

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. BIRSE AND HER OWN.

It was a fact incapable, I fear, of being successfully disputed, that Peter Birse senior had never profited as he ought by the exhortations of his wife, ably seconded of late years by her accomplished daughter, Miss Eliza Birse, in respect to the necessity of cultivating the virtue of gentility, and taking care to be select in the choice of his company. At any rate, had Peter been sufficiently perspicacious he would certainly not have given Mrs. Birse the too candid narrative he did of his ongoings at Lowrin Fair. Peter had gone to the Fair accompanied by his promising elder son. He had first visited the nowt market at the top of the brae, and cheapened several stirks; then he had come down to the fit market, and perambulated the same from Barreldykes to the Cross; and whereas he wanted a bandster for the harvest, he and Peter junior had, after due selection, set on to a regular haggle with an ancient-looking man, in thread-bare blue, with a green head of oat-straw stuck within the band of his old stuff hat, signifying that he was a candidate for harvest-work. And by and by he had engaged the ancient man for thirty-two shillings and sixpence of fee, and given him a penny of arles. This done, Peter had no other business on hand; but he would, of course, have a look at the horse market, before he would go home, were it only to give Peter junior the opportunity of increasing his knowledge of the equine race, and of those who traffic therein.

It was then that Peter Birse met Dawvid Hadden, with whom he had long been on terms of somewhat close and confidential intimacy; and that Dawvid being in an uncommonly genial and hospitable humour, they two resolved to be social together, while Peter Birse junior forgathered with certain young men of his own age, and went off to see life for a little in the thick of men and animals.

But why should Peter Birse senior be so very soft as to tell out baldly to his wife, on the morning after the market, how Dawvid Hadden and he went away together into that canvas erection by the roadside, with the sign-board,

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how Dawvid should have no sooner called out, "A half-mutchkin here, lassie," than they discovered Mains of Yawal and one or two acquaintances in a corner; and how they forthwith beckoned Mains over to bear them company, to which invitation Mains, who was settled down in the tent for the afternoon, affably responded? It was all very proper and necessary to tell Mrs. Birse, as he was in duty bound, about the character of the market and the terms of the engagement made with the bandster; but why not keep to safe generalities about his own movements thereafter? Of course Peter Birse wanted to bring out with impressive effect the gist of certain warnings delivered by Dawvid Hadden, in presence of Mains, as aforesaid, for behoof of all who were in danger of following divisive courses in kirk affairs at that juncture; but, poor man, he did not perceive that he was taking the very method to prevent his having the slightest chance of a respectful hearing.

"Man, aw div won'er to hear ye speak o' takin' drams fae the like o' that creatur!"

"Hoot, 'oman, ye wudna hed me to pay't mysel', wud ye?" said Peter.

"Peter Birse; will ye ever leern to conduck yersel' as ony weel-menner't person wud? Gin ye hae nae regard for yersel', ye mith hae some for yer faimily, peer things."

"I wusna deein nae ill, I'm seer," replied Peter, in a bewildered way.

"Nae ill! gaen awa' sittin' doon drinkin' in a hovel o' a tent, wi' a leein', ill-win'et creatur like that, an' a drucken slype like Mains o' Yawal. A bonny example 't ye set to the risin' generation; an' your ain son tee—Faur was Patie a' the time 't ye was blebbin an' drinkin' at this rate?"

"Peter? Ou weel, he mitha been wi' 's an' he hed like't, but he gaed aff up the horse market fanever Dawvid an' me begood to speak."

"Mitha been wi' ye! A fine wye o' deein, leernin ony young creatur sic drucken haibits!—An' ye sat still there the feck o' the aifterneen?"

"Ou, na, we satna nae time. There was only the half-mutchkin 't Dawvid got, an' the boddom o' a gill 't Mains feish owre in 's han' i' the stoup. I wudna lat 'im ca' nae mair, though he threepit owre an' owre again 't he wud dee 't."

"Humph; an' ye never leukit owre yer shooder for Peter, to fesh him hame wi' ye, but cam' awa' wi' this low-life't creatur."

"Oh, 'oman, dinna speak that gate. Dawvid's a rael perjink, weel-leern't body; we've been obleeg't till 'im mony a time, an' may be 't again; an' he has a gweed hantle o' poo'er fae the laird; I'se asseer ye."

"Haud yer tongue, Peter Birse! Poo'er or than no—a grun-offisher glaid to gae aboot an' tell fowk fan to pay their hens to the laird; the thing that the vera flunkey wud scorn to dee. That's his poo'er; an' he mak's 'imsel' a muckle man meddlin' wi' the henwife's wark; an' syne comin' hame ilka ither nicht fae this an' the neist orra company as fou's a piper."

