

CHAPTER XXVII.

MAINS OF YAWAL AT THE SYNOD.

By the time that Sandy Peterkin had been summoned out of the school, Johnny Gibb was quite prepared for seeing the venerable Kirk of Scotland rent asunder. One thing that had strongly excited his feelings was the meeting of the Aberdeen Synod. Hitherto in the parish of Pyketillim, apart from the gathering and distribution of the offering, the office of the ruling elder, as already stated, had been very much of a sinecure. The Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot rode to the Presbytery meetings with great regularity, but he had not up to this time felt it necessary to have the intelligent laity of the parish represented in the rev. court. Now, however, great questions were at stake, and votes had come to be of importance. So, by the unanimous voice of the Session, Mains of Yawal was appointed ruling elder for Pyketillim. Mains went to a meeting of Presbytery, and sat out the affair in a wearied sort of way, but as the ait seed was just beginning, he loudly grudged the waste of time which his new dignity had entailed on him. The Synod met in the second week of April, and at the kirk next Sunday, Mains had an onset from the minister and the dominie, as to the absolute necessity of his accompanying the former to the meeting of Synod.

“Hoot, I haena been in Aiberdeen this three towmons; an’ forbye, I cud be o’ nae eese at Kirk maitters,” urged Mains.

"Buff an' nonsense," said Jonathan Tawse. "Ye can seerly say 'Ay' or 'No,' whichever the minister bids ye."

"An' it's jist the heid hurry o' the sizzon; I've byous ill winnin awa'. Fegs, an' I hed kent, I sud 'a latt'n some ither ane be rowlin' el'yer, I can tell ye."

Mains's objections were speedily overborne; and the next point to settle was the mode of transit to Aberdeen. As the newspapers had just announced, the Aberdeenshire Canal was "again open for navigation," after some temporary stoppage, and Mains was decidedly favourable to going by the "swift gig boat," as the cheapest means of conveyance. So next day he had his old-fashioned gig a-yoke to convey himself and the minister to the "Canal Head," in time for the leaving of the boat for Aberdeen; one of Mains's lads had been sent on an hour before on foot to bring back the gig. Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot, as became his dignity, took his passage in the cabin of the "flyboat;" but this course his ruling elder resolutely declined to follow. He could save a shilling by going in the steerage, and why should he not do so? Then, as was his wont, the minister would put up at that well-reputed hostelry, the Lemon Tree. Mains demurred somewhat at the idea of going thither, being convinced that they might be accommodated at some stabler's at less cost. But, as his knowledge of "the City" had got rusted, he was unable to specify the particular inn where he would desire to take his ease, and, under a sort of protest, he agreed at last to go with the minister, provided Mr. Sleekaboot would undertake to devote part of next morning to assisting him in looking up certain shops where he wanted to make safe purchases, including that of Coutts, the cutler, in Gallowgate, who, as Mains believed, was unequalled in the production of a reliable pocket gullie.

The great question in which the services of Mains of Yawal and his lay brethren were called into requisition at the Synod was, whether the ministers of *quoad sacra* churches should be allowed to sit as members of the rev. court. There was long debate on the point, during which a well-known leader declared that he objected to the

General Assembly admitting the *quoad sacra* brethren to sit in the church courts, "not only on civil, but on religious grounds likewise;" and another less prominent member, no doubt feeling acutely where the shoe pinched him, observed that protesting against their admission "had cost him many a shilling." When the grand division was taken, it carried by 101 votes to 55, that the *quoad sacra* brethren should not be recognised as members of the Synod; whereat, amid no little noise and excitement, the whole evangelical party left the Synod House, viz. the West Kirk, and thereafter met in Melville Church. Of this sweeping majority, close upon one-half were elders, the Moderate party having succeeded in rallying a force of these zealous gentlemen from the country of rather more than double the number of elders who came up to vote for their opponents. As a very natural result, Mains of Yawal returned from the Synod somewhat elated at the part he had played. The ait seed had gone on favourably in his absence; he had furnished himself with a trusty Coutts' gullie, had hunted up, in inconceivable places, sundry remarkable bargains, including fully half a hundredweight of iron goods, consisting chiefly of a parcel of second-hand sells and thrammels, one or two back chynes, and similar chain work, got at a mere wanworth; all of which he brought with him by way of luggage. Above all, he had done his duty by Church and State, and for once had seen his name printed in the newspapers.

