women prayed for the man who was to be tied to her. Such was the ebb and flow of the tide of village gossip.

Coffin-clocks are common enough yet, though you may not recognise them by that name. Some of our younger villagers of forty years ago identified them with a song more popular then than now, and called them "Grandfathers' clocks." "Lobby clock" is the more dignified

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 55

name they bear. Henderson and Stevenson were the names that guaranteed good workmanship in the village. Stevenson's was a time-honoured establishment. Henderson was an apprentice of Stevenson, then began business on his own account, and did fairly well. Subsequently, however, he sold out of Kennethcreek and removed to Rockburgh, where now (seeing the village has no watchmaker of its own) he is to a large extent supported by the villagers.

Alexander Stevenson—familiarly known as San. Steenson — was the village antiquary. His shop was a veritable museum. Its contents, however, were chiefly connected with the trade. He had a wonderful collection of old clocks and watches, and was a perfect storehouse of information regarding them. Yes, I remember often speaking to him about his curios, and receiving information concerning them. It is not that, however, so much as the excitement that prevailed when they came to a sale, that keeps the relics in my memory. Quite a number of curio-hunters visited the village that day, and Stevenson's watches—his trash, as the old wives styled them—brought high prices.

But San's chief branch of his profession was his attendance on the village clock. The clock kept a time of its own. From the funds of the Kirk Session San drew an annual allowance of five pounds, and for that sum was liable for the maintenance of the clock. It required winding up every day. When the sexton mounted the tower to ring the bell at eight o'clock, he was invariably accompanied by San. One day, how-



over, San and the sexton fell out, and after that the clock was never wound up till between nine and ten. Then it was that the village was terrified, and children stayed indoors at night after dusk. A ghost was in the kirkyaird.

"Sae muckle kieann (cayenne) pepper wull ye gie's for tuppence, Luckie?" queried Robin Tosh of the astonished postmistress.

"Guid guide us, laddie, what do ye want wi' kieann?" demanded Luckie, after regaining composure.

"Spier nae questions, Luckie, sae muckle for tuppence?"

"Twa unce jimp, juist wantin' the turn o' the scale."

"Weel, I think that should maist dæ. Tuppence worth."

The ghost was about to be laid. That night a band of four young men came swinging up the Shirra's Brae. From their laughter one would have said they had spent some time at the "White Horse." The night was what the village folks called "inky black." As they turned the corner of the brae the faintest of them quaked. There was the ghest. Only a few yards from them, and hanging over the kirkyaird dyke, was the object that had frightened the villagers for three weeks. Robin Tosh was the least timid of the company.

"I'm thinkin', ma man, it's an unco cauld job ye've gotten," said Robin, as he approached the ghost. And the ghost spoke.

"Dae ye think sae?" it muttered.

"Ye'd be nane the waur o' a moothfu'," said

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 57*

Robin, following up his conversation. Again the ghost spoke.

“Dae ye think sae?”

“Wad ye tak a snuff, ma man?” asked Robin, as he held out his snuff-box. And the ghost spoke not. It put out its hand, took the box, and snuffed greedily.

Once in his life San Steenson uttered speech that my pen would rebel against writing. The once was that occasion.

“Snuff, Steenson, snuff, ye’re welcome to it, and mind it was Robin Tosh that gied ye’t,” and Robin and his companions fled.

That was the last of our village ghost. San left his white apron at home after that, and, strange to say, he was never afterwards seen in the kirkyaird after dark. He never admitted that he was the ghost, but village gossip (based on circumstantial evidence) gave him a position from which there was no recoiling.