"Weel, I never saw the man hae drink upon 'im, an' aw'm seer he was freely sober o' the market nicht."

"Dinna ye tell me; the tae corbie winna pyke oot the tither's e'e. Fan fowk comes hame wi' a face like a Halloween fire, there's rizzons for 't. Fat kin' o' a pawrent's hert can ye hae, to come oot o' a market wi' the like o' him, an'

leave them 't's sibbest t' ye to be prann't, or ill-guidet ony gate?"

"Keep me, 'oman, Peter's nae a littleane noo; fat wud come owre him?"

"Ay, ye may speer that noo. Gin ye hed been atten'in' till a fader's duty, ye wudna hed nae sic questions to speer. I suppose yer freen was needin' a' the help that ye cud gi'e 'im gin that time to get *him* hame."

"Forbye that, Dawvid an' me ca'd up an' doon the fit market for naar an 'oor leukin' for Peter—I'se warran' he hedna been seekin' to come hame wi' 's."

"An' little won'er; nae gryte heartnin till 'im, peer man, to see's nain fader takin' up wi' sic company."

Now, this last remark of Mrs. Birse was scarcely fair. For she very well knew what, she was fully aware, Peter Birse senior at that moment did not know, namely, that his eldest son, Peter Birse junior, had come home on the previous evening, not only at a late hour, but, furthermore, with a broken nose; which, on being caught by his mother as he was unobtrusively slipping away to bed without showing himself in the parlour, he accounted for by saying it had been caused by "something flein up an' strikin' 's face" as he left the market. The rational theory on the subject was, that Peter had got into a quarrel, more or less, as young men of gallant and amatory disposition will sometimes do on such occasions, and that he bore the marks of his chivalrous daring on his countenance. A very few particulars in support of this theory were, with difficulty, extracted from him by his fond mother, when she had returned a second time to the charge; whereupon her reflections took this shape:—That, it being evident that Peter had got into a vulgar fight with two or three farm-servant lads, and all about a farm-servant girl whom Peter had desired, but had not been permitted, to accompany to her home, it was also evident that she must forthwith charge herself even more directly than hitherto with the duty of developing and directing the young man's matrimonial intentions. In her maternal solicitude she had not overlooked this part of her

duty, and had, indeed, been fondly hoping that the little scheme of affection she had endeavoured to promote between Mrs. Gibb's niece, Mary Howie, and her own son, Peter, had been gradually ripening all this while. But the facts that had now partly emerged rather staggered her.

Mrs. Birse thought on the subject for days, with much frequency, turning it in her mind first in one shape, then in another. If she had known who the girl was, but this Peter stubbornly refused to tell—and, indeed, generally remained in a sulky state of mind—her feelings would certainly have carried her the length of seeking the damsel out on set purpose to upbraid and snub her for the audacious impertinence which, in such a sphere of life, could allow itself to be the object of admiration on the part of a wealthy and genteel farmer's son. Then would her thoughts revert, with a sort of angry feeling, to Peter Birse senior, as she remembered all his vulgarities; and I fear she sometimes audibly hinted at his baleful responsibility in this whole matter; and Peter slunk silently away to escape the heinous imputation. Towards Peter Birse junior her feelings had nothing of acrimony or heat in them. The notion of evil existing in her excellent son, otherwise than as it might have come by inevitable inheritance from his father, had not, in the least, entered her head. How, then, could she be angry with him?

The general result of these Lowrin Fair transactions then, was, first, to leave Mrs. Birse in a state of some dubiety about her son. That dubiety, however, she had made up her mind should be removed before long. Only a little more of explicitness on the part of Peter junior was needed to enable her to institute whatever proceedings the case might demand; and she knew a little time was required to allow the amiable young man to get over his present sullen mood. When he had so far relaxed, she knew it would require only a little tycein to induce him to pour forth all that was in his heart. So she would bide her time. Then, in so far as her husband was concerned, she had got, as she believed, most righteous cause for putting her ban on any

further intercourse of a friendly nature between him and Dawvid Hadden. Peter had, as he imagined, been working up to the point when he could, with telling practical effect, bring in Dawvid Hadden's authority to impose a check on the headlong course his wife seemed determined on following in kirk matters. But, lo, his hopes were blasted at once and conclusively; for, slow i' the uptak as Peter was, he could not but feel that, after the recent morning's overhaul, the quotation of Dawvid's name in support of his position must be a good deal worse than useless. Poor Peter! his state of mind was far from a comfortable one. How willingly would he have given vent to his perplexities and regrets to Mains of Yawal, to Mr. Sleekaboot, even to Jonathan Tawse, or anybody who could sympathise in his sentiments, and concurrently deplore with him what was likely to happen if things went on in the direction in which his non-intrusion neighbours were driving them. But then the thought that Mrs. Birse might find it all out, haunted him, and he could only obtain a solace for his troubled mind by turning to his own servant, Tam Meerison, now a staid married man, and, as opportunity offered, disclosing to Tam the burdened state of his feelings.

