

CHAPTER XXIV.

PREPARING FOR THE CONFLICT.

WHEN the Rev. Jonathan Tawse was to have a dinner party, the laddies at the school were sure to become quite aware of what was about to take place. The external symptoms of the coming event were visible in Jonathan's person and movements. He sowed more to himself than usual, in an abstracted way, on these days; one or other of the lessons was sure to be curtailed, and more of them were slurred over, for Jonathan had to go out repeatedly to the kitchen through the middle door to confer with Baubie, his house-keeper; then, though we might be taken into school sharp at the end of the play hour, we knew that this would be more than made up by the promptitude with which we should be dismissed at a quarter after three, in place of an hour later. And above all—just as it was wont to be in the years before, on the days when Lord Kintore, and that great hero of our youthful imagination, Joe Grant, the huntsman, came round on a fox hunt—we knew perfectly well there would be no risk of lickin', unless for offences of the most outrageous kind.

On this side of it, Jonathan's character called forth my warmest admiration at the time; and, indeed, I don't know that I am called upon to qualify that admiration in any material degree even yet. At any rate, that he was a jovial and kindly host on those occasions was not to be doubted. It was testified by the very countenances of his visitors as

they were sometimes seen by us assembling about the entry door, ere we began to take our loitering departure homeward.

It was on the afternoon of the Friday on which, as Dawvid Hadden had informed Jonathan Tawse, Johnny Gibb and his non-intrusion friends were to have their evening meeting, that Jonathan's pupils were set agog by symptoms of the nature of those referred to. Jonathan was fully bent on carrying out the resolution he had announced to Dawvid, of going down to Smiddyward school, and interposing an authoritative check to the proceedings of the fanatics, against whom his gorge had been gradually rising for many months. And he deemed it suitable to assemble a few of his friends, staunch and true champions of moderate religion, who should accompany him in the guise of faithful witnesses. The company included Mains of Yawal, Teuchitsmyre, and Braeside, who, of course, as his fellow-elders, could not be omitted, and Dr. Drogemweal junior, to whom he had written a note, specially explaining the object of the meeting. The doctor, as may be here said, was a great fleshy-looking fellow, about thirty, or a few years beyond it. He was not to be termed brilliant as a professional man. His grand characteristics seemed to be the enjoyment of robust animal health, and love of good fellowship; and his present zeal for the Kirk of Scotland was somewhat difficult to account for, seeing his attendance at church on Sundays did not average much over once in twelve months.

The dinner was a capital dinner, for Baubie's capabilities as a cook were unimpeachable, and she waited no less efficiently than she cooked. Her master spoke familiarly to her, and Baubie, in turn, spoke just as familiarly to the guests. And thus, as Braeside sat masticating, long and seriously, with his knife and fork in either hand, set in a perpendicular attitude on the table, she would coaxingly urge him to "see an' mak' a denner o' 't, noo; an' nae min' fowk 't eats as gin they war on a waager;" while to Drogemweal's mock profession of his sense of obligation to her for the numerous good dinners she had provided for him, she retorted promptly, "Oh, it 's weel kent that at'en maet 's ill to pay."

“Ye hae ’im there, Baubie, at ony rate,” quoth the dominie. “If ye had been wise, doctor, ye wud ’a keepit by the aul’ proverb that says, ‘Dit your mou’ wi’ your meat.’ Isna that the wye o’ ’t, Mains?”

Mains, who had been acting on the proverb by keeping perfect silence, and attending to his dinner, declared his belief that the dominie was quite right, and added something about Jonathan’s “leernin” giving him such an advantage, in a wide comprehension of these “aul’, auncient byewords.”

When the dinner was finished, they had their toddy. There were yet two hours to the time of meeting; and in the interval they would discuss the general aspect of affairs. So, after they had concocted the first tumbler, and duly pledged each other, Jonathan took up an Aberdeen newspaper, wherein were recorded certain of the proceedings of the evangelical ministers, who were visiting different parishes, for the purpose of holding meetings. First he put on his “specs,” and next he selected and read out several paragraphs, with such headings as “THE SCHISMATICS IN A——;” “THE FIRE-RAISERS IN B——,” and so on, winding up this part with the concluding words of one such paragraph, which were these—“So ended this compound of vain, false, and seditious statements on the position of the Church, and which must have been most offensive to every friend of truth, peace, or loyalty who heard it.”

“I say Amen to ilka word o’ that,” said Dr. Drogemweal. “Sneevellin hypocrites. That’s your non-intrusion meetin’s. It concerns every loyal subject to hae them pittin doon.”

