

BAUBIE HUIE'S BASTARD GEET.



JOCK HUIE'S HOUSEHOLD—BAUBIE ENTERS LIFE.

I AM not prepared to say how far Baubie Huie's own up-bringing had been a model of judicious parental nurture. There was ground to fear that it had not been at all times regulated by an enlightened regard to the principle laid down by King Solomon, concerning the training up of children. Jock Huie had a muckle sma' faimily, crammed into limited space, in so far as the matter of house accommodation was concerned. It was a little, clay-built, "rape-thackit" cot in which Jock, with Eppie, his wife, and their family dwelt; and the "creaturs" came so thickly, and in such multitude, that Jock, who was a "darger," and did "day's warks" here and there, as he could find them, experienced rather queer sensations when an unusually "coorse" day happened to coop him up at home among the "smatterie" of youngsters.

"Saul o' me, 'oman," would Jock exclaim, when patience had reached its limit; "the din o' that bairns o' yours wud rive a heid o' steen—gar them be quate, aw 'm sayin', or I 'll hae to tak' a horse fup to them."

"Haud yer tongue man; gin ye war amo' them fae screek o' day till gloamin licht's I am ye mith speak. Fat can the creaturs dee fan they canna get luiket owre a door?" Eppie would reply.

Notwithstanding his formidable threat, Jock Huie rarely lifted his hand in the way of active correction of his offspring. His wife, who was not indisposed to

govern a little more sharply if she could, knew of only one way of enforcing obedience, or some approach thereto, when matters had come to a decided pass of the character indicated, and which may be best described in plain English as indiscriminate chastisement, applied with sufficient heartiness, though it might be quite as much in accordance with the dictates of temper as of calm reason. And so it came to pass that, as most of the youthful Huies were gifted with pretty definite wills of their own, the progress of physical development on their part might be taken, in a general way, as indicative, in inverse proportion, of the measure of moral and mental sway which the parental will was able to exercise over them.

All that by the way, however. Jock Huie got his family brought up as he best could, and off his hands mainly ; and he, personally, continued his dargin' with perhaps a little less vir than aforetime. Jock was a man of large bones and strong bodily frame ; when thirty he had physical strength that seemed equal to any task, and endurance against which no amount of rough usage appeared to tell with evil effect. But, after all, men of Jock Huie's class do not wear long. Jock was now a man only a few years past fifty ; yet digging in wet drains and ditches, and eating a bit of oat-cake, washed down with "treacle ale," to his dinner, day by day, had procured for him a very appreciable touch of "rheumatics," and other indications that he had fairly passed his prime.

And Baubie, his eldest daughter, though not the eldest member of his family, for Jock had various sons older than she—Baubie had grown up—a buxom, ruddy-cheeked "gunie" of nineteen. She was servan'lass to the farmer of Brigfit—Briggies in short.

I remember very distinctly a bonnie summer gloamin at that time. It was gey late owre i' the evenin'. Baubie had milket the kye, seyt the milk, and wash'n up her dishes. Her day's work was at last fairly done, and

why should not Baubie go out to the Toon Loan to enjoy the quiet scene as the cool dews of evening began to fall upon the landscape around the cosy old-fashioned farm "steading" of Brigfit.

It matters nothing in this narration where I had been that evening, further than to say that, as I pursued my journey homeward, the road took me past the corner of Briggies' stable, where, altogether unexpectedly to me, I encountered Baubie Huie "in maiden meditation fancy free." Though Baubie's junior by a twelvemonth or so, I had developed since we two had last met from a mere herd loon into a sort of rawish second or third horseman. We had known each other more or less from infancy, Baubie and I, and our talk during the short parley that now ensued had a tinge of the by-gone time in it; though, of course, we could not help giving fulfilment, in our own way, to the saying that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and, naturally enough, at that season of life, that which most occupied our hearts was the present as it bore on our respective positions and prospects.

My own notion (it may be said in confidence) was that I was climbing up the pathway to maturity of life and definiteness of position with creditable alacrity; but in this direction I speedily found that Baubie Huie had fairly out-distanced me. Why, here was the very same "quine" who, almost the last time I saw her, was lugging along a big, sulky bairn, half her own size, wrapped in an old tartan plaid, and her weather-bleached hair hanging loosely about her shoulders—and that bairn her own younger brother—that very quine, giggling and tossing her head knowingly as she spoke, in what seemed a tone of half masculine licence, about the "chiels" that were more or less familiarly known as sweethearts among young women in the neighbourhood of Brigfit. In matters of love and courtship, I was, it must be confessed, an entire novice; whereas in such affairs, it was obvious, Baubie

had become an adept ; and if I had been somewhat put out by the ready candour with which she criticised the physical appearance and general bearing of this and the other young man—hangers on after Baubie, I was given to understand—I was nothing short of completely “flabbergasted” when, just as we were parting, she said—

“Dinna ye never gae fae hame at even, min ? Ye mith come owre the gate some nicht an’ see’s.”

What my confused and stuttering reply amounted to, I cannot really say—something grotesquely stupid, do doubt. What it called forth on Baubie’s part, at any rate, was another round of giggling and the exclamation, as she turned off toward the dwelling-house of Brigfit—

“Weel, weel, Robbie, a’ nicht wi’ you ; an’ a file o’ the morn’s mornin’.”—This was simply the slang form of saying “good night” among persons of Baubie’s class. And she added—“I’ll need awa in ; for there’s Briggies, the aul’ snot, at the ga’le o’ the hoose—he’ll be barrin’’s oot again, eenoo.”

