

CHAPTER VII.

BACK FROM THE WELLS.

JOHNNY GIBB'S return visit to the Wells, in 1839, was to him a somewhat memorable one; not for any remarkable events by which it was distinguished, but in this wise. Johnny had the fortune then to make the incidental acquaintance of two men, each in his way not a little after his own heart. These were Donald M'Craw, and the gentleman from Marnoch, of whom the reader has already heard somewhat. Donald, like many another Celt, was a keen hand in the discussion of all questions of a theologico-polemical cast, and a staunch upholder of the Church's exclusive jurisdiction in matters spiritual. And while the Marnoch man held similar sentiments with Donald theoretically, the progress of events was just then bringing to his own door the opportunity of illustrating his theory by a practical testimony.

And thus it was that when Johnny Gibb, Donald M'Craw, and "Maister Saun'ers," as Mrs. M'Craw called him, had got fairly yokit on the subject of the Kirk, a lengthened and engrossing confabulation was the result. When general principles had been sufficiently expounded—Donald and the Marnoch man being so thoroughly well up in the subject that Johnny was reduced to the position very much of a listener and learner—Maister Saun'ers entered on the history of the Marnoch case with all the exactitude of personal knowledge. Johnny had heard of it

in a general way before, and sympathised with the protesting parishioners, but as his information grew through the communications of Maister Saun'ers, his sympathy also waxed in intensity, till it merited the name of righteous indignation against those who had sought to deprive them of their rights and privileges.

"Ay," said Maister Saun'ers, "faur's the richts o' conscience there, I wud like to ken? A man wi' nae gifts fittin' 'im for the wark forc't upon an unwillin' people i' the vera teeth o' the Veto Act."

"An' was there naebody in fawvour o' this Edwards?" asked Johnny.

"Judge ye, Maister Gibb—oot o' three hunner heids o' failmies, members o' the congregation, nae less nor twa hunner an' sixty-one protestit against his bein' sattl't."

"An' the lave sign't for 'im?"

"'Deed no—I dinna like to speak oot o' boun's: but I'm seer there's nae half-a-dizen, that hae ony richt to meddle i' the maitter, in fawvour o' him—leavin' oot Peter Taylor, the innkeeper at Foggieloa, I ken hardly ane."

"Dear me, man: but lat yer Presbytery be fat they like, the Assembly 'll never thole sic ongaens."

"Ay, Maister Gibb, but that's jist faur the creesis lies. The Assembly o' last year—thirty-aucht, ye ken—ordeen't the Presbytery to throw the presentee oot: aweel, that's been deen sinsyne. But nae doot ye've heard o' the Auchterarder case, faur the Coort o' Session was call't into play, an' the vera Presbytery o' Dunkeld brocht till its bar in person—it's aneuch to gar ane's bleed boil to think o' 't, aifter the noble struggles an' sufferin's o' oor covenantin' forebears to mainteen spiritooal independence."

"It leuks like a joodgment o' ta lan' for oor onfaithfu'ness," said Donald.

"Aweel," continued Maister Saun'ers, "the Apos'le says, 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' an' so although the Presbytery hae been prohibitet fae takin' ony forder steps fatsomever to induck this 'stranger' that the flock will never follow, fa sud hin'er him to gae to the Coort o' Session

neist an' seek a decree authoreesin the Presbytery to gae on wi' the sattlement?"

"I' the vera teeth o' the Assembly?" exclaimed Johnny.

"Ay, Maister Gibb, that's the pass we're brocht till at Marnoch noo."

"An' has the airm o' ta secular poo'er raelly been stretch't oot to touch ta ark o' ta Kirk's spiritooal independence?" asked Donald, with an air of solemnity.

"Judge ye, Donal'—This vera ouk this Edwards has gotten a legal dockiment fae the shoopreme ceevil Coort, requarin the Presbytery forthwith to tak' 'im on his trials."