“Here’s fat the editor says in a weel-reason’t, an vera calm an’ temperate article,” continued Jonathan—“he’s speakin’ o’ the fire-raisers—‘How much reliance could be placed on the kind of information communicated by these reverend gentlemen will be readily imagined by such of our readers as have read or listened to any of the harangues which the schismatics are so liberally dealing forth. If simple laymen, in pursuing objects of interest or ambition, were to be guilty of half the misrepresentation of facts and concealment of the truth which are now, it would seem,

thought not unbecoming on the part of *Evangelical* ministers, they would be justly scouted from society.' That's fat I ca' sen'in' the airrow straucht to the mark."

"Seerly," interposed Mains, who had been listening with much gravity.

"A weel-feather't shaft tee," said Dr. Drogemweal.

"An' it's perfectly true, ilka word o' 't. They're nae better o' the ae han' nor incendiaries, wan'erin' here an' there to raise strife amo' peaceable fowk; and syne their harangues—a clean perversion o' the constitutional law, an' veelint abuse o' the institutions o' the countra."

"Did ye hear sic a rouse as they hed wi' them doon in Fintray last week?" asked the doctor.

"No; the paper disna come till the morn," answered Jonathan.

"I wud 'a gi'en a bottle o' black strap till 'a been there; an' it was jist the barest chance that I didna hear o' 't in time," said Dr. Drogemweal.

"Was there a row?"

"Row! ay was there. An' maugre the leather lungs o' them, the fowk roar't them doon whan they try't to get up a meetin' in a mannie Knight's barn; an', fan they saw 't it was like to be a case o' physical force, they war forc't to skulk oot o' the pairish, like as mony tykes wi' their tails atween their legs. That's the style for the non-intrusion fanatics, Mr. Tawse."

"Weel, I never thocht they wud be ill to beat at argument; but they dinna deserve a hearin', it maun be alloo't. They hinna a fit to stan' upon i' the licht o' logic and common sense, lat alane statute law."

"Na, na; a 'staffy-nevel job,' s aul' Skinner has 't," exclaimed the doctor, with emphasis, refilling his tumbler. "Physical force is the argument for them."

Mains and his fellow-elders had been rather thrown out in this conversation, and while it still went on, Braeside, whose attitude had been purely that of a listener, now ventured to ask his neighbour, quietly, "Fat dis he mean, Mains, by aye speakin' o' 'feesikle force'—Is't ony kin' o' drogs?"

"Na, na," answered Mains, who was gratified to find himself in a position to give instruction on this occasion. "'Feesikle force' jist means to lay fae ye a' 't ye're able."

"Keep's an' guide's," said Braeside, "that seerly canna be fat he means; there's never been nae ill neepourheid amo' the fowk roon hereaboot."

"Weel, it's their nain blame," answered Mains, vaguely.

"Fat is 't, boys?" shouted Drogemweal. "Keep the bottle gaen there—thank ye. Ye'll need to lat the fanatics see that they winna come here for naething."

"We wus jist speakin' aboot 'feesikle force,' doctor," answered Mains, confidently.

"Ou ay; physical force, if it be necessary. Mr. Tawse'll gi'e them jaw; an' I think for wecht at the ither style o' argument, 'we three' sud haud our ain. But they're to hae nae meetin' here at ony rate."

"Dawvid Hadden'll dee that pairt o' 't, dootless," said Jonathan, "if he be as gweed's his word."

"Yon bit pernicketty wallydraggle! He'll dee some service, or than no."

"He's airm't wi' poo'er fae the laird, though—so I b'lieve—to keep them oot o' their conventicle. But jist pit roun' the kettlie there, an' haud gaen. We'll need to start in a few minutes."

"My certie, ye're richt; it's the quarter past six," said Dr. Drogemweal, looking up at Jonathan's eight-day clock. "We maun start at ance, or they may be a' gaither't afore we win there."

The doctor then gulped down the remaining contents of his tumbler, and Jonathan having given Baubie orders to have a haddock ready by the time Dr. Drogemweal and he should return, an hour and a half or so thereafter, the valiant Church defenders set out for Smiddyward school, Jonathan and the doctor marching in front, the latter with a big stick in his hand, and Mains, Teuchitsmyre, and Braeside, who had begun to be a little uncertain of the part they were expected to play, following behind.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GUSHETNEUK MEETING.

WHILE Jonathan Tawse and his friends plodded down towards the hamlet of Smiddyward, they had, as I have indicated, separated into two groups, Jonathan and Dr. Drogenweal going in front, while Mains of Yawal and the other elders gradually fell behind, to the distance of about ten yards. It was a cloudy evening in February, though partial moonlight helped somewhat to lighten the darkness of the way. When they had reached to within about a furlong of the Ward, at the point where the road leading from the hamlet joined the kirk road, some one passed them going in the opposite direction.

"Eh, man!" exclaimed Braeside, after stopping and looking for a second or two in the direction in which the figure had gone, "an' that binna Dawvid Hadden, it's seerly his wraith."