Now, far be it from me to say that Baubie was a vicious or immodest young woman. I really am not prepared to say that she was anything of the sort. She had simply got the training that hundreds in her station of life in these northern shires do—home training that is. And after she left the parental roof, her experiences had been the common experiences of her class—that is to associate freely with promiscuous assemblages of farm-servants, male and female ; mainly older than herself, without any supervision worth mentioning, as she moved from one situation to another. And how could Baubie, as an apt enough scholar, do other than imbibe the spirit and habits of those in whose companionship she lived day by day ? Baubie was simply the natural product of the system under which she had been reared. Her moral tone, as indexed by her speech, might not be very high ; and yet, after all, it is very possible to have the mere verbal proprieties fully at-

tended to, where the innate morality is no whit better. Coarseness in the outer form, which is thrust on the view of all, is bad enough; depravity in the inner spirit, which is frequently concealed from many, may be a good deal worse.

Brigfit was a decent man; a very decent man, for he was an elder in the parish kirk, and a bachelor of good repute. He was a careful industrious farmer, the extent of whose haudin' enabled him to "ca' twa pair." Briggies was none of your stylish gentlemen farmers; he needed neither gig nor "shalt" to meet his personal convenience, but did his ordinary business journeys regularly on foot. And he stood on reasonably amicable terms with his servants; but he sought little of their confidence, and as little did he give to them of his own. Only Briggies had certain inflexible rules, and one was that his household should be in bed every night by nine o'clock in winter, and an hour later in summer; when he would himself solemnly put the bar on the door, and then walk as solemnly along to the "horn en" to seek repose.

Briggies was a very early riser, and as it was his hand that usully put the bar on the door at night, so, honest man, was it his hand that ordinarily took it off in the morning in time to see that the household proper and the occupants of the outside "chaum'er," consisting of the male servants, were stirring to begin the labours of the day in due season. According to Baubie Huie's account, the bar was sometimes tampered with during the interval by the "deems;" only if matters were gone about quietly enough, Briggies, whether or not he might suspect aught in that way, usually said nothing.

"Augh, Robbie, man! Fear't for Briggies kennin? Peer bodie fan onything comes in's noddle aboot's nowte beasts he canna get rest, but 'll be up an' paumerin aboot the toon' o' the seelence o' the nicht, fan it's as mark's pick in winter, forbye o' the simmer

evenin's. So ae nicht i' the spring time that me an' my neebour hedna been wuntin' to gae to oor beds, we pits oot the lamp in gweed time, an' sits still; as quaet's pussy, till Briggies hed on the bar an' awa till 's bed. I'm nae sayin' gin onybody was in ahin' that or no, but lang aifter the wee oor hed struck'n, me an' Jinse was thereoot. I suppose the chiels hed made mair noise nor they sud 'a deen, caperin' owre the causeway wi' their muckle tacketie beets. At ony rate in a blink there was Briggies oot an' roon to the byres wi' the booot in 's han'. Fan he hed glampit aboot amo' the beasts till he was satisfet, he gaes awa' to the hoose again; an' we wusna lang o' bein' aifter 'im. But fudder or no he hed luiket ben to the kitchie to see gin we wus there, he hed pitten the bar siccar aneuch on upo' the door this time, I can tell ye; an' nae an in cud we win for near an oor, till we got an aul' ledder an' pat it up to the en' o' the hoose, an' syne I made oot to creep in at the ga'le winnockie—Fat did he say aifterhin? Feint a thing. Briggies never loot on, though he cudna but 'a hed's ain think, 'cause gin he didna hear huz, he be't till 'a kent "gyaun oot" that the bar sudna 'a been aff o' the door at that time o' nicht."

In this wise did Baubie Huie keep up the colloquy, my own side of which, candour compels me to say, was very badly sustained; for had I been ever so willing to take my part, the requisite fluency and *abandon* had not been attained, to say nothing of the utter absence of knowledge germane to the subject in hand, and personally acquired.

As a matter of course, I did not accept Baubie Huie's invitation to visit Brigfit. If the truth were to be told, I was too much of a greenhorn; one who would have been accurately described by Baubie and her associates as utterly destitute of "spunk." My Mentor of that date, a vigorous fellow of some eight and twenty years, whose habits might be not incorrectly described by the word "haiveless," whose speech was at least as free, as

refined, and who occupied the responsible position of first horseman, did not indeed hesitate to characterise my behaviour in relation to such matters, generally, in almost those very words. He knew Baubie Huie, moreover, and his estimate of Baubie was expressed in the words—"Sang, she's a richt quine yon, min; there's nae a deem i' the pairt'll haud 'er nain wi' ye better nor she'll dae; an' she's a fell ticht gweed-luikin' hizzie tee," which, no doubt, was a perfectly accurate description according to the notions entertained by the speaker of the qualities desirable in the female sex.

However these things may be, Baubie Huie continued to perform her covenanted duties to the farmer of Brigfit; and, so far as known, yielding the elder average satisfaction as a servant during the summer "half-year."

CHAPTER II.

BAUBIE RETURNS HOME.