Notwithstanding his little weakness for playing the ghost, San placed much of his time at the disposal of the village public. The clock occupied his continual attention. Since his death many, doubtless thinking themselves far beyond San at their trade, have been called in, but the clock is as wayward as ever. Its one great fault in San’s time was its long half-hour and its short one. It seemed to be off its balance. The long hand in making the circuit of its circumference was exceptionally slow in climbing the brae towards the hour. When the clock struck, however, it seemed to impress upon the hand that it had taken thirty-five

minutes to do the half of its journey, and that it must do the other half in the remaining twenty-five. The hand then set to work ; came down the hill at a high speed, gained its lost minutes, and was in time to start the upward march at the proper second. For a long time San devoted his thoughts towards the rectifying of that fault, but all to no purpose, and at length he gave up the chase. Otherwise the clock went fairly well, and San was proud of his work. Nor did he hesitate to say so. Among the floating traditions of the place, which depend for existence on the village gossip, is an anecdote of the pride San felt in his workmanship. He had been having a late night with some cronies at Rockburgh, and it was nearly twelve o'clock when he and they set out towards Kennethcrook. Just as they were approaching the village, the clock struck twelve, and San, turning to his companions, said, with a smile—"Noo, hark ye up, lads, she soonds fu' high, her maker's praise." Saunders Denovan has preserved the remark in one of his poems, although he gives it a different setting of incident. Still the clock strikes its various hours, and still it indulges in its wayward time, but the Antiquary heeds not. San sleeps below the shadow of the tower, but it is the sleep from which there is no awakening. He was a faithful servant of the village in the capacity of clock-maker, and the village recognised this to a greater extent after his death. You will look in vain for his shop in the middle of the brae, but just step in to one or two of the houses in the village and look at the dials of

*Some Sketches of Village Life.* 59

their eight-day clocks. There you will get abundant evidence of the once thriving calling, for their faces bear the legend—

“A. STEVENSON, KENNETHCROOK.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### ORGANISATIONS.

Forty years ago there was a number of organisations in Kennethcrook. One of these alone remains. It is a yearly society conducted on what its founders termed "philanthropic principles." Each member pays so much a week, and these contributions, minus some few pence, are returned once a year in time for the Martinmas term. The few pence deducted are set aside against sickness and death. When any member is taken ill, he receives a weekly aliment of several shillings, and where death ensues, his relatives obtain sufficient to provide for decent interment. This is one of the best societies I know of. Conducted in a humble way, it has been largely taken advantage of by the villagers, and the modest contribution weekly relieves them from the anxiety of gathering a rent.

Among the fallen institutions are the "Hearse Fund" and the "Horse Fund." The system of cab-hiring, carried on to such an extent in Rockburgh, was the death of these organisations. Nevertheless they were provident, and though now among the things that were, no one regrets their existence.

The "Hearse Fund" and the "Horse Fund" were instituted as media to facilitate interment.

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 61

Long before I came to Kennethcrook, the villagers rebelled against burial by spokes, and these funds were the outcome of that rebellion. The last funeral in which the spokes played a part took place a number of years ago, and it was wholly owing to circumstances that the spokes were used. It was a double funeral. A mother and a daughter—Elsapie Johnston and Maggie—died on the same day, and when the hour of interment came, the mother was placed in the hearse and the daughter was carried. There was no very definite reason given for the disuse of the spokes, but the villagers seemed to regard them with instinctive horror.

When steps were taken to institute these societies, Colonel Robertson of Blair lent a good hand. He gifted them a horse, built a stable, and gave a handsome contribution towards the purchase of a hearse. Penny Readings did the rest. A curious combination of mirth and death, you may think, but the proceeds of these entertainments furnished the means to procure a hearse. After these had been obtained, the different organisations were formed. A committee, elected by vote, was entrusted with the management, and, at an annual meeting held in the school-house, the report was submitted to the members. At this meeting a new committee was appointed, those retiring from office being ineligible for a year. Nearly all the male members who were householders officiated on this committee at one time or another.

The subscription was not a heavy one. Every householder paid two shillings yearly into the

funds, and for that modest contribution was entitled to the use of the hearse and horse as often as misfortune demanded. The only relic of these funds is the Hearse House which stands at the foot of Flint's Brae. There is a spirit of fashion even in matters pertaining to death, and, some years ago, the hearse was sold as being less fashionable than those which could be hired from Rangholm. Peter Morrison bought the horse, and so were wound up two institutions which did good service.