"It canna be Dawvid," answered Mains, "for we ken't he'll be doon at the Ward skweel afore's."

"That's as lucky at ony rate," said Braeside, "for I'm nae jist vera keerious about that doctor's protticks, an' Dawvid's hed a hantle o' expairience—'serve's, it wud be an unco thing to gar fowk get ill-willers amo' their neebours."

"Weel, but ye see they're brakin the staito law o' the kwintra," replied Mains; "speer ye at Maister Tawse an' he'll tell ye the same."

"It's a terrible daurin thing to gae on in sic a menner," said Teuchitsmyre.

"Ou, aw'm nae misdootin' 't; but it disna weel to mak' fash amo' kent fowk," replied Braeside.

In short, Braeside only deprecated conflict the more the nearer he and his friends came to the scene of action. They had passed Widow Will's cottage, and also the cottages of the smith and souter, where the lights were burning cheerily inside. They had met two or three more people, but there was no great appearance of a meeting gathering. When they got up to the school, the windows were quite dark, and the door still fastened.

"Owre early, ye see," said Jonathan. "We hed better step oot the loan a few yairds."

"Countra fowk's aye late," replied the doctor; "but faur's your advanc't guard wi' 's dogs? He mitha been here at ony rate, by this time."

"Nae fear; he's owre croose o' the subject nae to be here in time," said Jonathan.

"Was that Dawvid Hadden?" inquired Mains, after a pause of some duration. "'Cause Braeside threepit owre hiz that yon was him 't we met at the glack o' the roads."

"Dawvid Hadden!" exclaimed the dominie, "Dawvid Hadden gyaun the conter gate?"

"I'm fell seer it was him, at ony rate," said Braeside.

"Ye've mista'en the hour; an' we're here afore the time," said Dr. Drogemweal. "What's to be done?"

"Mithna we speer some gate?" suggested Mains.

Sandy Peterkin's school remained suspiciously dark and silent, and so, for that matter, did Sandy's house, too; for when Dr. Drogemweal, who had gone off to ask about the meeting, came to the front of it, Sandy's modest window had the blind down, and there was no appearance of light within. The doctor rapped loudly on the door with his cudgel, and was in the act of rapping again, when "a fit" was heard coming down the loan, by the doctor's companions, who stood a little way back. The new arrival, who was walking rapidly, slackened his pace; and, as he approached the

group, seemed to hesitate whether or not to stop. Stop he did, and a voice asked, "Is that you, Mains?"

"Ay," answered Mains, with that tone of dry reserve which a man adopts when he is in doubt about the identity or respectability of his questioner.

"Aw doot ye're mista'en, as weel's some mair."

"Ou, it's you is't, Molie," said Mains, in a mightily altered, and more human tone.

"Ay, it's a't's for me," answered our old friend the gudge, cheerfully. "Ye wud be gyaun to the meetin'?"

"Weel," replied Mains, speaking very slowly, "Weel, Maister Tawse an' ane or twa o's jist tyeuk a stap doon the howe i' the gloamin'—it's a fine nicht."

"It *wus* till 'a been i' the skweel, but they cheeng't it, ye ken," said the simple-minded gudge, not heeding Mains's rather obvious attempt at *finesse*.

"Cheeng't it?" exclaimed Jonathan Tawse; "an' that creatur Hadden never to hint at sic a thing to me!"

"But aw doot Dawvid's gotten's nain leg drawn a wee bittie;" and the gudge laughed quietly. "It was only the streen that the meetin' was cheeng't; an' I tyeuk a rin roun' to tell some o' the fowk aifter aw was laid bye for the day. Dawvid was doon in gran' time, aw b'lieve, as big's the vera Sir 'imself—ye've seerly met 'im. He's hame nae time syne in a terrible bung."

The gudge's information was rather more copious than palatable. But while Jonathan Tawse and his other friends were endeavouring to ruminate thereon, Dr. Drogemweal, who had returned from his ineffectual assault on Sandy Peterkin's door, asked, in a peremptory tone, "An' when's the meetin' to be held, noo?"

"Ou, the nicht, the nicht," said the gudge.

"An' where's it to be?"

"I' the barn at Gushetneuk. There cudna be a better place. Aw'm seer ye ken, Mains, sic scouth's there is i' the strae en' ahin the thrashin' mull. An' ye mitha seen's fae yer nain toon biggin oot the strae i' the aifterneen." The gudge paused; and, there being no reply, he continued,

"Weel, I'll need to be stappin'; for aw hinna wull't aw war late, an' they're feckly a' up fae this side a filie syne. Aw'm sure it'll be a capital meetin'."

And the mole-catcher moved briskly on his way.