It was nearing the term of Martinmas, and Jock Huie, who had been laid off work for several days by a "beel't thoom," was discussing his winter prospect with Eppie, his wife. Meal was "fell chape," and the potato crop untouched by disease ; but Jock's opinion was that, as prices were low for the farmer, feein' would be slack. Cattle were down too, and though the price of beef and mutton was a purely abstract question for him personally—he being a strict vegetarian in practice, not by choice but of necessity—Jock was economist enough to know that the fact bore adversely on the farmer's ability to employ labour ; so that, altogether, with a superfluity of regular servants unengaged, and a paucity of work for the common "darger" in the shape of current farming improvements going on, he did not regard the aspect of things as cheering for his class.

"Aw howp neen o' that loons o' oors'll throw themsel's oot o' a place," said Jock. "Wud ye think ony o' them wud be bidin'?"

"That wud be hard to say, man," replied Eppie.

"That widdifus o' young chiels's aye sae saucy to speak till," said Jock ; whether he meant that the sauciness would be exhibited in the concrete from his own sons toward himself, or if the remark applied to the bearing of servant chiels generally on the point under consideration, was not clear. "But better to them tak a sma' waage nor lippen to orra wark ; an' hae to lie about idle the half o' the winter."

"Weel ken we that," said Eppie, with a tolerably lively recollection of her experiences in having previously had one or two of her sons "at hame" during the winter season. "Mere ate-meats till Can'lesmas; I'm seer fowk hae's little need o' that; but creaturs'll tak their nain gate for a' that."

"Aw howp Baubie's bidin' wi' Briggies, ony wye," added Jock.

"I ken naething aboot it," said Eppie, in a tone that might be described as dry; "Baubie's gey an' gweed at keepin' 'er coonsel till 'ersel'."

It was only a fortnight to the term, and Jock would not be kept long in suspense regarding those questions affecting the family arrangements on which he had thus incidentally touched. In point of fact, his mind was set at rest so far when only half the fortnight had run. For the feeing market came in during that period, and as Jock's thumb had not yet allowed him to resume work, he "took a step doon" to the market, where he had the satisfaction of finding that his sons had all formed engagements as regular farm servants. As for Baubie, though Jock learned on sufficient authority that she was present in the market, he failed to "meet in" with her. Concerning Baubie's intended movements, he learnt, too, that she was *not* staying with Briggies; Briggies himself had indeed told him so; but beyond that Jock's inquiries on the subject did not produce any enlightenment for him.

Subsequently to the feeing market, Jock Huie had once and again reverted to the subject of Baubie's strange behaviour in keeping the family in ignorance of her movements and intentions, but without drawing forth much in the way of response from his wife beyond what she had generally expressed in her previous remark.

The afternoon of the term day had come, and servants who were flittin' were moving here and there. I can

not state the nature of the ruminations that had passed, or were passing, through the mind of either Jock Huie or his wife Eppie concerning their daughter Baubie but Jock, honest man, had just left his cottage in the grey gloamin to go to the smiddy and get his tramp-pick sharpened with the view of resuming work next day in full vigour, when Baubie dressed in her Sunday garments, and carrying a small bundle, entered. There was a brief pause; and then Baubie's mother, in a distinct and very deliberate tone, said—

“Weel, Baubie, 'oman; an' ye 're here neist.”

At these words, Baubie, who had just laid aside her bundle, threw herself down beside it, on the top of the family “deece,” with the remark,

“Ay; faur ither wud aw gae?”

And then she proceeded silently to untie the strings of her bonnet. Neither Baubie nor her mother was extremely agitated, but there was a certain measure of restrained feeling operating upon both the one and the other. The mother felt that a faithful discharge of the maternal duty demanded that she should give utterance to a reproof as severe as she could properly frame, accompanied by reproaches, bearing on the special wickedness and ingratitude of the daughter; and, on the part of the daughter along with a vague sense of the fitness of all this, in a general way, there were indications of a volcanic state of temper, which might burst out with considerable, if misplaced fierceness, on comparatively slight provocation. And wherefore create a scene of verbal violence; for deep down, below those irascible feelings, did there not lurk in Eppie Huie's bosom a kind of latent sense that if such crises as that which had now emerged were not to be regarded as absolutely certain, they were assuredly to be looked upon as very much in the nature of events inevitable in the ordinary history of the family? And thus it was that Eppie Huie, virtually accepting the situation as part of the common lot, went no further than a

general rasping away at details, and the consequences arising out of the main fact.

"Weel, weel, Baubie, 'oman, ye 've begun to gae the aul' gate in braw time—ye 'll fin't a hard road to yersel', as weel 's to them 't's near conneckit wi' you. Fat gar't ye keep oot o' yer fader's sicht at the market—haudin' 'im gyaun like a wull stirk seekin' ye, an' makin' a feel o' 'im?"

"Aw'm seer ye needna speer that—'s gin ye hedna kent to tell 'im yersel'."

"That's a bonnie story to set up noo, ye limmer—that I sud say the like," said Eppie with some heat. "Didnin ye deny't i' my face the vera last time that ye was here?"

"H-mph! an' aw daursay ye believ't's!"

"Weel, Baubie, 'oman, it's a sair say't we sud be forc't to tak for a muckle black lee fat's been threepit, an' yea-threepit i' oor witters b' them that's sibbest till's."