"Alas! alas!" said the blind pensioner, shaking his head, "sic unhallow't wark bodes ill for oor coontra. We may some o' us leeve to see ta day when the faithfu' people o' God maun worship on the hill-sides again."

"But," interposed Johnny, "your Presbytery—they'll see you richtit. They winna daur to disobey the Assembly."

"Oor Presbytery! Jist wait ye," said Maister Saun'ers. "We've hed owre gweed preef o' their quality in the times bygane. They've deen ocht but befrien'et the people; an' I'll gi'e the lugs fae my heid gin they dinna gae on noo, neck-or-naething, to cairry out this sattlement—that's to say, the majority; for aiven in Stra'bogie we've a faithfu' minority protestin' against sic iniquity."

"An' will ye stan' to hae this man Edwards forc't upo' ye, neck an' heels?" said Johnny Gibb, warmly.

"Never!—I tell ye the fowk o' Marnoch 'll never submit to that, come fat will. They'll leave the kirk wa's to the owls an' the bats seener, an' gae forth oonder the firmament o' heaven to worship."

"Praise to Him that rules ta hearts o' men that we hae faithfu' witnesses i' the lan'!" quoth Donald M'Craw, with something of the fervour of an old Covenanter.

"Ay," replied Johnny; "it wud be a gran' sicht to see a congregation mairch oot, an' leave the bare wa's o' the desecratit kirk, raither nor bide still, un'er the minastry o' ane that hed nae better call till 's office nor fat the poo'ers

o' this earth can gi'e 'im by dent o' the strong airm o' the law—owreridin' the saacred richts o' men's consciences."

"Mark my words weel," said Maister Saun'ers; "if ye dinna see sic a sicht as fat ye speak o' in Marnoch, afore ony o' 's is muckle aul'er, I'm far mista'en."

"Wae, wae, to ta men that forder sic unsanctified wark," said Donald; "an' may ta Christian people nae be foun' faint-hertit i' the day o' trial."

"Never fear," exclaimed Maister Saun'ers stoutly; "we hae stood to oor prenciples as yet, an' we'll dee't still, i' maugre o' an Erastian Presbytery, wha ken nae heicher hom-age nor renderin' to Cæsar the things that are God's."

"Ay, ay, man," said Johnny, reflectively, and I rather think the image of Mr. Sleekaboot crossed his mind. "There's owre mony o' them tarr't wi' the same stick—war'dly, time-servin' characters; mair concern't aboot pleasin' the lairds nor sairin their Maister."

"Weel, weel," added Maister Saun'ers, "depen' ye upon 't, though it may begin at hiz, it canna en' there. There maun be a clearin' oot, an' an estabishment o' the true prenciples that oor forefaders focht an' suffer't for, afore the Kirk o' Scotlan' can be set on her richt founda-tions."

"Ah, but ye're speakin' ta Gospel truth noo," exclaimed Donald M'Craw, who delighted in sombre prediction. "'I will overturn, overturn, overturn,' saith ta prophet. An' ta Kirk has been too lang sattl't on her lees—her day o' joodgment must come."

As may be imagined, the spirit of Johnny Gibb was not a little stirred within him by the discourse he had held with Maister Saun'ers and Donald M'Craw. For the day or two that he remained at Macduff, Maister Saun'ers was his constant companion. They took their walks together, and Jock Will trotted behind; they sat on the braes in the sun, and talked together, and Jock traversed the pebbly part of the beach in search of bonny buckies, half of which Jock had destined for the adornment of his mother's mantelpiece at home; the other half—well, Jock was gallant enough to

meditate a surprise for the lassie, by presenting to her, should a favourable opportunity occur, as they journeyed home, a choice collection of the finest shells that the Macduff beach afforded. When the two new-made friends parted there was a vigorous handshaking, and Johnny Gibb avowed, as indeed turned out to be the case, that from that day forward his zeal in the Non-intrusion cause would be quickened in a degree that should bear no relation to his previous state of hazy, half-informed rebellion against Moderate domination, as it had been attempted to be exercised by Mr. Sleekabout.