CHAPTER XXI.

PATIE'S PLUSH WAISTCOAT.

THE uniform and deep interest which Mrs. Birse of Clink-style manifested in the welfare of her family was clearly seen in her anxious desire to reach a full acquaintance with those causes that had led to her eldest son, Peter, coming home from Lowrin Fair slightly damaged in person, and considerably soured in spirit; and not less so in the course she adopted with a view to setting the young man up again, and inducing him to go on in the path chalked out for him by maternal wisdom and solicitude. In the first place, with a view to stimulate in Peter that sentiment of grateful confidence which was likely to lead to a full disclosure of the troubles that had been weighing on his spirit, she resolved to surprise him with a very handsome present. About that date, plush waistcoats were an object of strong desire with many young men of Peter's years and tastes: plush waistcoats, double-breasted, and with many pearl buttons on them. Such a waistcoat of blue plush was a garment of high attractions, but one of red plush fairly outdid it, and put its owner in a position of singular distinction. There was just a little doubt in Mrs. Birse's mind whether a plush vest was to be reckoned genteel. Miss Birse had pronounced it vulgar; but then it was well enough understood that the heart of Peter Birse junior was set upon having that very article of clothing, and it was not to be expected that Peter should change his mind for anything his sister

might say; indeed, the contrary effect was certain to be produced. Therefore, to gratify his wish now was very much in the nature of making a virtue of necessity—not to speak of the object to be directly attained in so doing. Mrs. Birse went to the Kirktown, and ascertained through Jock Will, now promoted to the dignity of apprentice to Andrew Langehafts, that the merchan' had on his shelves a piece of red plush, which he might be concussed into selling on very reasonable terms, inasmuch as it had proved hitherto to be dead stock, being an article quite beyond the mark of the ordinary beaux of Pyketillim.

"The merchan' s nae in, is he, laddie?" asked Mrs. Birse, turning over the pieces of plush on the counter.

"No, nae eenoo," was Jock's reply.

"But ye say the reid bit 's never been price't?"

"I heard 'im sayin' that."

"Weel, aw dinna won'er at it—lyin' tooshtin about there till it 's fooshtit and half ate'n wi' the mochs. Cut ye aff a yaird an' a finger-length than, an' gi'e me a dizzen o' pearl buttons, an' we'll saddle aboot the price wi' 'imself Na, Jock, but ye *are* a braw man noo," continued Mrs. Birse, as Jock went on to fulfil her orders in a business-like style. "Nae less nor cairryin a shears i' yer waistcoat pouch already; aw wudna won'er to see ye wi' a chop o' yer nain yet."

Jock laughed his own quiet laugh, and went on with his work.

The announcement of the red plush vest had a highly salutary effect upon Peter Birse junior. He now relaxed with a suddenness that made the muscles of his face feel the thaw almost uncomfortably; he would have desired that the severity of his countenance should have disappeared more gradually, but the sight of the red plush was too much for him—his mother had taken care to bring the unmade piece home with the pearl buttons to display them before his eyes.

It was in the parlour, and they two were alone by themselves.

"Noo, Patie, man," said Mrs. Birse, with affecting em-

phasis; "fa 'll dee as muckle for ye as yer nain mither? Gin her heid war caul i' the mools, aw doot there's fyow wud leuk aifter ye as she wud dee."

Mrs. Birse endeavoured to look pathetic. Peter certainly did look sheepish for some minutes; and, in so far as he was able to distract his eye and his consciousness from the piece of red plush, he let his thoughts dwell next on what his mother had said, as he blurted out—"Hoot, fat's the eese o' speakin' that gate?—I'm sure I'm nae af'en in an ill teen." And then Peter became confidential, and informed his mother how, failing to find his attentions duly reciprocated by Mary Howie, he had gone to Lowrin Fair in a somewhat desperate mood; how, at an advanced period of the fair, the determination had seized him to exhibit his gallantry independently, by walking home with a servant girl who was a mere casual acquaintance; so Peter said, the truth being that the girl was a former servant of Mrs. Birse's own; and how, as she happened to have another beau, certain little unpleasantnesses had occurred, and Peter, in addition to the slight amount of damage he had sustained, writhed greatly under the idea that he had been laughed at,—a sort of ordeal he greatly disliked.