Mains had his weak points like other people; and though the least like it, of all men, there was not altogether wanting a slight touch of vanity in his composition. He had, some little time after his return, related his experiences of this his first grand ecclesiastical campaign to Braeside and Dawvid Hadden, and by both had been eulogised for his unflinching faithfulness, in as high terms as their respective natures allowed, Braeside remarking, "Goshie, man!" while Dawvid Hadden, with a proper allusion to his own recent doings, observed, "Weel, it's jist as I've aye said. Fowk 't's in a public an' 'sponsible wye maun tak' the lead an' ack o' their nain heids, but ithers canna be on-taen pairt accordin'

to their capacity—ye sud be prood o' bein' alloot to vote, Mains. I sanna foryet to mak' mention o' 't fan I vreet to Sir Simon." And fortified by all this, Mains felt that a man who had buckled on his armour and gone forth at the call of duty amid the gathered hosts, could afford to be aggressive in some degree against disaffected stragglers. It was with some dim notion of this sort that, when he was next down at the smiddy, he fell on to the smith with—

"Nyod, aw b'lieve we sortit yer Nons at the Seenit."

"Maybe that," said the smith, with great gravity. "An' fat did ye wi' them syne? Fowk canna believe a' 't they hear; far less a' 't they see i' the newspapers. But fan ye hed a han' in 't yersel', ye 'll be able to tell 's a' about it."

"Ou weel, it was jist to keep oot that *quod sacra* min-aisters—they 've nae bizzness there."

"Oh, aw thoct it wus the non-intrusionists 't ye wus settin' doon."

"Weel, an' arena they the vera warst kin' o' them?"

"Na, Mains; some o' them 's as gweed 'constitutional' kirk men as yersel'."

"Hoot, dinna ye try to gar me believe that. Foo wud they be pitten oot, than? An' they *war* pitten oot, an' a bonny din yon Aiberdeen Nons made cryin' a' kin' o' orra jaw i' the vera kirk; stan'in' up o' the seats, an' aiven brakin' some o' the timmer wark."

"Ay, man, it's a sairious case it's like. But I was taul' that the day aifter ye had fleggit them awa', ane o' the Seenit inform't the meetin' that he hed that nicht offer't up his 'sincere prayers' for the misguidit fowk. Nae doot ye 've a' been as min'fu' at yer private devotions."

The smith spoke this very deliberately, and when he paused, Mains merely said, "Ou, ay, they heeld a prayer fan they met, an' the blessin' ere they brak up."

"Jist that; an' though we canna hae Seenits sittin' aye, fowk 't's been there 'll be able to gi'e 's a word in sizzon as weel 's the benefit o' their prayers, gin we be lickly to gae owre the bows."

Mains did not altogether relish this train of remark, and

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would not unwillingly have allowed kirk matters to drop again. But unhappily for him, Johnny Gibb entered the smiddy at that moment. It was not necessary for the smith to apply his match to the tinder in Johnny's breast; and Mains himself seemed to have an uncomfortable dread of an explosion. He tried, not very skilfully or successfully, to be cheery, and to lead a conversation on other subjects. The smith simply did not back him, and Johnny Gibb was something very like snappish. At last he put to Mains the rather unceremonious interrogation—

"Hae ye repentit o' that oonrichteous vote yet? Or is your conscience as sear't as though the smith hed scaum't it wi' that reid-het sock plate?"

"Hoot, Gushets, ye tak' a'thing owre sair in eernest," replied Mains, who was disposed rather to be amicable than the reverse.

"Owre muckle in eernest!" exclaimed Johnny, "owre muckle in eernest! An' you gyaun an' makin' a teel o' yersel' to sair the purposes o' a set o' carnal, wor'dly-minet rascals; gi'ein' your vote at the biddin' o' a peer seecophant, to deprive ten times better men nor him or the like o' him o' the preevileges that belang to them, gin there be ony trowth i' the Word o' Gweed, or ony vailue i' the conten'in's o' oor forefaders."

"Ou weel, it wunna haim nae ane i' this pairt o' the kwintra, at ony rate," said Mains, with hardly an attempt to defend his position.