The journey home from the Wells was necessarily very much of the character of the journey thither; only that the patients were a little more tanned, if possible, by the sun, and the stores they now carried were chiefly of a maritime nature—a few dried cod; herrings; partans; dulse, and a bottle of sea water taken along by Widow Will to perfect her son's cure. In due course they arrived at Gushetneuk.

"Hae, lassie," quoth Johnny Gibb, handing out a decrepit-looking wicker basket, "that's the wife o' Clinkstyle's herrin'. Ye'll better tak' them owre at ance, or we'll be hearin' about it."

"Wudna ye sen' a puckle o' the dilse to the goodwife, man—an' a partan?"

"Please yersel', 'oman; but I sud partan neen wi' 'er. They war owre dear bocht till agree wi' her constiteetion."

"Hoot, ye sudna be sae nabal wi' fowk," answered the goodwife.

Johnny gave an expressive pech, and proceeded with the dismantling of the cart.

The compromise made was to send along with Mrs. Birse's parcel of herrings a goodly bundle of dulse; and the lassie went off to Clinkstyle freighted accordingly.

"An' that's my herrin' is't, Mary?" said Mrs. Birse, on seeing the basket. "An' dilse, nae less? Na, sirs, but ye'll be a far-traivell't 'oman noo. Did the wife Wull come hame wi' yer aunt an' you, no?"

"Ay."



R

Taslaïr.

“An’ Jock, nae doot—Is his sair chafts better noo?”

“I think they are,” said the lassie.

“An’ ye’ve bidden a’ thegither at Macduff, I’s’e warran’?”

“Na; auntie an’ me bidet oor lanes in ae hoose, an’ Widow Wull at anither.”

“Ou yea, I thocht ye wud ’a maetit a’ throu’ ither—’t wud ’a made it chaeper for Jock an’ ’s mither, maybe. They cam’ in files to see you, an’ bade throu’ the aifterneen?”

“Ay, files.”

“An’ fa did yer aunt an’ you bide wi’, syne?”

“They ca’d them Mr. and Mrs. M’Craw.”

“A muckle house, I wauger, an’ braw fowk?—brawer nor the fowk that Jock Wull an’ ’s mither bade wi’?”

“Ay, it was middlin’ muckle.”

“It wusna neen o’ the fisher tribe ’t ye bade wi,’ than?”

“Na, the man was an aul’ sojer.”

“An aul’ sojer! He’s keepit ye in order, no?”

“But he was blin’.”

“An’ ’s wife made a livin’ by keepin’ lodgers—she wud hae mair nor you?”

“Na; she keepit a skweel for little littleanes.”

“An’ lodg’t you i’ the room en’?—jist that. She wud mak’ a gweed penny i’ the coorse o’ the sizzon that wye, I’s’e warran’.”

As the goodwife of Clinkstyle leisurely undid the basket, she plied the girl with these and sundry other queries, marked by the like laudable intention of finding out the inner history of the journey to the Wells; and in particular whether Widow Will had not only been conveyed to and fro by the Gushetneuk folks, but had also shared in their bounty while at Macduff. At last the basket was emptied and its contents scrutinised.

“Ay, lassie, an’ that’s my twa dizzen? They’re some saft, an’ nae gryte sizes, weel-a-wat—Hoot, lassie, there’s only sax an’ twenty there! Keep me, there sud ’a been foorteen to the dizzen—I never tyeuk less nor foorteen fae aul’ Skairey the cadger, lat aleen Macduff itsel’. Aweel,

tak' ye hame yer creelie noo. I sanna be speerin' the price o' them eenoo, but fan I see yer uncle I *sall* lant him the richt gate. He's a het buyer o' fish—nae to ken the cadger's dizen!"