"Ay weel, weel, Patie, man:—that's jist a bit lesson to ye," said Mrs. Birse, who had now dismissed her charnel-house tone. "Them 't sets to coortin the lasses maun temper their nose to the east win' as weel's the south."

"I wasna wuntin *her*!" quoth Peter, bluntly.

"Na, I'm richt weel seer't *ye* wud never leuk owre yer shooder at nae servan' quine. But, my laddie, min' ye're nae to be bauch an' chucken-hertit though Mary Howie sud gie her heid a bit cast files at the first. That's nae mark; she may be rael prood to be name't to ye. An' min' ye that Mary's grown a strappin, weel-faur't lass: an' though she hisna the menners nor edication o' yer sister——"

"Hah! I dinna care a tinkler's curse for menners," exclaimed Peter, candidly, "gin aw cud get 'er."

"An' she's a richt servan'," continued his mamma, not heeding the interruption; "an' fau the aul' fowk wears awa'

ye wud be seer to get the muckle feck o' fat they hae gin ye play'd yer cairts the richt gate; for Gushets has nae near freens o' 's nain. An' ye mith aiven, in coorse o' naitur, come into Gushetneuk itsel', tee. It's a likeable spot, an' richt weel-in-hert kin'ly grun'ie."

"But fat wud aw dee wi' Gushetneuk? Aw thoct I was to get oor ain toon; amnin aw?"

"Seerly; but hear me oot. Ye cud manage baith pairts, brawly. Though fowk grows aul' in coorse o' time, yer fader an' me maun hae some gate to bide. An' wi' Robbie intill anither place, an' Benjie at 's buzness, *we* cud live there fine; awat it's a richt gweed hoose, gin it hed but a back chimley bigget; only there's little eese o' that as lang's the like o' Mr. an' Mrs. Gibb has 't. Your fader cud trock aboot at 's leasure on a placie like Gushetneuk; he wud be aye worth 's breid; an' lat you tak' chairge an' mak' market for baith places."

"Weel, that wud dee fine," said Peter Birse junior, brightening up at the brilliant prospect thus opened up to him. His countenance fell, however, as he added, "But I dinna ken gin she cares for 's ava."

"Care for ye? Fat wud pit that styte i' yer head?"

"Weel, at ony rate, ye ken, I bocht sweeties at St. Saar's Fair an' fuish till 'er——"

"Weel, an' didna she tak' them?"

"Ou ay, but I'm maist sure 't she hed taul' Jock Wull, for they war lauchin' at 's aboot the chop, upo' Saiterday's nicht."

"Lat them lauch that wins, Peter, man. Jock Wull wud need it. Fat's he—the sin o' a peer nace nyaukit beggar creatur, 't hisna passin' a gweed barrow load o' wardle's gear to bless 'ersel wi'! Set *himsel'* up wi' the like o' you, though ye warn a my son! The impidence o' creaturs is a perfect scunner. But never ye min' Jock Wull; an' he gae far that road they'll seen get their sairin o' him, an' 's mither tee; an' little maitter, weel-a-wat.—Gin I hed bit kent that afore I gaed to the chop, no!" added Mrs. Birse, in a subdued key.

"But he gaes hame wi' 'er mony a time; an' fan I try't to get her to come hame wi' me fae the Ward at Yeel, she made fun o' 's a file, an' syne, aifter aw thocht she wud dee't, gaed aff wi' aul' marriet fowk."

"'Fant hert never wan fair dame,' Peter," said Mrs. Birse, with a half scornful laugh. "That's been the gate wi' mair nor Mary Howie, as yer nain fader cud tell, an' he war willin'. Mony was the 'put an' row' wi' him ere he gat muckle audiscence, I can tell ye. But though *he* wusna the young man o' a braw fairm than, he made it oot at the lang len'th, by dent o' patience an' perseverance."

"Weel, but gin she like Jock Wull better," argued Peter, upon whom the green-eyed monster was operating so sensibly that the image of his, as he believed, more successful rival would not leave his mind.

"Gae 'wa' wi' ye!" exclaimed his mother, with some impatience. "Fear't at Jock Wull, an apprentice loon in a bit orra choppie, an' you as weel plenish't a fairmer's sin as there is i' the pairis'!—For shame to ye, Peter, man, 't ye hae so little spunk."

"Cudna ye fesh't about nae wye to Mrs. Gibb than?" asked the gallant youth.

Mrs. Birse, after a moment's reflection, assented to this suggestion, and agreed to do her best with both Johnny and Mrs. Gibb, to pave the way more directly for Peter's matrimonial campaign. Meanwhile, she further exhorted Peter to pursue the same resolutely on his own account.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAINLY POLEMICAL.