It was not altogether a pleasant predicament into which Jonathan Tawse and his friends had been led. The way in which things had taken the turn that had brought them into it was this. During the week, Dawvid Hadden had been unusually demonstrative not only in letting it be known what he was to do in the way of stopping the meeting, but also the authority by which he was to do it. Dawvid's object, of course, was to frighten the timid and wavering from showing face at the school. So far he had been successful, for not only was Peter Birse in a state of helpless agony, but even Hairry Muggart, when down at the Ward on some professional business, had left the impression on the souter and smith that there were really ground for Dawvid's boast that he had made Hairry "shak' in his sheen." The two friends, therefore, had begun to have some fears that the meeting might be spoilt in this way; and, moreover, the souter raised the question strongly whether it was altogether fair to Sandy Peterkin to make him voluntarily invite ejection from his school by holding the meeting there. He would go to Johnny Gibb, and suggest to him the propriety of transferring the meeting to his own barn. At first blush of the proposal Johnny got hot, and denounced it as mere truckling to petty tyranny, but he speedily saw the matter in a different light, and set zealously about reddin' up the barn as a place to meet in.

The change in the place of meeting had been intimated during the day as widely as possible, and probably none of the well-affected, who were likely to attend, had been left in ignorance of it. Nor was there any desire to keep others in the dark on the subject. Dawvid Hadden, even, had been indirectly informed very early in the afternoon; but unhappily for himself, Dawvid had concluded it to be a *ruse* to throw him off the scent; so Dawvid had observed that he was "owre aul' a sparrow to be ta'en wi' cauff."

And the meeting in Johnny Gibb's barn was highly successful. Thither came the majority of the residents at Smiddyward, including the souter, the smith, and Sandy Peterkin; Andrew Langchafts, the merchan,' was there, and his apprentice, Jock Will. And Mrs. Birse brought with her Miss Birse, along with Peter senior and Peter junior; Hairry Muggart, too, under the feeling that Dawvid Hadden was likely to keep at a respectable distance from Gushetneuk, also put in an appearance; and the zeal of the mole-catcher had operated to the bringing out of a considerable number of farm servants, including his old rival Tam Meerison, so that the available space in the barn was fully occupied. It had been intended to reinstate Hairry Muggart in the chair, but Hairry being rather shy of the honour on this occasion, the smith proposed Johnny Gibb as the fittest person to be chairman in his own barn, and the proposal was "carried by acclamation."

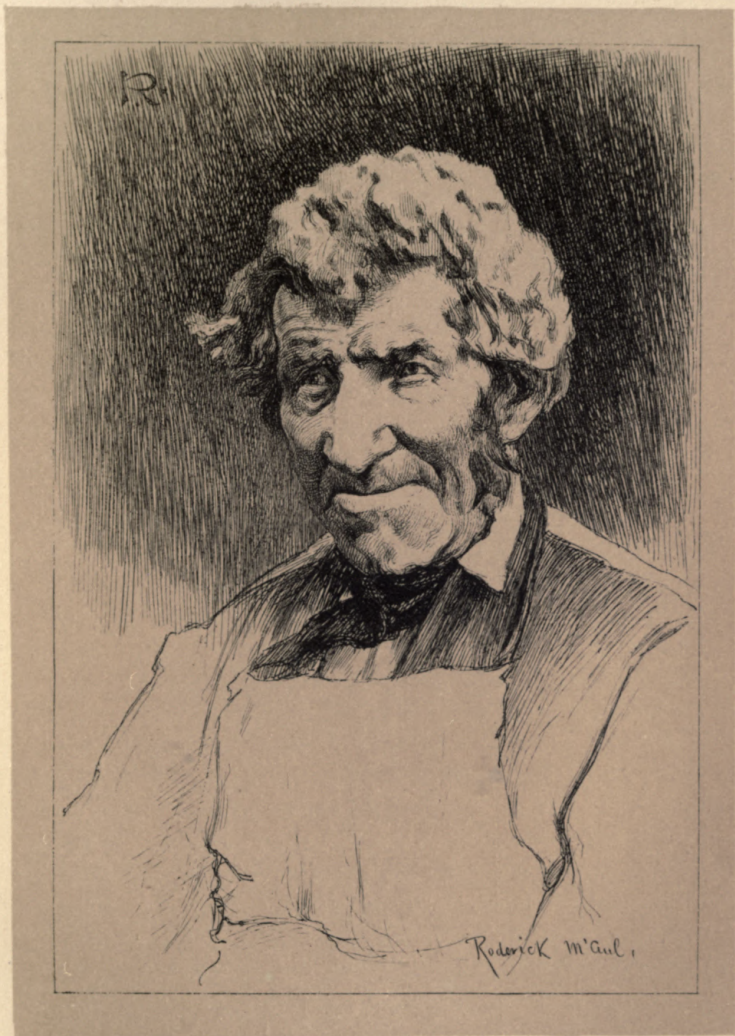
This point had just been settled when the door was pushed open, and the head and shoulders of Dr. Drogemweal thrust in. "Come awa' an' tak' seats, we're jist gaen to begin," said the chairman in a somewhat emphatic tone. "Ou, that's you, Maister Tawse; a sicht o' you here's gweed for sair een. See, there's a bit bole ahin the shakker'll haud you; ye're nae gryte bouk mair nor mysel'. Mains an' the lave o' ye'll get edge't in aboot the en' o' the furms."