Another of the organisations, and one differing widely from these already named, was the Brass Band. There is no Brass Band in Kennethcrook to-day, but that is no reason why we should be denied a pleasant reminiscence. Once upon a time the village was prominent in musical circles; once upon a time our Band held the championship of Scotland. It was the only band within a radius of twenty miles, and its success was watched with interest by the villages and towns near Kennethcrook. The conductor lived in Rockburgh, and the good folks of that town tried on several occasions to get the band recognised as theirs. But it died as it had lived, "The Kennethcrook Brass Band."

The majority of the musicians were nailers, and the band was dissolved during a trade depression. Things were almost at a standstill. As a means of passing time, those who were bandsmen were wont to congregatè in one or other of the nail-sheds, and there engage in rehearsal. One day while they were thus employed, a waxwork passed through the village

## *Some Sketches of Village Life. 63*

on the way to Rockburgh. The proprietor of the exhibition, hearing the music, made some enquiries and discovered that it was made by idle nailers passing time. Ever on the outlook for an addition to his attractions, he made for the nail-shed, and was soon negotiating with the bandsmen for their services. He agreed to give them ten shillings a week, their board, and travelling expenses. This offer to a number of young men who had hitherto kept body and soul together on fourteen shillings a week, made the bandsmen think. Again, there was the novelty of the affair. They closed with the offer. Lifting their instruments they mounted a waggon, and from that moment were full-fledged musicians to the moving waxwork. Quite a number of the villagers walked into Rockburgh in the evening to see and hear them at their new occupation. That was the last of our Band. The ups and downs of the wandering existence proved too much for some of them. One or two returned to the village, some graduated as masters of music, and one, I am told, is still in the service of the Exhibition. Too old to play, he may now be seen, a white-haired man, moving about and heard telling in broken English, with here and there a word that stamps him as a Scotaman, of the life-like representations of The Pope and Charles Peace, John Knox and Dr Pritchard, Mary Queen of Scots abdicating the Crown, and Little Jim, the Collier's Dying Child.

Another organisation that has passed away is the "Penny Readings." This was one of the features of village life. Every winter a series



of these meetings was arranged for. The meetings took the form of concerts, and were given in the school-house on Saturday nights. The local talent was on these occasions drawn out, and when it was exhausted, the committee procured singers from Rockburgh. Previous to the hour of opening, the Band paraded the village as an advertisement to the concert. The price of admission was the humble penny, and the proceeds went to laudable objects. The ministers in turn were asked to preside, and after them the committee approached some of the wealthier of the villagers. Taking the chair meant a contribution of five shillings, but, of course, there was the honour of presiding. Songs, comic and sentimental, violin and cornet solos, band selections, and recitations were the chief features of the entertainments. The recitation was the highest form of dramatic art which was attempted and permitted with favour. I may tell you at some other time of the Kennethcrook dramatic school and its short existence. It was never represented in the "Penny Readings." These entertainments were carried on for many years, but they, too, were doomed to disappear, and the prosperous Readings of long ago linger with some of us as dim, uncertain memories.

There were societies in connection with the different trades. The nailers had a society ; so also had the weavers. These institutions existed for the same purposes as the more influential Trades' Unions of the present day. The motto of the nailers' society was "Live and let live." The weavers, who were more sweeping in their

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 65

demands, used to appear on patriotic or public events with a banner and "a strange device." The banner was a relic of the Chartist movement. It was emblazoned with various illustrations of weavers and their appliances, and in a ribbon scroll had the somewhat startling inscription "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." These societies, while they had some connection with the headquarters in Glasgow, were, to a very great extent, local bodies. The nailers, who were on strike at one time for some weeks on end, so exhausted the society's funds that they had to wind it up. The weavers' union, which was less frequently called upon for relief, existed for a longer period, but when the trade gradually fell so did the society. There are no such associations among us now, but in the Museum in Rockburgh, hanging from the ceiling of the industrial department, may be seen a blue square, somewhat tattered, but still bearing a resemblance to a banner. I do not know that you could make out any of the emblems that are painted on it, but if you care to look, you will easily enough make out its motto—"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Some of our societies are likely to go down to posterity. Ben in my parlour hangs a well-known engraving on which my visitors gaze admiringly. I will not wonder though you tell me you have seen a copy. Many of my visitors have said the same. There are a good round dozen in Kennethcreek, and I have seen one or two at some distance from the village. The original was attended with some measure of success,