It is not quite certain that Mrs. Birse had any matured intention of ever asking the price of the herrings, if no one else stirred the question. Anyhow she deemed it politic to let it rest meanwhile; and politic also, in a wider sense, to dismiss the lassie graciously.

"Na, Mary, but ye *are* growin' a lang lassie. Oor 'Liza an' you ees't to be heid-y-peers, but ye're tynin her a' thegither. I dinna believe but ye're near as heich's Peter there. Come 'ere, min," continued Mrs. Birse, addressing the young gentleman in question, who had applied himself industriously to the mastication of the dulse. "Awat, but ye mak' a winsome pair. Gae 'wa' noo, Patie, an' convoy Mary a bit; tak' 'er basket i' yer han', and see't ye help her owre the stank afore ye turn."

Peter, a thriving but on the whole slightly softish-looking lad, hirsled off his seat with rather evident reluctance, and after groping about for his bonnet, proceeded to do as his mother had ordered him. And with this lesson in gallantry to her eldest born, the goodwife of Clinkstyle turned her to the continued prosecution of her domestic duties.

CHAPTER VIII.

TAM MEERISON FLITS.

THE style of life that prevails at such places as Gushetneuk would not, I can well believe, suit the taste of the sensational story-teller. He might wait a very long time for "thrilling incidents" of any sort, and wait in vain; and the sober realities of every-day life, as there exemplified, would be certain so to conflict with his spasmodic conceptions of human existence as to drive him to distraction. Nevertheless, I am prepared, after full trial, to deny that such a style of life is in reality, or necessarily, either dull or uninteresting. But, what is more to the point, it is just the very thing that suits my present purpose, inasmuch as I can take my narrative in the most leisurely way, and jump over twelve months or so, which I now do, with the bare remark that I have performed that exploit, fully trusting to pick up my characters *in statu quo* just as I left them.

When the Martinmas term of 1840 was drawing near, Johnny Gibb wanted to know of Tam Meerison whether he was disposed to remain as his servant through the winter. Tam's answer to this question, addressed to him while he was busy currying the bay mare, was not decisive either way.

"Aw cudna say," quoth Tam, drily; "aw wudna care a great heap, gin we can 'gree aboot the waages, an' a' ither thing confeerin."

"Confeerin or no confeerin," said Johnny, testily, "I wunt a mair direck answer—fat siller are ye seekin'?"

"It depen's a gweed hantle on a body's neebours tee," continued Tam.

"Ou ay, I ken the loon an' you's been aye haein bits o' sharries noo and than; but he's a weel-workin', weel-conduckit loon, an' ye winna pit an aul' heid upo' young shou'ders."

"Will he be bidin?" asked Tam.

"Lickly, though he hasna been speer't at yet; an' Jinse's bidin—hae ye ony faut to fin' wi' her?"

"I've naething adee wi' women's wark, an' never meddles wi' 't," said Tam, pursuing his grooming very industriously. "Roun', Jess—wo—still, you thing." The latter part of the sentence was of course addressed to the animal, then undergoing its daily trimming.

"Weel, weel, but tell me, ay or no, an' fat fee yer seekin'," insisted Johnny Gibb.

"I cudna say foo the fees'll be rinnin this term; an' aw wudna like to name siller till the mornin' o' the market."

"A puddin' lug, min," exclaimed Johnny. "That's aye the gate wi' you chiels; tum'le aboot a haill kwinttra side, sax month or so here, sax month or so there, for half o' your life-time, an never save a saxpence to bless yoursel's wi'."

"I cudna dee 't, though," said Tam, who still carried in his mind Johnny's demand to know what fee he wanted.

Johnny at once turned him about and left the stable.