To this observation Baubie made no reply: and after a short silence Eppie Huie continued in a dreary monotone.

"Ay, ay! An' this is fat fowk gets for toilin' them-sel's to deith feshin' up a faimily! There's little aneuch o' peace or rest for's till oor heid be aneth the green sod—jist oot o' ae tribble in till anither. Little did I or yer peer fader think short syne that ye was to be hame to be a burden till's."

"Aw ha'ena been a burden yet ony wye," said Baubie with some sharpness, "ye needna be sae ready speakin' that gate."

To this retort Eppie Huie made some reply to the effect that others similarly circumstanced had uttered such brave words, and that time would tell in Baubie's case as it had told in theirs. She then rose and put some water in a small pot, which she hung upon the "crook" over the turf fire, in the light of which Baubie and she had hitherto sat.

"Fa's the fader o' 't than?" said Eppie Huie, as she turned about from completing the operation just mentioned; but though the words were uttered in a very distinct as well as abrupt tone, there was no answer till she repeated her question in the form of a sharp "Aw 'm sayin'?"

"Ye'll ken that a-time aneuch," answered Baubie.

"Ken't a-time aneuch!—an' you here?"—

"Ay an' me here—an' fat about it? *It* winna be here the morn, nor yet the morn's morn," said Baubie in a harder and more reckless tone than she had yet assumed.

Eppie Huie had, no doubt, a sense of being baffled, more or less. She resumed her seat, uttering as she did so, something between a sigh and a groan. There was nothing more said until the water in the little pot having now got to "the boil," Eppie rose, and lighting the rush wick in the little black lamp that hung on the shoulder of the "swye" from which the crook depended, she proceeded to "mak' the sowens." When the lamp had been lighted, Baubie rose from her place on the deece, and lifting her bonnet, which now lay beside her, and her bundle, said,

"Aw 'm gyaun awa to my bed."

"Ye better wyte an' get yer sipper—the sowens'll be ready eenoo."

"Aw 'm nae wuntin' nae sipper," said Baubie, turning to go as she spoke. "There's nae things lyin' i' the mid-hoose bed, is there?"

"Naething; oonless it be the muckle basket, wi' some o' yer breeders' half-dry't claes. Tak that bit fir i' yer han'—ye'll need it, ony wye, to lat ye see to haud aff o' the tubs an' the backet."

And Baubie went off to bed forthwith, notwithstanding a sort of second invitation, as she was lighting the fir, to wait for some supper. I rather think that after all she did not relish the comparative light so much as

the comparative darkness. And then if she staid to get even the first practicable mouthful of "sowens," was there not considerable risk that Jock Huie, her father, might drop in upon her on his return from the smiddy? Not that Baubie had an unreasonably sensitive dread of facing her father. But having now got over what she would have called "the warst o' 't," with her mother; she felt that her mother, being on the whole so well "posted up," might be left with advantage to break the ice, at least, to the old man.

When Jock Huie returned from the smiddy that evening, an event that happened in about half an hour after his daughter Baubie had gone to bed, he seemed to be moody, and in a measure out of temper. He put aside his bonnet, and sat down in his usual corner, while Eppie set the small table for his supper, only one or two remarks of a very commonplace sort having been made up to that point.

"Ye'll better say awa, man; they've been made this file," said Eppie, as she lifted the dish with the "sowens" to the table from the hearthstone, where it had been placed in order to retain warmth in the mess.

"Aw'm sayin', 'oman," quoth Jock, apparently oblivious to his wife's invitation. "Div ye ken onything aboot that jaud Baubie—there's something o' anither nae richt, ere she wud haud oot o' fowk's road this gate?"

"Baubie's *here*, man," said Eppie Huie; and the brevity of her speech was more than made up by the significance of the words and the tone in which they were uttered.

"Here?" exclaimed Jock in a tone of inquiry, and looking towards his wife as he spoke.

"She's till'er bed i' the mid-hoose," said Eppie in reply; and, perceiving that Jock's look was only half answered, she added, "Aw daursay she wasna owre fain to see you."

"Fat!" cried Jock, "she'll be wi' a geet to some chiel, is she?"

"Ou ye needna speer," said Eppie in a tone of "dowie" resignation.

"Weel, that does cove the gowan—a quine o' little mair nor nineteen! But aw mith'a been seer o' 't. It wasna' for naething that she was playin' hide-an'-seek wi' me yon gate. Brawlie kent I that she was i' the market wi' a set o' them. Deil speed them a', weel-a-wat!"

Jock Huie was not a model man exactly in point of moral sentiment; neither was he a man of keen sensibility. But he did nevertheless possess a certain capability of sincere, if it might be uncultured feeling; and he now placed his rough, weather-beaten face against the horny palms of his two hands, and, resting his two elbows on his knees, gave utterance to a prolonged "Hoch-hey!" Jock maintained this attitude for some time, and probably would have maintained it a good deal longer, but for the practical view of matters taken by his wife, and the practical advice urgently pressed upon him by her when her patience had got exhausted:—

"Aw 'm sayin', man, ye needna connach yer sipper; that'll dee nae gweed to naebody.—Tak' your sowens! Ye 're lattin' them grow stiff wi' caul', for a' the tribble 't aw was at keepin' them het to you."