After the mole-catcher had left the gentlemen just referred to, they had debated among themselves what was to be done. Jonathan Tawse, who had managed to get into a great rage, and did not know exactly upon whom to vent his anger, would have turned and gone home in disgust, and it need hardly be said that his fellow-elders would have been extremely happy to follow that example; but, as Mains of Yawal thereafter averred, Dr. Drogemweal "bann't feerious" at this proposal, and hinted that the zeal of the Pyketillim eldership must really be at a low ebb if it did not incite to pursuit of the fanatics wherever they went. In short, he persuaded Jonathan to go along with him to

the meeting, albeit his temper continued in a ruffled state; and, on the whole, it was not improved by the reception he met with from Johnny Gibb on entering the barn.

The meeting was formally opened by singing part of a psalm, which Johnny Gibb precented, and prayer; a proceeding the like of which not a few of the rustics there assembled had not before dreamt of as possible in a barn; and they felt correspondingly queer in the circumstances. The chairman then abruptly announced that "We're to get addresses fae twa respeckit minaiaters fae a distance, settin' forth the prenciples o' the evangelical pairty. As ye a' see, the skweelmaister o' the pairis' is here tee; an' he'll be waur nor's word an' he binna wuntin' to mak' a speech to defen' the Coort o' Session Kirk. We'll hae nae objection to g'ie 'im a hearin'; but lat me tell ye ane an' a', that I'll keep order i' my nain hoose; an' gin ony horse-coupin doctor, or ony ither ane, try to mak' disturbance here, we'll lat 'im see the bonny side o' the door raither seener nor he wud like maybe."

The chairman's remarks naturally drew rather more attention to Jonathan Tawse and Dr. Drogemweal than those gentlemen seemed to relish, but without allowing time for either of them to put in a word, he continued, "Noo, ye'll get an address fae the Rev. Mr. Nonem—come forret aside me here, sir." The platform consisted of a wooden threshing-floor, on which had been placed the chairman's seat and a small table with a lighted candle on it and a pair of snuffers. The rev. gentleman announced, at once commenced an earnest, though, perhaps, somewhat verbose address, wherein he dwelt at length on "the doctrine of the headship;" and then proceeded to expound the rights of the Christian people in the choice of their ministers, calling upon his auditors, with much emphasis, to say whether they were prepared to hand over their consciences to patrons who might be prelatists, or papists, or worse, and let the Judges of the Court of Session in the last resort decide all such questions for them, for that was the pass things were coming to now?



During the delivery of this address there was marked attention generally; the parishioners of Pyketillim had not yet learnt the mode of giving expression to their approval by "ruffing" with their feet, or otherwise, and the one demonstrative individual in that direction was the chairman, who once and again very audibly emphasised the sentiments of the speaker by such utterances as "Owre true, sir;" "We a' ken fat kin' o' caul' morality we get fae your law-made minasters," and so on. It was evident that Dr. Drogemweal and Jonathan Tawse were on edge; and the doctor had once or twice attempted an interruption by such exclamations as "Not true, Nonem," and "Question;" but getting no support from the meeting, he had found himself uncomfortably individualised by the chairman's "Seelence, sir!" and "Wheesht, sir!" and had given up these attempts.

"Noo, Maister Tawse, we'll hear ye," exclaimed Johnny Gibb, "an' dinna deteen's owre lang." Jonathan Tawse started to his feet, and curtly declared, "I did not want to speak." "Dinna dee 't, than," quoth the chairman, promptly. But Jonathan continued, "An there's been vera little said here this nicht that deserves a reply." "Hear, hear," cried Dr. Drogemweal. What were they to think, Jonathan proceeded to ask, of men like those of the present deputation, who had vowed to uphold the Established Kirk, and were now trying to pull it down? What were they to think of men who had trampled an interdict of the Court of Session under foot? Could temerity further go? And why all this insensate hubbub about the interference of the civil magistrate? Had the civil magistrate ever sought to enter their pulpits—he would like to know that? Had he ever done aught but his duty in controlling the actings of a set of hot-headed zealots, who set all law, civil and ecclesiastical, at defiance, whose language was seditious, and whose actings directly tended to anarchy and insurrection?