To Johnny Gibb the summer of 1842 was a season of unusual mental activity. The great Kirk controversy was waxing hotter and hotter, and a crisis, in some shape, seemed certain at no distant date. The spring of that year had seen the settlement of a minister in a Strathbogie parish, in anticipation of which it had been deemed prudent, after what had occurred at Culsalmond, actually to have a company of soldiers conveyed from Aberdeen to the neighbourhood. The settlement took place quietly enough, but the fact that the moderatism of the Church had indicated its temper in this militant fashion could not fail to arouse still more deeply the belligerent element in a nature like that of Johnny Gibb. He declared that things could not stop short of a rebellion, which would put that of the Forty-five in the shade. Then, at the General Assembly, the deposed ministers of Strathbogie both presented commissions for those of their own number whom they chose to send up, and also offered at the bar of that right reverend house a Court of Session interdict against those of the minority of their brethren from the Presbytery, who had been elected commissioners, and who, according to the Assembly's own previous decision, were the only true representatives of the Presbytery. When the news of this had travelled north to Gushetneuk, through the medium, in the latter part of its journey, of a steady-going Aberdeen news-

paper, which Johnny Gibb, notwithstanding that its opinions differed *toto cælo* from his own, continued to peruse with regularity, Johnny hastened down in the gloamin to Smiddyward to relieve his overwrought mind by some conversation with the souter and the smith.

"I tell ye fat it is," said Johnny, "they winna halt till the earth open an' swallow up a batch o' them like Korah, Dathan, an' Abiram."

"Nae doot we're comin' upo' times o' trial," answered the souter, "but it chaets me sair gin a' this heemlin creengin to the Coort o' Session binna jist i' the wye o' plantin' a saplin' to grow the stick that'll brak their nain heids some day yet."

"That means 't punishment winna owretak' the Moderates in a han'-clap, as it cam' upo' Korah an' 's company," said the smith. "But hae the Stra'bogie Moderates actually been alloot to tak' their seats i' the Assembly, you that's seen the papers?"

"Na, man: I hinna wull o' 't. Ill that we are, we're nae come to that yet," said Johnny. "But nae fyour nor eighty-five votit for them, an' twa hunner an' fifteen against; an' their enterdick to keep oot Maister Dewar, Maister Leith, an' this Mawjor Stewart, the rowlin el'er, was cas'n by a hunner an' seventy-three voters to seventy-sax."

"Gweed fair majorities that, Gushets; they're sair i' the backgrun, ye see."

"Ay, but leuk at oor parliamenters, the heid deesters amo' them ken so little aboot richt prenciples in kirk matters. This Graham's nae sair to ride the water on wi' that nor nae ither thing; an' Lord Aiberdeen's bit milk-and-water schaimie's far fae the richt thing."

"Jist like ither half-an'-half mizzours," said the souter. "It'll dee mair ill nor gweed i' the lang rin. Ye canna serve God an' mammon, aiven wi' a bull oot o' Parliament. But ye're comin' unco near't there, Gushets. The fattal thing's nae that there's a camp o' Moderates to conten' against: lat them stan upo' their nain shee soles, an' they wud be scatter't like cauff afore the win'; but dinna ye see

that they're playin' into the han's o' a set o' men that hae poo'er o' their side, an' owre afen but little o' the fear o' Gweed afore their een?"

"The Government, ye mean?" said the smith.

"An' the Coort o' Session," added Johnny.

"Ay," continued the souter, "an' the pawtrons."

"True, true," interposed Johnny Gibb, "the thing's rotten, reet an' crap."

"Nae doot o' that; but leuk at this," and the souter took up a newspaper containing a report of the General Assembly, which he had carefully conned. "Here's the debate on pawtronage—' Mr. Cunningham moved that the Assembly resolve and declare that patronage is a grievance, has been attended with much injury to the cause of true religion in the Church and kingdom, is the main cause of the difficulties in which the Church is at present involved, and that it ought to be abolished;' that was sec-ondit by ane Mr. Buchan o' Kelloe, an extensive lan'it proprietor i' the Border coonty o' Berwickshire, Mr. Macrory taul' me. Foo cud ony richt-thinkin' man back-speak a motion like that noo?"

"I daursay Gushets winna dee't, but aw b'lieve him an' Maister Sleekaboot raither differs aboot the benefits o' pawtronage," said the smith, with a sly twinkle in his eye.

"I see 'brawly fat ye're lattin at," answered Johnny. "An' nae thanks to Maister Sleekaboot to fawvour pawtronage, 't wud 'a never gotten a kirk ava haud awa' fae't. But I'se gae nae farrer nor 'imsel' for preef o' the evils o' that system; an ill-less, gweed-less creatur, ye may tell me, but nae mair fit to be minaister o' a pairis' nor a blin' man is to herd sheep. An' syne fat d'ye mak' o' sic oot-rages as Marnoch an' Culsalmon', to keep near han' hame?"