and was hung in the Royal Academy. The one word "Curlers" denotes the subject of the illustration. But I never was a keen curler, so do not think that my love of the roaring game makes me treasure the picture. The artist belonged to Kennethcrook ; the subject belongs to Kennethcrook. You may not know the characters, but you may identify them if I tell you their names. That is Andra Duchart bending over the stone with a look of self-complacence on his face. Here is John, the beadle, with an earnest expression, as though he would rather direct Andra's hand. There, too, is Mr MacThomas, the minister, who figured in every curling match for a quarter of a century. A little to his left is Robin Alison talking excitedly to Jeems Jamieson and Jeems Aitkenhead. At the other end of the rink there is a group of characters, but it is lost to me in the prospective. Some there are, I know, who identified every personage, but these were those who would not stick at trifles. I have no doubt our artist meant them for local characters, but the prospective hindered him from giving them that strength of outline which enables me to recognise the half-dozen I have named.

The curling pond is just at the foot of Flint's Brae. A marsh during spring and autumn, it is filled by a channel which joins the Lunarty just above the mill-lade. On the first indication of frost, the sluice is drawn, and curlers take down their besoms from the walls. The roaring game has not so many devotees to-day as it had long ago. The death of the weaving and nail-

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 67

making industries is in large measure accountable for this. Now-a-days, men who are keen of curling can only do so after hours when the work of the day is done, and, although I have seen candles lit on the pond to finish a game, the curlers are not given to engaging in the sport after dusk. Saturday afternoon is the only time available to the majority of them, and when a frost holds from Sabbath to Thursday, it begins to think of giving way. Long ago, the weavers and the nailers were their own masters, and could leave the nail-shed and the loom-shop when pleasure and frost demanded it.

With every succeeding winter the sluice is drawn and the pond filled, but, if you happen to pass it on any other day than Saturday, you will very likely discover it deserted, and if of a meditative mind, may recognise in its stillness, a monument to the memory of the roaring game as it was played in Kennethcrook four decades ago.

Kennethcrook held national honours for music. She held provincial honours for quoiting and draughts. These games, too, like curling, have disappeared to a very considerable extent. Quoiting lingers out a somewhat questionable existence. For a long time draughts sank to the significance of a parlour game ; a game to be played at a fireside of an evening. I hear, however, that a movement is abroad to get a club re-established.

There, above my mantle-shelf, hangs a relic of the days when draughts was a favourite pastime with the villagers. It is a hand-painted

draught-board on glass. It was won in a tournament by Sandy Turnbull, who died a few years ago in America. Sandy did not think a draught-board would be of much use in the new world, indeed, he was not sure whether or not the people there would know how to play draughts. So he left his board in Kenneth-crook. His household furniture was put up to auction, but he could not think of selling his prize. On the promise that I would tell its history to anyone who cared to ask, the board was entrusted to my keeping. There it hangs, and I have taken this opportunity of keeping my promise.

Draught-boards and quoits serve the purposes of ornaments now. There is scarcely a house but has the one or the other set up in some prominent part where every caller may see it. Uninteresting ornaments they may seem, but give them tongues and they will tell you they were once used as a means of pleasure by the villagers.

Undoubtedly the most interesting of our institutions was the debating society which met at the mouth of the Parliament Close. I am perhaps going too far in including it among our institutions, because it was never properly constituted. It was an entirely voluntary business. But, while this is the case, constant attendance went a good way towards the recognition of members, and there were those among the number who looked upon a visitor, or an occasional caller, as one who had no right to a share in discussion.

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 69

The Parliament Close was situated near the kirkyaird, and there the cronies were wont to congregate after work had been suspended at the tinkling of the eight o'clock bell. There are some of the younger villagers at the same place to-day, but their time is taken up in discussing the points of pigeons, and the recent results of football. They do not emulate the actions of their fathers.