During his speech Jonathan not merely waxed warm himself; he also roused the feelings of the audience. The chairman once and again abruptly expressed himself in a

fashion somewhat short of chairman-like calmness and impartiality; his excitement infected the mole-catcher, who also cried, "Keep to the pint;" "Nane o' yer ill-naitur;" and so on; and when Dr. Drogemweal cheered Jonathan on by thumping with his stick on the edge of the "furm" and shouting "Hear, hear," "Good," "That's it," and so forth, Andrew Langchafts, seconded by Sandy Peterkin, very audibly suggested to "Pit 'im oot!"

Jonathan finished abruptly, and, while the "steam" was still fully up, the second deputy rose, and endeavoured, by a few sensible words, to recall the audience to a state of calmness. It so happened that this gentleman had not only been an old college companion of Drogemweal, but the medical practitioner in question had for a short time been a parishioner of his. And so, Drogemweal's blood being now up, he forthwith commenced a somewhat coarse personal attack, charging the minister with habitually neglecting his own pastoral duties, while he, forsooth, had the presumption to invade the parishes of better men than himself. "I lived in his parish more than a year, and he never once visited me—that's the man to tell other men their duty!" exclaimed the doctor. "Yes, my friend," was the reply, "and there may be parishioners whose faces we have little chance of getting familiar with, except in the way of private inquiry." Dr. Drogemweal was about to attempt a retort, when Andrew Langchafts stood up and solemnly protested against any one being allowed to interrupt a speaker; and the chairman, with an emphatic shout, ordered "Seelence, sir, this moment, or I'll get ye pitten oot!" What might have happened in this way had not become apparent, when Jonathan Tawse got to his feet, hat in hand, and unceremoniously made for the door. Dr. Drogemweal, with a muttered malediction, and a great amount of noise, caused by his stick and feet, as he pushed past some of his neighbours, followed. Mains of Yawal and his brother elders looked as if they would have liked to go too; but, their presence of mind failing them at the moment, they had not moved when their friends were clean

gone ; and then, as they did not like to be conspicuous, they kept their seats.

“A gweed reddance ; a gweed reddance, weel-a-wat,” said the chairman, as he snuffed the candle beside him, after the barn door had been once more closed. “Noo, sir, we’ll tak’ the lave o’ yer discoorse.” The speaker resumed accordingly, and spoke at length, and with a force and seriousness that evidently told on the more intelligent part of his audience, after which opportunity was given for persons present to signify adherence to non-intrusion principles, by signing their names to a paper to that effect.

Johnny Gibb was in his most exalted mood as he marshalled the forces to this part of the business, which seemed to him a process very nigh akin to signing the Solemn League and Covenant. Mains of Yawal and his brethren, who saw that the case was getting desperate, now rose and slipped to the door, while Johnny shouted, “Gweed nicht, men ; we’re muckle obleeg’t for your peaceable company.” Some of the younger people had left while the preparations for signing were going on ; but most of the prominent members of the meeting were still there, including Mrs. Birse, who now sat on the front form, with her husband close at hand.

“It’s nae a thing to be lichtly deen, sirs. Ye’re pittin your names till a dockiment that concerns oor ceevil an’ religious liberty. Come awa’, souter, ye’re weel fit to set’s a’ an example ; ye winna pit yer han’ to the pleuch an’ leuk back.” The souter had no choice but do as he was bid, though the suggestion was made that the chairman’s name ought to go first. “It’ll be lang to the day that I’m fit to step afore Roderick M’Aul,” said Johnny Gibb. Johnny had an appropriate word for each several adherent as he came up ; and I don’t think there was the least shade of conscious irony in the remark he addressed to Peter Birse, when Peter rose from his wife’s side, and came slowly up to the table, “Come awa’, Clinkstyle ; I’m glaid to see ye takin’ pairt for defence o’ the trowth set afore’s this nicht. I’m weel seer ye’ll never see rizzon to be o’ a different

min' fae fat yer in eenoo, about fat yer deein here afore wutnesses."

Peter signed with very much of the feeling that might have been supposed to animate the traditional "John," when his wife desired him to put his neck into the mink to please the laird. Then Mrs. Birse, with a becomingly solemn countenance, rose, and after doing her best at a curtsey, and addressing an impressive "Good nicht, sir," to each of the deputies, left for home.

When men get into the position of public characters, they have, in some cases, as it appears to me, a considerable reluctance to allowing that aspect of their lives to get obscured, or be lost sight of. With Johnny Gibb this was not by any means the case; for although the barn meeting had brought Gushetneuk greatly more into prominence than before, while his handling of Jonathan Tawse and Dr. Drogemweal junior had made all Pyketillim "ring from side to side" with his fame as chairman, nothing more readily nettled Johnny than any allusion to the proceedings above narrated in the light of his own share in them. He was rather pleased that Dawvid Hadden had been, as it were, snuffed out for the time, and that the other two just named had been driven from the field, but the question before which they had succumbed was a question of great principles, in relation to which he, Johnny Gibb, was a mere entity of only the smallest dimensions, and not once to be named as a power in the case at all. In short, he was Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk, as he had been for the last thirty and odd years; an inconsiderable person, speaking and acting as the impulse moved him, in accordance with what he believed at the time to be right. It was in Church affairs as it was in other things; Johnny followed his own path of duty, quite irrespective of the state of opinion round about him, and he was honestly unconscious of any claim to merit in so doing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SANDY PETERKIN'S FORTUNE.