"Weel, takin' a' that's come an' gane intill accoont, fat sud actually happen noo, but that nae less nor a hunner an' forty-seyven members o' Assembly sud vote against Mr. Cunningham's motion; an' some nae far fae oor ain quarter spak' their warst against it?" said the souter.

“It was cairriet, though?” queried the smith.

“Ou ay, by a sma’ majority: twa hunner and fifteen votit for’t. But see sic a han’le as that state o’ maitters gi’es to them that’s but owre weel-will’t to be lords owre God’s spiritual heritage, fan they can say, ‘Oh, the tae half o’ the kirk *wants* pawtronage.’ But the rowle obtains throu’ a’—‘whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.’ An’ tak’ ye my word for’t, the day’ll come yet that this pawtronage’ll be a bane that’ll stick i’ the thrapple o’ the Moderate pairty o’ the Kirk o’ Scotlan’, seein’ that they hed it in their poo’er to sweep it clean aff the face o’ the lan’, but refees’t to len’ their assistance. An’ it’s waefu’ to see the num’er o’ men that better things micht hae been expectit o’ takin’ that time-sairin coorse. To them, also, may the words be appliet that oor freen sae af’en quotit:—

‘The sons of Ephraim, who nor bows
Nor other arms did lack;
When as the day of battle was,
They faintly turned back.’

Hooever, the Kirk’s coorse has been made perfectly clear. Her ‘Claim o’ Rights,’ mov’t by Dr. Chalmers, an’ sec-ondit by Dr. Gordon, ’s been cairriet by twa hunner an’ forty-one to a hunner an’ ten; an’ we’ll see ane o’ twa things—the true Kirk o’ Scotlan’ restor’t till her richtfu’ claims, or leavin’ her manses, kirks, an’ stipen’s for the sake o’ her spiritual liberties.”

“It’s a perfeck trowth, souter!” exclaimed Johnny Gibb. “Ye never spak’ mair to the pint i’ yer life. There’ll be a winnowin’ o’ the cauff fae the corn yet, wi’ a vengeance.”

When Johnny Gibb took his yearly journey to the Wells at Macduff, he could not fail to visit his friend, Maister Saunders, at Marnoch, who gave him a spirit-stirring narrative of how the miniature Disruption there had been carried through; how they had worshipped in a quarry for a time; how about twelve months previous to the date of Johnny Gibb’s visit they had commenced

to build a church and manse, to cost, together, well on to £2000 ; and how subscriptions had come to them from east and west, from north and south, some even from across the Atlantic, insomuch that they had a goodly surplus, which they had trusted to invest as a partial endowment for their minister, who was now about to be inducted. On one point Johnny and Maister Saunders were quite clear—that there must now be a separation of the wheat from the chaff ; that is to say, of the non-intrusion, or rather the evangelical, from the moderate element. Johnny returned, indeed, fully of opinion that the Kirk throughout would be rent in two, even after the manner of that which he had now seen with his own eyes on a small scale. “Lat it come,” said Johnny ; “onything to roose the countra fae the caul’ morality o’ a deid moderatism.” Of course Johnny spoke strongly ; but in that particular he was not singular ; strong language was common on both sides. Even able editors on the side to which he was opposed, as Johnny heard and read, designated the leaders and clerical party in whom he believed by such choice designations as “Edinburgh popes,” “Candlish & Co.,” “highflyers,” “wild men,” “agitators,” “reckless disturbers of the peace of the Church,” and so on ; and in point of warmth and “personality” the addresses of the fathers and brethren when they met were at times rather well worth hearing by those who relished anything in that vein. At the meeting of the Synod of Aberdeen, in October of this year, the moderate party had the upper hand—they carried their candidate for the moderatorship, Mr. Watt, Foveran, by 79 votes to 58 for Mr. Simpson, Trinity Church, Aberdeen, proposed by the other side ; and also, after a fair amount of rather pointed talk, carried a resolution to admit to the sittings of the Synod the ministers of the Garioch Presbytery, who had been suspended for their part in the Culsalmond business. In a subsequent discussion one rev. brother observed that, “the blighting influence of moderatism had been thrown over all their institutions ; and even its corrupting hand had been thrown over their colleges and universities, rendering them rather the schools of hell

than of heaven ;" whereupon two other rev. brethren suggested whether the speaker's words should not be taken down, with a view to ulterior proceedings, while a third rather thought it might "be better to hear them with silent contempt."

CHAPTER XXIII.

JONATHAN TAWSE AND DAWVID HADDEN.