Now the truth of the matter was that Tam Meerison did not wish to leave Gushetneuk. The loon, of whom the reader has formerly heard, and who was still Tam's fellow-servant, was just a little of a thorn in his side occasionally, by his lack of reticence in speech on certain subjects; but then there was much seemingly to balance this very partial grievance. If Johnny Gibb was occasionally a little hasty, he was on the whole a kind and indulgent master. The horses Tam drove were handsome, well appointed, and well fed—an important consideration, and properly so, with every man in Tam's position. Tam admitted that the servants were "weel ees't" in the way of food; and then the

presence of Jinse Deans had come to be something that seemed to be essential to Tam's perfect serenity of mind. But for all that Tam was so far the slave of habit that he could not clearly see his way to departing one jot from what, among his compeers, had come to be considered the correct mode of bargain-making in covenanting for their services; he had a kind of general idea that it was on the whole an effeminate sort of thing to "bide owre lang i' the same place," and he had now been eighteen months at Gushetneuk.

On the morning of the feeing market day, Johnny Gibb no doubt asked, once more, what wages Tam required, but evidently Johnny was in a decidedly more indifferent mood than when he had previously mooted the subject. And, accordingly, when Tam, who by that time had begun seriously to doubt his previous policy, "socht," he somewhat curtly "bade" ten shillings less than the sum Tam mentioned. With few more words they separated, and each went away to the market in his own interest, but with a vague notion on Tam's part that they "wud lickly meet afore they were lang there." Early in the day, however, Johnny had a stoot gudge, anxious to "work a pair o' horse," pressed on his notice, and easily arranged with him. Tam hung in the market for good part of the day, receiving only indifferent offers, and the upshot was, that he at last, reluctantly enough, engaged himself to be foreman at Clinkstyle. Peter Birse, as was not an unusual case with him, was about to make what is understood by "a clean toon" of his servants, and, according to his invariable practice, had been endeavouring to fill up the vacancies in his establishment at the cheapest rate; so he managed to pick up Tam Meerison at an advanced period of the market, at a crown less fee than Johnny Gibb had offered Tam on the morning of the same day.

The change from Gushetneuk to Clinkstyle was one that Tam Meerison did not find exactly conducive to his comfort. In explaining his reasons for making the change, Tam, to put the best face upon it, told his friends that he was

desirous of getting to a "muckler toon" than Gushetneuk, where he would have more "company" and so on. But, poor lad, the company he got were a cause of no little trouble to him. It so happened that Mrs. Birse's notions about the proper mode of feeding servants were not such as to command the approval generally, of those servants who had had practical experience of them, or to procure for Mrs. Birse herself a favourable reputation among that class where she was known. The new servants—second horseman, orra man, and cow bailie—were disposed not merely to grumble but to break out into open insurrection, on the ground of the unsatisfactory character of the victuals supplied to them. And they expected Tam to vindicate their rights in the matter; a duty which he found by no means easy or pleasant. So far as mere inarticulate growling, or the utterance of an incidental anathema against the victuals in the hearing of the servant maid went, Tam found no difficulty in going fully along with his companions. But a crisis came by and by. The goodwife, in her thrifty way, had for a good many nights in succession supplied boiled turnips and turnip brose to the lads as the staple of their supper. And in testimony of their appreciation of the fare thus furnished, they latterly had no sooner smelt the odour thereof as they entered the kitchen night after night, than they duly commenced to low like as many oxen. Then it was that Mrs. Birse seized the occasion to catch them *flagrante delicto*, by bursting into the kitchen as they were bellowing away; and a very stiff onset she gave them about this unbecoming behaviour.

"An' fat hae ye to say against gweed sweet neeps to yer sipper, I sud like to ken?" demanded the irate matron.

"Oh weel, it's owre af'en to hae them ilka night 'cep Sunday for a haill ouk," said Tam.

"Owre af'en! Birst the stamacks o' ye; fat wud ye hae!"

"A cheenge fles."

"For fat, no? There's fowk maybe't kens their place better nor set their servan's doon at the same table wi'

themsel's; and gin ye hinna leern't that muckle gweed breedin' yet, the seener ye're taucht it the better; fat sorra div ye wunt?"

"We wunt naething but a fair diet," answered Tam.