Thus admonished, Jock Huie took his supper in silence; and, thereafter, with little more talk beyond one or two questions from Jock of a like nature with those which had been so ineffectually addressed to Baubie by her mother, the husband and wife retired to bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE GEET'S ADVENT—INITIAL DIFFICULTIES IN ACQUIRING AN ECCLESIASTICAL STATUS.

THAT Jock Huie's daughter, Baubie, had returned home to her father and mother was a fact about which there could be no manner of doubt or equivocation; as to the cause of Baubie's return, there was a general concurrence of opinion in the neighbourhood; indeed, it had been a point settled long before, among elderly and sagacious females who knew her, that Baubie would speedily appear in her true colours. Yet were there a few of this same class of people in whose sides Baubie was still somewhat of a thorn. For when the first few days were over after her return, so far from shrinking out of their sight, Baubie flung herself across their path at the most unexpected times, and exhibited an unmistakeable readiness to meet their friendly criticisms with a prompt retort. Or was it a staring personal scrutiny—well, Baubie was almost ostentatiously ready to stand that ordeal, and stare with the best of her starers in return. Baubie was perfectly able to take care of herself, and if a young woman of her spirit chose to remain six months out of the "hire house," whose business was that but her own? Baubie would like to know that.

It is not to be supposed that this bravado went far in the way of deceiving any but very inexperienced people, if it deceived even them, which is more than doubtful. And in the nature of the case, it would at any rate deceive no one very long.

It was just at Candlemas when it was reported that Jock Huie had become a grandfather ; a genealogical dignity the attainment of which did not seem to excite in Jock's breast any particular feeling of elation. Such an idea as that of apprehension lest the line of Huies in his branch should become extinct had certainly never troubled Jock to the extent that would have made him anxious to welcome a grandchild, legitimate or illegitimate ; and the belief that this particular bairn was born to be a direct and positive burden upon him hardly tended to make its advent either auspicious or cheering. Jock knew full well the "tyauve" he had had in bringing up his own family proper ; and now, ere the obstreperous squalling of the younger of them was well out of his ears, why here was another sample of the race, ready to renew and continue all that turmoil and uproar, by night and by day, from which his small hut had never been free for a good twenty years of his lifetime.

"An' it's a laddie, ye say, that the quine Huie's gotten ?"

"A laddie ; an' a-wat a richt protty gate-farrin bairnie 's ever ye saw wi' yer twa een."

"Fan cam' 't hame no ?"

"It was jist the streen, nae langer gane. Aifter 't was weel gloam't, I hears a chap at the window, an' fa sud this be but Eppie 'ersel', peer creatur. I pat my tartan shawl aboot my heid immedantly, an' aifter tellin' the littleans to keep weel ootbye fae the fire, an' biddin' their sister pit them to their beds shortly, I crap my wa's roun' as fest's aw cud. Jock was nae lang come hame fae 's day's wark, an' was sittin' i' the neuk at 's bit sipper. 'He's jist makin' ready to gae for Mrs. Slorach,' says she. Awat I was rael ill-pay't for 'im, peer stock, tirt' aneuch nae doot, jist aff o' a sair day's wark. It was a freely immas nicht, wi' byous coorse ploiterie road ; an' it's three mile gweed,

but I can asseer ye Jock hed gane weel, for it *wasna* muckle passin' twa oors fan he 's back an' Mrs. Slorach wi' 'im.

"Weel, weel, Jock 'll get 's nain o' 't lickly, honest man. It 'll be a won'er an' they hinna the tsil' to fesh up."

"Ou weel-a-wat that's true aneuch; but there's never a hicht but there's a howe at the boddom o' 't, as I said to Eppie fan she first taul' me o' Baubie's misfortune; an' there 's never a mou' sen' but the maet 's sen' wi' 't."

"Div they ken yet fa 's the fader o' the creatur?"

"Weel, she hed been unco stubborn aboot it no; but aw 'm thinkin' she hed taul' 'er mither at the lang length. At a roch guess, a body mith gae farrer agley, aw daursay, nor licken 't to ane o' yon chieles 't was aboot the toon wi' 'er at Briggies—yon skyeow-fittet breet."

The foregoing brief extract from the conversation of a couple of those kindly gossips who had all along taken a special interest in her case will indicate with sufficient distinctness the facts surrounding the birth of Baubie Huie's Geet.

The reputed father of the geet was a sort of nondescript chap, whose habit it was to figure at one time as an indifferent second or third "horseman," and next time as an "orra man"; a bullet-headed bumpkin, with big unshapely feet, spreading considerably outward as he walked; a decided taste for smoking tobacco; of somewhat more than average capability in talking bucolic slang of a gross sort; yet possessing withal a comfortable estimate of his own graces of person and manner in the eyes of the fair sex. Such was the—sweetheart, shall we say?—of Baubie Huie.