Andra Duchart was recognised as the leader of the House; John MacDiarmid as the leader of the Opposition. Sometimes Andra Duchart sat in the Opposition benches but his term of office on that side of the house was a short one. He converted minorities into majorities at his beck. Everything came up for consideration at this meeting, but the main subject of discussion was the "Week's Parliament" in the columns of the *Glasgow Star*. In this "Week's Parliament" the doings at Westminster were chronicled, and they formed matter of debate for three days following publication. There was occasionally an outsider present at these meetings. One afternoon a gentleman arrived in Kennethcreek by the mail coach and, staying in the village over the evening, found his way to the Parliament Close. He listened with much interest and evident relish to the discussion that was held, and, when the gloaming closed the meeting, went away to the Inn apparently satisfied with the manner in which he had spent his time. The subject which was under consideration was a report of the first reading of that Reform Bill which became law in 1867. The stranger was a

member of the Russell Cabinet, which held power until the year previous to the passing of the Reform Act when it resigned in favour of a Conservative Government. The Kennethcrook Parliament did not know that her stranger was a Cabinet Minister. If she had she might have been more pronounced in her opinions. Many years afterwards, when the distinguished stranger had resigned from Parliamentary life, he visited Kennethcrook. He was the guest of Colonel Robertson, and during his stay in the village discovered the different Parliamentarians and visited them. It was then that he told the story. Some there were who remembered him distinctly ; the rest were willing to let themselves think they remembered him. Our Parliament is now under a long prorogation, but I do not think it held office to no end. The Reform Bill became law under a Conservative Government. Our stranger was a member of the Russell Cabinet. He said the discussion at the Parliament Close altered his opinion somewhat with regard to the Bill. Who knows but that it led to one of those Opposition amendments that are so dreaded by the party in office, but which (with certain modifications) very frequently enter into the body of the Bill and become law ?

Second only in importance to our village Parliament, was our school of higher criticism. Politics were considered by the one party ; religion and morals by the other. The school was composed of the same members as the Parliament, with the occasional additional pre-

## *Some Sketches of Village Life.* 71

sence of one or other of the ministers. It, too, met at the kirkyaird. Sometimes, in these days, I hear folks speaking of the higher critics as a party which was born yesterday and as a party which will die to-morrow. I have different opinions on the subject. Higher criticism has been a fire smouldering for a long time in odd, unthought of corners. I sometimes attended the discussions. Yes, I may have helped to fan the embers into flame. Look where you like now-a-days, the literature of higher critics meets your eye, but long before Robertson Smith disturbed the Free Church courts with his opinions on the authorship of the Pentateuch, or Professor Drummond gave us to understand that we are the evolved product of insect life, Kennethcrook had its school of higher criticism. The foundations of unbelief in our village were laid by a travelling mesmerist. Mesmer had one disciple who was a regular visitor to Kennethcrook : Stone was his name. Professor Stone he was called, but I cannot say at which school of thought he graduated. It was usually about a month after the Fair that he made his appearance. His tent was erected on the Drum Park, and was much larger than any of the show places that covered the Park at the Fair. The doings of this mesmerist were voted mysterious by every one who paid a visit to his tent, and raised many points as to man's connection with another world. Our school of higher criticism received a new impetus with each successive visit of the Professor, and it was at the meetings



held immediately subsequent to Stone's departure that the ministers used to be present. They did not like the idea of the village becoming atheist all at once, and so attended in order that their presence might damp any over enthusiasm that should manifest itself. The village quota to the grand army of infidelity was one — Andra Johnstone, the village shoemaker. Yes, Andra was bold, and said some things at the kirkyaird that made some of the others quake, but death makes cowards of us all. "Andra 'll leeve to regret this nicht," was the remark of Saunders Denovan on one occasion when the atheist had been more pronounced than usual. "Ay," returned Jeems Jamieson, "wait or he comes to his death-bed." Towards the close of his days, Andra became longsuffering and allowed Divinity the suspicion of existence. Suspicion settled into probability, and probability into vague belief. In time vague belief was strengthened, and Andra saw as he had seen in his youth. Yes, death puts us all to the test. Andra gave his friends to understand that he was dying a Christian. He was the mainstay of the school of atheistic thought. When he withdrew his sympathy the institution went to ruin. Kennethcrook has no "higher critics" to-day although she has many who sympathise with the teaching of Robertson and Drummond.