WITH the November "Convocation" of 1842, the ferment within the Kirk of Scotland reached about as great a pitch of intensity as it was possible for it to attain. While on the one hand the results of the gathering of over 400 ministers of the evangelical section in Edinburgh was held to give great encouragement to the non-intrusion party, it was predicted on the other "that the reign of fanaticism was near an end, and the triumph of moderatism and rational religion at hand." In a few weeks thereafter meetings began to be held here and there in the interest of the non-intrusion party, for the purpose of giving all who were desirous of receiving it, information "on the present state of the Church;" and affording to the people the opportunity of subscribing papers declaring their adherence to the resolutions of the Convocation. The attempt to hold such meetings in parishes where the ministers leant to the moderate side was denounced in language more vehement than polite. Jonathan Tawse was only re-echoing in a strictly literal way what he had read in very legible print in a Tory newspaper, when he characterised it as "a dirty and disgusting" proceeding. "But," added Jonathan, "the fanatics winna try that here—they'll never come this length."

"Cudna they be ta'en an order o' gin they war to dee't?" asked Mains of Yawal, to whom Jonathan had addressed the foregoing remark, as they walked amicably home, one Sunday afternoon, after counting the bawbees.

“Nae doot o’ t,” answered Jonathan, promptly. “It’s against baith ecclesiastical an’ statute law.”

“An’ wud it be a fine or jilein, than?”

“That depen’s o’ the form o’ trial; there micht be discipline, inferrin’ censure, an’ deprivation o’ status an’ privileges; or a process i’ the ceevil coorts.”

“An’ filk o’ them wud be warst likein?” inquired Mains, who was anxious to be informed, but rather bewildered by Jonathan’s learned deliverance.

“Ou, that’s jist as ye set maist store o’ yer pride or yer purse; a bit canny joukin to lat the jaw gae owre’s nae thrown awa’ wi’ presbyteries eeswally; nor heritors either,” added Jonathan, with a slight tinge of bitterness, as he thought how scantily his own merits had been appreciated by that class.

“Weel, aw dinna ken: it’s an unco time,” said Mains, “t’ peaceable fowk canna be latt’n aleen. I kenna fat they wud hae; there’s been nae ane meddlin’ wi’ the kirk cep some o’ that Edinboro’ fowk, an’ noo they’re begun aboot Aiberdeen tee, they say.”

The truth was that Mains had suffered one or two assaults from Johnny Gibb on this subject; when, being an elder, it was, of course, needful to be able to give a reason for the faith that was in him. There was no want of will on his part to do so, but while Mains’s zeal in defence of rational religion had been growing, his stock of polemical argument had not correspondingly increased, so that he had felt a little hard pressed in the matter; and he therefore desired to avail himself as far as might be of the dominie’s superior knowledge. Mains had now, as he believed, got such an insight into the law of the case as ought to stand him in some stead, if he could only bear in mind the phrases “ecclesiastical” and “statute” law. As his question indicated, he was not quite so confident as Jonathan that the “wild men” might not even invade Pyketillim, if they were not frightened off betimes; and he now articulately expressed his apprehensions on that head.

“Fat!” exclaimed Jonathan Tawse; “tell me that that

ettercap, Gushetneuk, 's been thraet'nin' that the faces o' some o' them'll be seen here ere lang?"

"I'm nae biddin' ye tak' my word for 't, Maister Tawse, though he fell upo' me comin' oot o' An'ersmas Fair like a thoosan' o' divots, an' misca'd the minaster, an' said that he sud seen hae ane here that wud lat the fowk ken fat like he was; but speir ye at Dawvid Hadden."

"I'm nae misdootin yer word, Mains; he's a disaffeckit creatur, an' likes to be i' the heid o' things. An' fan the like o' 'im's amo' them that canna keep 'im in aboot, they'll gae gryte len'ths."

The last remark was not exactly complimentary to Mains, who did not see its application clearly, however, but went on, "Ou weel, ye see, I wud 'a fun't wi' 'im a bit; only he wudna haud a word o' me; but was up i' my witters like a fechtin cock."

"Was Dawvid wi' ye?"

"Na, na; sin' ever that skweel meetin' i' the spring, Dawvid's been i' the black beuks wi' 'im, an' wudna gae within a rig-len'th o' Gushets an' he cud help it."

"Hoo cud he ken o' 's projecks than?"

"Weel, ye'll min' o' the cheelie that was wi' me fern-year was a year, that leern't to be a mole-catcher."

"Brawly—a settril, braid-fac't chappie."

"Ay, ay, jist that. He was at Gushetneuk a' hairst, an' 's been takin' moles i' the neebourheid throu' the en' o' the year. Weel, Gushet's pitten him as heich's himsel' aboot this non-intrusion wark. He's aye eikin 'im up, an' Dawvid, fan he's on 's roun's, lats at him fanever they meet, aboot the kirk; an' syne Molie canna hae 't an' haud it, ye ken."