How one might best define the precise relationship existing between the nondescript chiel and Baubie, it would not be easy to say. It was believed that on the feeing market night he had taken Baubie home to

Briggies', he being not greatly the worse of drink, and that on the term night he had accompanied her part of the way toward her father's house. There was also a sort of vague impression that he had since then come once or twice to visit Baubie, keeping as well out of sight and ken of Jock Huie and his wife as might be. Be that as it may, now that the child was born, Jock, who was very much of a practical man, desired to know articulately from the man himself whether he was to "tak' wi' 't, an' pay for 't." The idea of asking whether the fellow had any intention of doing the one thing which a man with a shred of honour about him would have felt bound to do in the circumstances—viz., marrying his daughter—had really not occurred to Jock Huie. And so it came to pass, that after a certain amount of rather irritating discussion between himself and the female members of his family, and as the nondescript took very good care not to come to him, Jock "took road" to hunt up the nondescript, who, as he discovered after some trouble, was now serving on a farm some five or six miles off. He found him as third horseman at the plough in a field of "neep reet," along with his two fellow-ploughmen. The nondescript had a sufficient aspect of embarrassment when Jock Huie caught him up at the end rig, where he had been waiting till the ploughs should come out, to indicate that he would not have been disappointed had the visit been omitted; and it seemed not improbable that his two companions might thereafter offer one or two interrogatory remarks on the subject, which would not be a great deal more welcome. At any rate, Jock Huie had the satisfaction of finding that the nondescript "wasna seekin' to deny 't;" nay, that he did not refuse to "pay for 't," any backwardness on his part in that respect up to the date of visit, being readily accounted for by the fact that it was the middle of the half year, when a man was naturally run of cash. Threats about "'reestin' waages," therefore, were perfectly uncalled-

for; and, indeed, a sort of unjust aspersion on the general character of the nondescript. It was right that Jock Huie should know that.

"Ye sud hae the civeelity to lat fowk ken faur ye are than; an' ye think ony ill o' that. Bonnie story to haud me trailin' here, lossin half a day seekin' ye," retorted Jock with some roughness of tone.

Between the date of Jock Huie's visit, just mentioned, and the term of Whitsunday, the father of Baubie Huie's geet visited the abode of the Huies once at any rate; and in course of the conference that ensued, it so happened that the subject of getting the geet christened came up—the needful preliminary to that being, as Jock explained, to appear and give satisfaction to that grave Church Court, the Kirk-Session. This was a point which both the paternal and maternal Huie were a good deal more eager to discuss and settle about than either of the immediate parents of the geet. Indeed, the nondescript seemed penetrated with a sort of feeling that that was a part of the business hardly in his line. Not that he objected on principle to the geet being christened; far from it; for when Eppie Huie had stated the necessity of getting themselves "clear't," and having that rite performed, and Jock Huie had vigorously backed up her statement, the nondescript assented with a perfectly explicit "Ou ay;" only he showed a decided tendency always to let the matter drop again. This did not suit Jock Huie's book in the least, however, and he manifested a determination to have the business followed out that was not at all comfortable to the nondescript.

When the nondescript had pondered over the situation for a few days, and all along with the feeling that something must really be done, for he did not in the least relish the idea of further calls from Jock Huie, the happy thought occurred to him of calling on his old master, Briggies, who was one of the elders of the Kirk, and, being after all a humane man, would no doubt be

prevailed upon to pave the way for him and Baubie making penitential appearance before the session, and receiving censure and "absolution." So he called on Briggies, and was rather drily told that, neither Baubie nor he being "commenicans," apart from the censure of the session, which had to be encountered in the first place, he, at any rate, as "the engaging parent," (and perhaps Baubie too), would have to undergo an examination, at the hands of the minister, as to his knowledge of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, and the significance of the rite of baptism in particular.

"Fat wye cud ye expeck to win throw itherweese min?" Briggies felt bound to speak as an elder in this case—"Gin fowk winna leern to behave themsel's they maun jist stan' the consequences. The vera Kirk-session itsel' cudna relieve ye man upo' nae ither precunance."

The nondescript returned much pondering on this disheartening information, which he got opportunity, by and bye, of communicating to Baubie. In private conference, the two agreed that "a scaulin' fae the session," by itself—a thing they had been both accustomed to hear spoken of with extreme jocularity, not less than they had seen those who had undergone the same, regarded as possessing something of the heroism that is rather to be envied—a scaulin' fae the session might well be borne; but to stand a formal examination before the minister in cold blood was another affair. The dilemma having occurred, the two horns were presented to Jock Huie, who was so relentlessly forcing them on to impalement, in the hope of softening his heart, or at any rate awakening his sympathy; but Jock was just as determined as ever that they must go forward in the performance of their Christian duty, and his one reply was, "Ou, deil care; ye maun jist haud at the Catechis."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GEET'S STATUS, ECCLESIASTICAL AND SOCIAL, DEFINED.

"Aw 'm sayin' 'oman, that geet maun be kirsen't some wye or anither ; we canna lat the creatur grow up like a haethen."

The speaker in this case was Jock Huie, and the person addressed his wife Eppie. It was a fine Saturday evening toward the latter end of June, and Jock who had got home from his work at the close of the week, was now in a deliberative mood.

"Weel, man, ye'll need to see fat wye 't's to be manag't," was Eppie's reply.

"They'll jist need 'o tak' her 'er leen ; that's a' that I can say aboot it," said Jock.

"Ah-wa, man ; aw won'er to hear ye speak."

"Weel fat else can ye dee? Aw tell ye the littlean 'll be made a moniment o' i' the kwintra side."

"Ou, weel, ye maun jist gae to the minaister yersel', man, an' tell 'im fat gate her an' huz tee's been guidet ; he's a rael sympatheesin' person, an' there's nae doot he'll owreluik onything as far's he can."

"Sorra set 'im, weel-a-wat!" said Jock Huie emphatically, as he knocked the half-burnt "dottal" of tobacco out of his pipe into the palm of his hand, with a sort of savage thump.