IN the parish of Pyketillim the great event of the Disruption was not seen in any of its grand or striking features. Inasmuch as the Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot was a firm supporter of the authority of the powers that be, there was there no exodus from the Manse; the minister, for conscience' sake, leaving the comfortable home of bygone years, where his children had grown up about him; sending his family away many miles, and himself finding the home where he was to spend solitary months on months in a poor cottage, which afforded him the accommodation of only an indifferent but and ben. And, of course, if the entire body of the parishioners of Pyketillim would only have been guided by his advice, the Disruption, so far as Pyketillim was concerned, would have been a nonentity. It was curious to note how the three men of highest learning and position connected with the parish—viz., the Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot, the Rev. Jonathan Tawse, and Sir Simon Frissal—in their several ways, denounced the approaching event, or prophesied evil, and evil only, as its result, while they predicted disaster to all who might be aiding and abetting in bringing about its accomplishment. Nevertheless, I doubt very much whether it would have been for the advantage of Pyketillim, even at this day, that the event referred to had remained unaccomplished.

As it was, there was a small knot of the parishioners,

most of whom have been introduced to the reader, who had committed themselves definitely to the other side, on the question at issue. As to the varying degrees of intelligence and sincerity with which they had done so, I need not here speak; one thing is certain, that they had all more or less to learn from the circumstances under which they were placed; only we need not hastily call them slow in the uptake, for if I mistake not there are such singular examples in existence still, as people who took the same side as they did in 1843, and in 1870 have not more than half learnt the significance of the lesson taught by their own professed principles, and the stand they took twenty-seven years ago.

But to my story—It was on a Saturday afternoon in the last week of April 1843 that Dawvid Hadden came down to Smiddyward, evidently on business. He was accompanied by a man with bare cheeks, wearing a long-bodied waistcoat, and trousers tight about the ankles, betokening that his function lay in dealing with horses. Dawvid strode away past the smiddy without deigning to stop and converse with the smith, who was shovelling up a load of coals that had just been emptied for use. “Fine nicht, Dawvid,” said the smith, and Dawvid gravely replied “Fine nicht,” but did not “brak his pace.” Of course, Dawvid did not hear the smith’s semi-audible ejaculation, as he resumed his shovelling, “Fat’s i’ the creatur’s noddle noo ava?”

Dawvid went straight up to Sandy Peterkin’s, and without stopping to knock, thrust the door fully open. “Ony body here?” shouted Dawvid.

“Ou, ay, I’m here,” answered Sandy Peterkin. Sandy lived mainly alone, the kindly matrons in the hamlet taking a general oversight of his domestic arrangements. He had been enjoying a quiet cup of tea by himself, and rose up to open his inner door, as he asked, “Is that you, Dawvid? Come awa’ ben. I’m some tribble’t wi’ reek, but fan yer lootit doon it’s nae sae ill.”

“Na, na; I canna pit aff time, fan I’ve buzness adee.”

"Hoot, ye mith jist tak' a seat a minit," said Sandy. "It's nae af'en 't we see you here."

Dawvid made no reply, but fumbled in his breast pocket for a bundle of papers.

"I'm owthereest, as awgent for Sir Simon Frissal, to summons you, 'Alexander Peterkin, residerter, furth of the dwelling-house and adjoining premises at Smiddyward, and to quit the same at the ensuing term of Whitsunday.'"

Dawvid held conspicuously in his hand an official-looking letter, with a seal upon it, and he read from another of his bundle of papers. And as Sandy stood and looked with an uncertain stare, he waved the letter toward him with a sort of flourish, and added, "Ye thocht-na muckle o' oor words, Saun'ers, man, fan we gya ye a bit warnin', but that's vreet upon 't noo; foo does that please ye?"

"Ou, weel, an' it come to that, I've haen to flit afore noo," said Sandy, complacently.

"Weel, ye'll tak' notice 't ye've been regular summons't i' the presence o' a lethal wutness, Peter M'Cabe, to remuv at the proper time. Ye may go noo, Peter," said Dawvid, turning to the horsey-looking man, whose company he did not seem to be desirous of having longer than duty required.

"I'm obleeg't to ye, Dawvid, for your great pains i' the maitter," replied Sandy Peterkin.