"A fair diet! An' weel't sets ye—aw wud thank ye to tell me fan *your* fader, the roch dyker,"—and here Mrs. Birse looked directly in Tam Meerison's face—"was able to gi'e's faimily aneuch o' onything to ate. But that's aye the gate; them that's brocht up like beggars's aye warst to please."

This outburst took the wind so considerably out of Tam that he utterly failed to make any reply; and Mrs. Birse, after a brief pause, went on, "'Deed, they're but ower gweed for ye—wi' weel hir't brose, an' plenty o' as gweed milk to yer kyaaks as ever cam' oot o' a byre."

"Sang, it needs't a'—near aucht days aul', an' as blue as blaeworts;—but it's nae the milk 't we're compleenin' o' eenoo," said the second horseman, after another pause.

"Na, an' ye wud be baul' to compleen, ye ill-menner't pack; but ye'll jist tak' yer neeps there, an' nae anither cheep oot o' the heids o' ye; or gin ye dinna, we'll ken fat wye to tak' an order o' ye."

"Tak' an order o' the aul' Smith, an' ye like; neeps sax nichts oot o' the seyven winna stan' law at ony rate," said the former speaker.

"An' it's muckle *ye* ken aboot law," replied the good-wife, scornfully. "Jist gae ye on till I need to gar yer maister tak' ye afore the Shirra, an' ye'll maybe hae some diffeek-walty in stannin yer grun for refeesin a gweed halesome diet."

With this deliverance, and unheeding the rejoinder, "Aweel, aw daursay ye've hed the chance o' hearin' the Shirra afore noo," Mrs. Birse turned, and bounced away ben to the parlour, where she proceeded to make tea for her husband and hopeful progeny, now gathered round the table, at the same time letting the unspent balance of her wrath blow off in a general way, to ease her mind; the head of the household getting a slight incidental scorching, when he happened to come in the way.

"I'm sure, man, I'm jist keepit in a fry wi' ae coorse pack aifter anither; ye seerly wile the vera warst that ye can get fan ye gae to the market."

"Hoot, 'oman, ye sudna vex yersel' about them."

"Easy to ye; but an' ye had the maetin o' them's I hae, ye wud tell anither story. A vulgar, ill-fashion't set."

"Fat's been adee eenoo?"

"Adee! refeesin their neeps, an' makin' a din like as mony nowte fan they cam' in."

"Hoot awa'."

"Yes," interjected Miss Eliza Birse, "an' I heard the second horseman cursin' about the kitchie cakes."

"An' fat did he say, my dear?" asked Mrs. Birse.

"He bann't at Betty, an' said they werena fit for swine to eat."

"An' fat did Betty say, 'Liza?"

"She said't hoo't she cudna help it; that it was your orders to mak' them weet i' the hert to keep the men fae eatin' owre muckle."

"The dooble limmer!" exclaimed Mrs. Birse. "An' her leukin a' the time't a bodie speaks till 'er as gin butter wudna melt in her cheek."

"Weel, I heard 'er at ony rate; for I was jist gaen up the stair, an' stoppit and hearken't at the back o' the inner kitchie door."

"The ongratefu ill-menner't jaud't she is," continued Mrs. Birse. "But I'll sort 'er for that. She'll be expeekin to get some leavin's i' the teapot, to be a cup till 'er fan the men gae oot to sipper the beasts, as eeswal; but she 'll leuk wi' clear een ere she see that again, I doot. That's the reward't fowk gets for their kin'ness to the like o' 'er."

While this conversation was going on, the tea was proceeding apace. The three young Masters Birse and Miss Birse, with their respected parents, were seated round a somewhat clumsily set out table, containing in the way of solids, an ample store of bread, oatcakes, cheese, and butter. The olive plants were all at school, except Peter junior, who,

being designed for agriculture, was understood to have the literary part of his education about finished, and was taking to farming operations, including some minor attempts at cattle-dealing, at which he had been allowed to try his hand, very kindly. Suddenly Peter senior called across the table to his youngest born, Benjamin—

“Benjie! fat are ye deein pirlin aboot at yer breid that gate?”