Whether Jock Huie's portentous objurgation on the subject of the Catechism had much or anything to do with the result it would perhaps be difficult to say, but it was a simple matter of fact that after it had been uttered, the father of Baubie's geet exhibited

even more than previously a disposition to fight shy of the path of duty on which Jock sought to impel him. The Whitsunday term was drawing on; the Whitsunday term had arrived and the geet still unchristened. Then it was found that the father of the geet had deemed it an expedient thing to seek an appreciable change of air by "flittin'" entirely beyond "kent bounds." True it was, that on the very eve of his departure he had by the hands of a third party transmitted to Baubie for the maintenance of her geet a "paper note" of the value of one pound, and along with it a verbal message to the effect that he was "gyaun to the pairis' o' Birse;" but as it had been a not infrequent practice among the witty to mention the parish named as a sort of mythical region to which one might be condemned to go, for whom no other sub-lunary use was apparent, Baubie herself was far from assured that the literal Birse was meant; and we may add was equally at a loss as to whether she had further remittances to look for, or if the note was a once and single payment, in full discharge of the nondescript's obligations in respect to the present maintenance, and prospective upbringing of his son—the Bastard Geet.

Baubie Huie's Bastard Geet had now reached the age of fully four months; no wonder if the grand-paternal anxieties should be aroused as to the danger of the "peer innocent" merging into heathenism and becoming a bye-word to the parish. And as Jock Huie had expressed his sense of the importance of kirsenin' as a preventative, so after all, it fell to Jock's lot to take the responsible part in getting the rite performed. The name was a matter of difficulty; had there been an available father, it would have been his duty to confer with the mother on the point, and be fully instructed what name to bestow on the infant; and in the case of his own children, the male part of them at any rate, Jock Huie had never been much at a loss about the names. Among his sons, Tam, Sawney, and Jock, came in, in orderly succession; but, ponder as he would.

the naming of Baubie's geet puzzled him long. Its reputed father bore the name of Samuel—cut down to Samie—Caie, and Jock rejected promptly and with scorn the suggestion, coming from its mother, to inflict upon the bairn any such name, which he, in strong language, declared to be nauseous enough to serve as an emetic to a dog. Indeed, Jock's honest hatred of the nondescript had now reached a pitch that made him resolutely decline to pronounce his name at all; a practice in which, as a rule, he was tacitly imitated by his wife and daughter. Partly from this cause, and partly by reason of the still further delay that occurred in getting the christening over, it came to pass that the poor youngster began to have attached to it, with a sort of permanency, the title of Baubie Huie's Bastard Geet; and when at last the parson had done the official duty in question, and Jock Huie, with a just sense of his position in the matter, had boldly named the bairn after himself, it only led to the idle youth of the neighbourhood ringing the changes on the geet in this fashion—

Aul' Jock, an' young Jock, an' Jock comin' tee;
There'll never be a gweed Jock till aul' Jock dee.

But notwithstanding of all these things the geet throve and grew as only a sturdy scion of humanity could be expected to do.

To say that Baubie Huie was passionately attached to her child, would perhaps be rather an over-statement; yet was she pleased to nurse the poor geet with a fair amount of kindness; and physically the geet seemed to make no ungrateful return. It was edifying to note the bearing of the different members of the family towards the geet. The practical interest taken in its spiritual welfare by old Jock Huie, has been mentioned; and despite the trouble it had caused him, Jock was equally prepared now, to let the geet have the first and tenderest "bite" from his hard won daily crust to meet its temporal wants; a measure of self-denial such as many a philanthropist of higher station and greater pretensions has never set before himself. The nature

of Eppie Huie's feelings toward the geet was sufficiently indicated by the skilled and careful nursing she would expend upon it at those times when Baubie, tired of her charge, with an unceremonious—"Hae, tak' 'im a file mither,"—would hand over the geet "body bulk" to the charge of its grannie. When any of Jock Huie's grown-up sons happened to visit home, there cue was simply to ignore the geet altogether. Even when it squalled the loudest they would endeavour to retain the appearance of stolid obliviousness of its presence; just as they did when the hapless geet crowed and "walloped" its small limbs in the superabundance of its joy at being allowed the novel pleasure of gazing at them. The members of the family who were Baubie's juniors, did not profess indifference; only their feeling toward the geet, when it came under their notice on these temporary visits home, was in the main the reverse of amicable. Her younger sister indeed, in Baubie's hearing, designated the unoffending geet a "nasty brat;" whereat Baubie flared up hotly and reminded her that it was not so very long since she, the sister, was an equally "nasty brat," to say the very least of it; as she, Baubie, could very well testify from ample experience of the degrading office of nurse to her. "Fat ever 't be, ye may haud yer chat ony wye," said Baubie, and the sister stood rebuked.

When harvest came, the geet being now six months old was "spean't," and Baubie "took a hairst." Handed over to the exclusive custody of its grannie for the time being, the geet was destined thenceforth to share both bed and board, literally, with Eppie Huie and Jock her husband. The tail of the speaning process when the geet got "frettie," and especially overnight, brought back to Jock Huie a lively remembrance of by-gone experiences of a like nature; and he once or twice rather strongly protested against the conduct of "that ablich" in "brakin' 's nicht's rest" with its outcries. But, on the whole, Jock bore with the geet wonderfully.