"Ay, Saun'ers, man, an' ye may be thankfu' that ye've gotten so lang warnin'. It wasna necessar' to gi'e a day's notice. Ye ocht to ken that ye've been at oor merciment ilka minit sin' ever ye sat doon here. Ye've nae proper possession o' the premises, accordin' to law; an' cud be turn't oot at ony time. But Sir Simon Frissal's mair o' a gentleman nor tak' advantage o' the vera peerest incomer on's estates."

"Muckle obleeg't to Sir Simon; he'll nae doubt be turnin' the place till a better purpose ance he war redd o's."

"It maitters-na to you; he's enteel't to hae's wull respeckit by them't's behaud'n till 'im for a biel' to pit their heid in. An' nae less to see 't the premises on's nain

property sanna be ees't to herbour malcontents, an' gi'e encouragement to oonlawfu' gedderins. That's fat yer non-intrusion comes till; ye mitha leern't mair wut ere noo, man, an' ye cud a' ta'en a tellin' fae fowk wi' mair gumption nor yersel'."

"Oh, weel, gin Sir Simon be to clear aff a' the non-intrusionists upo' the place, I'll suffer in gweed company. Ye'll be gyaun owre bye to summons Gushets neist, nae doot?"

"Jist leern ye to keep a ceevil tongue i' yer heid, Saun'ers, man. That's nedder here nor there: but I've something ither adee nor waste time nyatterin on wi' the like o' you;" and with this the ground-officer turned and passed away, and Sandy Peterkin shut the door and proceeded to finish his tea.

On his homeward route Dawvid Hadden took care to make a call at the shop of Hairry Muggart, the wright; where, in an "overly" way, as Hairry said, he turned out the famous summons he had just professed to serve on Sandy Peterkin.

"An' will he raelly be pitten oot?" asked Hairry, with some earnestness.

"Pitten oot!" exclaimed Dawvid. "Div ye mean to say that Sir Simon Frissal wud mak' a feel o' 'imsel' or gae back o' s' word, aifter sen'in's nain awgent to summons ony ane oot? Ay, Hairry, man, that's but the beginnin' o' t," said Dawvid, pocketing his papers. "The langest livers sees maist ferlies. Aw wudna won'er nor there may be mair summonses ere lang gyang."

On that very evening, after droppin' time, Hairry Muggart was away to Smiddyward to see the smith and the souter. Hairry's statement was the first intimation they had received of what Dawvid Hadden had really been about; and the question naturally enough arose what had become of Sandy himself that he had not been down with the intelligence. The readiest way to solve this question seemed to be to call on Sandy; and the trio accordingly went up to his house, where they found the honest dominie

deeply engrossed in the perusal of a newspaper, which, he at once informed his visitors, contained a deal "o' vera interaistin" intelligence about current ecclesiastical affairs. It was this, in fact, that accounted for his not having got down to tell the souter and the smith of his fate. The proceedings recorded were of some length, and Sandy had read the speeches made by several popular divines with extraordinary satisfaction and edification, as he now proceeded to set forth. When he had got round to the less lofty but more practical subject of Dawvid Hadden's visit, he narrated the circumstances much as they have been set forth, and seemed rather pleased that he had been able to keep Dawvid tolerably well "in about" in the long run.

It was evident that Dawvid Hadden's visit was seriously meant. Sandy Peterkin's three friends felt it to be so; and I am verily persuaded, in full view of the somewhat awkward consequences it involved to him personally, Sandy was the least deeply concerned of the group. When Johnny Gibb had been told of it he stormed fiercely, and talked of employing a lawyer to set at defiance Dawvid Hadden's irregular summons. But of course this passed off, though Johnny retained his determination to give Sir Simon a few lines of his mind, so soon as he should return to the quarter. The settled conviction of the smith, in which the others concurred, was that the ejection of Sandy Peterkin was the joint performance of the Rev. Mr. Sleekaboot, Jonathan Tawse, and Dawvid Hadden; that is to say, their united wisdom had settled it as the judicious and proper thing to be done, with the view of striking terror into the fanatics, it being evident that things were coming to a head; and this once agreed upon, there was no difficulty in obtaining Sir Simon Frissal's authority for carrying it out in the fashion adopted by Dawvid Hadden.

The result was that, when Whitsunday came, the humble school door was locked for good and all. Sandy Peterkin's scholars took their several ways homeward, after a parting advice and much kindly clappin on his side, and not a few tears on theirs; and Sandy Peterkin was once more a

gentleman at large in the world, a proposal to engage him as private tutor to his classical pupil, Benjie Birse, having fallen through, not because Sandy would have asked unreasonable terms, but because Mrs. Birse felt there was some force in Miss Birse's objection to admitting a person like him to the parlour society and parlour fare of Clinkstyle, while it would have been at the same time degrading to Benjie to have his tutor herding with the farm servants.