“Weel,” answered Benjie, sulkily, “’Liza’s gi’en’s a nae gweed bit, an’ winna hae’t ’ersel’.”

“The breid’s a’ perfectky gweed—ate it this moment, sir!” said Peter Birse senior, severely.

Benjie put on a look more dour and dolorous than before, but failed to fulfil the parental mandate.

“Fat is ’t, my pet?” asked Mrs. Birse, in her most sympathising tones, addressing Master Benjamin.

“Weel, it’s nae gweed,” answered Benjie, proffering his mamma the unacceptable bit of cakes—a thick, rather sodden-looking piece. The worthy lady examined it for a second, and said, “’Liza! that’s a bit o’ the kitchie kyaaks—fat wye has that come here?”

“I dinna know,” answered Miss Birse; “it was upo’ the truncher.”

“Is there mair o’ ’t? Eh ay—here’s twa korters! Betty cudna but ’a kent that she was pittin’t upo’ oor maun’. I sudna won’er nor she’s stown as muckle o’ the parlour breid till hersel’. Sic creatures wi’ oonhonesty. Lay that twa korters by, ’Liza, till we see better in till’t. I’se be at the boddom o’ that, though it sud cost her ’er place.” The careful mother added, “There’s a better bittie to ye, my dautie,” and as she said this, she handed to Benjie a full half of one of the quarters of parlour cakes, which bore about the same relation to the kitchie kyaaks that a well-browned biscuit does to a lump of dough.

“Hoot, ’om—an,” Peter Birse had commenced to utter, in the way of deprecation of this proceeding, when Mrs. Birse cut him short by tossing the lump of kitchie kyaaks towards him, and exclaiming—

"Weel, weel, try 't yersel', gin ye hae onything to say. But ye canna expeck the bairn's stamackie to be able to disjeest the like o' that."

"Humph, I cud ate it brawly," said Peter Birse senior; and in proof of the truth of his assertion he did eat it. Only his next helping was taken, not from the remaining bit of kitchie kyaaks, but from the parlour cakes.

The result of the turnip controversy was that Tam Meerison and his companions did get an occasional supper of kail, very purely prepared with salt and water; only as the three lads coincided in holding decidedly that Tam ought to have "stuck'n up better to the aul' soo," his influence and authority as foreman were correspondingly diminished. And the less Tam was disposed to renew the quarrel with his mistress, the more did the others swear "at lairge" when they happened to be about the kitchen. Not seldom was this done, with the evident intention of provoking warfare, as well as of manifesting the slight degree of respect they entertained for Tam, and for everbody else connected with Clinkstyle; the general result being that Tam would sit, mainly dumb, a good part of the evening, hearing no end of jibes indirectly launched at himself; while Betty, the hard-worked bedraggled kitchen damsel, would at one time giggle and laugh with the rough fellows, and be at next turn coarsely tormented till she was in a state of the highest wrath; or be made the butt of their oaths and obscene allusions. As for Mrs. Birse, bauld woman as she was, even she found it to her comfort to make as few errands to the kitchen as might be, while "the boys," as her husband termed them, were about.

And here, good reader, I bethought me of giving utterance to a few moral reflections on the degraded character of our farm-servant class; and how blameworthy they are for being such immoral and unmannerly boors. But somehow my line of vision came always to be obstructed by a full-figure image of Mrs. Birse of Clinkstyle, who, you will perceive, is a very particular and intimate acquaintance of mine. Mrs. Birse *would* come into the forefront, and her husband,

Peter, was vaguely discernible in the background. So I gave up the attempt. You may make it on your own account; but I doubt whether you will be able to search thoroughly into the causes of this social evil without being also troubled with the image of Mrs. Birse of Clinkstyle.