When her hairst was finished, it was Baubie's luck

to get continuous employment from the same master till Martinmas. When that period had arrived, Baubie of her own free will and choice again stood the feeling market, and found what she deemed a suitable engagement at a large farm several miles off, whither she went in due time; and where, as was to be expected, she found the domestic supervision of the male and female servants less stringent on the whole than it had been at the elder's at Brigfit. In so far as her very moderate wages allowed, after meeting her own needs in the matter of dress, Baubie Huie was not altogether disinclined to contribute toward the support of her bastard geet. As a matter of course nothing further was heard of or from the nondescript father of the geet. He had moved sufficiently far off to be well out of sight at any rate, and Jock Huie had no means of finding him out and pressing the claim against him in respect of the child's maintenance, except by means of the Poor Law Inspector; and Jock being a man of independent spirit had not yet thought of calling in the services of the "Boord." As time went on, Baubie's maternal care did not manifest itself in an increasing measure in this particular of furnishing the means to support the geet more than it did in any other respect affecting her offspring.

After one or two more flittings from one situation to another, it became known that Baubie Huie was about to be married. At another Martinmas term—there had been an interval of two years—Baubie once more returned home; but this time frankly to announce to Jock and Eppie Huie that she was "gyaun to be married" to one Peter Ga', who had been a fellow-servant with her during a recent half-year. From considerate regard for the convenience of her parents, and other causes, the happy day would not be delayed beyond a fortnight; and there would be no extensive "splore" on the occasion to disturb materially the domestic arrangements of the Huies.

On this latter point certain of the neighbours were keenly disappointed. Because there were no marriage

rejoicings to speak of, they missed an invitation to join in the same, and they spoke in this wise :—

“An’ there’s to be nae mairriage ava, ye was sayin’?”

“Hoot—fat wye cud there? The bridegreem an’ aul’ widow man ’t mith be ’er fader, wi’ three-four o’ a faimily.”

“Na, sirs; a bonny bargain she’ll be to the like o’ ’im—three or four o’ a family, ye say?”

“So aw b’lieve; an’ aw doot it winna be lang ere Baubie gi’e ’im ane mair to haud it haill wi’.”

“Weel; weel! Only fat ither cud ye expeck; but the man maun hae been sair misguidet ’t loot’s een see the like o’ ’er.”

“An’ ye may say ’t.”

“Fat siclike o’ a creatur is he, ken ye?”

“Ou weel, he’s a byous quate man it wud appear, an’ a gweed aneuch servan’, but sair haud’n’ doon naitrally. Only the peer stock maun be willin’ to dee the richt gate in a menner; or he wud a never propos’t mairryin’ Baubie.”

“Gweed pity ’im wi’ the like o’ ’er, weel-a-wat—senseless cuttie.”

Naturally, and by right, when Baubie Huie had got a home of her own, she ought to have resumed the custody of her Bastard Geet, now a “gangrel bairn” of fully two years; but on the one hand, it was evident that Mr. and Mrs. Ga’ had the prospect of finding the available accommodation in a hut, whose dimensions afforded scope for only a very limited but and ben, sufficiently occupied by and bye without the geet; and on the other, Eppie Huie, though abundantly forfough’en for a woman of her years in keeping her house, attending to the wants of her husband, Jock, and meeting such demands as her own family made upon her exertions as general washerwoman, would have rather demurred to parting with the geet, to whom she had become, as far as the adverse circumstances of the case allowed, attached. And thus the geet was left in the undisputed possession of Jock and Eppie Huie, to be trained by them as they saw meet.

Unlucky geet, say you? Well, one is not altogether disposed to admit that without some qualification. Sure enough, Jock Huie, senior, would and did permit Baubie's geet to grow up an uncouth, unkempt, and, in the main, untaught bairn; yet was there from him, even, a sort of genuine, if somewhat rugged affection, flowing out toward little Jock Huie (as the geet was alternatively styled); as when he would dab the shaving brush playfully against the geet's unwhiskered cheek, while sternly refusing him a grip of the gleaming razor, as he lifted the instrument upward for service on his own face; or, at another time, would quench the geet's aspiration after the garments of adult life, manifested in its having managed to thrust its puny arms into a huge sleeved moleskin vest belonging to Jock himself, by dropping his big "wyv'n bonnet" over the toddling creature's head, and down to his shoulders. Bitter memories of Samie Caie had faded into indistinctness more or less. And when the neighbour wives, as they saw the geet with an old black "cutty" in his hand, gravely attempting to set the contents of the same alight with a fiery sod in imitation of its grandfather, would exclaim, admiringly, "Na, but that laddie is a bricht Huie, Jock, man," Jock would feel a sort of positive pride in the youngster, who bade so fairly to do credit to his upbringing.

No; it might be that meagre fare—meagre even to pinching at times—was what the inmates of Jock Huie's cot had to expect; it might be that in a moral and intellectual point of view the nourishment going was correspondingly scanty and insufficient, to say the least of it; but in being merely left to grow up under these negatively unfavourable conditions, a grotesque miniature copy of the old man at whose heels he had learnt to toddle about with such assiduity, I can by no means admit that, as compared with many and many a geet whose destiny it is to come into the world in the like irregular fashion, the lot of Baubie Huie's Bastard Geet could be justly termed unlucky.