"Ou ay, an' Dawvid acks the moudiewort wi' *him!*"

"Weel, ye ken, Molie's a simple cheelie, an' Dawvid gets onything that's gyaun on wi' Gushets, aw b'lieve, seener throu' him nor he cud dee ony ither gate."

"Vera like Dawvid's sneck-drawin'; he was aye a straucht-oot-the-gate callant!" said Jonathan, with a very obvious sneer at the zealous ground-officer's proclivities.

But although Jonathan could be sarcastic about Dawvid Hadden in friendly conference with his brother elder, he was far from being averse to availing himself, as opportunity served, of Dawvid's gossip about the local feeling in kirk matters. Jonathan had, in fact, begun to regard himself as a sort of guardian of "rational religion" in the parish. The Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot held opinions more orthodox than his own, probably, anent the sacred rights of the patron, and the pernicious fanaticism which would question the powers of the Civil Court; but what then, if the Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot—with the exception of a quiet thrust from the pulpit occasionally—was rather studious to avoid collision, than desirous of enforcing his authority upon those of his parishioners who were manifesting a tendency to follow divisive courses? Mr. Sleekaboot believed in patient waiting; the spirit of fanaticism, he still said, would die out. But even although the whirligig of time might bring about a properly sobered state of mind among these people, the process was altogether too tedious for the Rev. Jonathan Tawse's temper. And he had become fully determined to strike a blow for Kirk and State, whenever and wherever occasion offered.

Therefore it was that, when, on a certain evening not many days after the occurrence of the foregoing conversation, Jonathan Tawse caught sight of Dawvid Hadden passing the end of the school homeward, he hailed him with the utmost frankness, and invited Dawvid in to take sneeshin and a drink of ale.

"An' fan saw ye Gushetneuk?" asked Jonathan.

"Weel, I foryet noo," said Dawvid, thoughtfully. "It's nae time syne; but I'm seein' sae mony daily day."

"Is he as keen o' the kirk sin' ye gae 'im sic a fleg aboot Hairry Muggart's meetin'?"

"Weel, they've never daur't to try the like o' t again; an' I gar't Hairry 'imsel' shak' in's sheen aboot that at ony rate."

"An' Gushets—I've nae doot he wud be o' the steel o' repentance aboot it tee?"

"Hairry was a kin' o' heid deester there, ye see, an' it wusna worth *my* pains min'in' the lave."

"O-oh! I thocht ye gae Gushets up's fit—Fat's this't he's been bullyraggin Mains aboot than; anither meetin' that he's to haud at the Ward wi' some o' the highflyers?"

"I cud maybe tell ye that tee, Maister Tawse," said Dawvid with an air of some consequence.

"I dinna doot it, Dawvid; I dinna doot it. Ye've a gran' scent for fin'in' oot the like o' that, man."

"It maitters-na fat wye I fan't oot; but I'm quite awaar 't they've set the night for a meetin' wi' ane o' the rovin' commission, doon at Peterkin's hole o' a skweel."

"So the mole-catcher creatur was sayin', I believe," remarked Jonathan, wickedly.

"Maybe," said Dawvid, in a half offended tone; "an' nae doot he wud tell ye a hantle mair nor the like o' me cud dee aboot it."

"Na, na; he only said that Gushets sud say that he was quite prepar't to set the laird's delegate, Dawvid Hadden, at defiance."

"An' did he tell ye fat authority the 'laird's delegate' hed fae Sir Simon 'imsel' to enterdick ony sic meetin', an' fat mizzours he hed ta'en ere noo to pit a stop till 't?" asked Dawvid, promptly.

These were points that Jonathan really desired to know definitely about, so he gave up the bantering tone, and by a little judicious flattery induced Dawvid to explain to him how, on the evening of next Friday, which was fixed for the meeting, he proposed being down with a body of men and some dogs absolutely to prevent the assembling of a non-intrusion meeting in the Smiddyward school. A letter he had received from Sir Simon gave him full authority to adopt that course (as Dawvid interpreted it); and Jonathan Tawse, who, as the conversation went on, had latterly waxed warm on the subject, not merely approved of the scheme, but declared he would be present himself, along with some of his trusty personal friends, to give what aid might be required.

“Friday nicht at seven o'clock—we'se gi'e Gushets an's non-intrusionists as snell a nizzen as they've gotten yet. Gweed nicht, Dawvid,” said the dominie.

“Gweed nicht, sir: an' I'll be stappin,” answered Dawvid.

And so they parted.