"Dinna tell me, min. It's accurs't, reet an' brainch. There's yersel', 't kens nae mair about the prenciples o' the struggle nor that turkis i' the smith's sheein box, gyaun awa' to Aiberdeen like a wull chucken, an' preten'in' to tak' pairt in decidin' the question, fan ye're jist han'in' yersel' owre, sowl an' body, to dee mischief. That's the tae pairt o' 't; an' we see the tither fan that vicious, ill-gatet ablich, Hadden, mak's 'imsel' the willin' enstrument to cairry oot the tyranny o' yer kirk pawtrons an' moderate minaiaters."

Mains had got very hot in the face and even angry

by the time Johnny had finished this extremely violent speech. He did not give any formal reply, however, but in a rather loud tone declared that he "wudna stan' that fae nae man."

"Stan't or no's ye like, it's the trowth," said Johnny Gibb, as he turned away to direct the smith about some bit of work.

After this passage, the Kirk question was allowed to rest for the time being. But from that date onward Mains of Yawal entertained a pretty distinct grudge against his neighbour Gushetneuk.

A month thereafter the Disruption had occurred, and Johnny Gibb had, at no little expenditure of energy, got arrangements made for a Free Kirk service in his barn to be kept up, if not regularly, as frequently as "supply" could be obtained.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FREE KIRK OF PYKETILLIM.

It was not Johnny Gibb's intention to be a Disruption leader, yet he had become so *de facto*. The small body of Pyketillim non-intrusionists not merely conceded that position to him, but without him it may be doubted whether they would have gathered into any compacted form at all. To say that he felt his leadership to be an onerous burden would not be true, because Johnny did not feel it in one way or another; did not indeed know that he was leader. When he prepared his barn as a place of meeting, when he travelled on foot six or seven weary miles to a Presbytery of the "Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland," to negotiate for a supply of preachers, and, to promote that, boldly undertook to raise a certain sum in contributions—though Johnny in all this was carrying out a work which very likely no one else among his friends could or would have carried out, he was simply doing what seemed to lie naturally to his hand to do. Of course Johnny had all the time the firmest possible conviction that he was doing what was right, while, perhaps, his patience was not very ample with those who had less decided opinions than his own. And I daresay it would have tended greatly to the comfort of Peter Birse senior if he could have been inspired with a tithe of Johnny's belief in, and fervency for, the "cause." Peter had, perforce, been riven away from the auld kirk; and, as he accompanied Mrs. Birse and family, Sabbath after

Sabbath, to "the conventicle," as Jonathan Tawse wittily called it, at Gushetneuk, many a wistful glance did he cast in the direction of the kirk road, along which the forms of his old familiar friends were to be seen wending in the distance. As a last despairing effort, Peter had pleaded—

"Keep's, 'oman, it wud be a byous thing to brak' aff fae the hoose o' Gweed freely—mithna I gae up bye files?"

"To gae yer leen, no?"

"Weel, it wudna leuk sae glaurin like, ye ken."

"An' muckle better ye wud be o' that; it'll be lang ere ye hear the Gospel there," said Mrs. Birse.

"Weel, but ye ken Hairry, 't was sic a han', 's been gyaun maist pairt sin' there was word o' Sir Seemon comin' hame."

"Humph, Hairry! He's some mark, or than no. An' ye wud lat Dawvid Hadden fley *you* back to the hoose o' bondage neist?"

"Ou, it's nae him; but ye ken Hairry Muggart gaed a hantle forder a-len'th nor ever I did aboot that kirk wark."

"Ah, weel, ae turnkwite's aneuch," said Mrs. Birse, scornfully.

Peter's statement was mainly correct in point of fact. It was true that Hairry Muggart, in a sore strait how to carry out his convictions, and at the same time avoid calling down on his head the wrath of Sir Simon Frissal, had come to the conclusion that the Disruption was rather a hasty and ill-considered step. His principles? Oh yes, they were as staunchly held by as ever—so Hairry loudly averred—but why not keep within the walls of the national Zion, and at same time stoutly assail the citadel of Erastianism?—it would be gained "come time." So said Hairry: and I am not sure whether a similar proposal was not also mooted in much higher quarters, at the last meeting of the "Convocation," by some who have since laid claim to being distinctively the true representatives of Free Church principles. Besides, Hairry was an adept in theology, and those fledgling parsons of Johnny Gibb's, while he was pleased to hear the lads at a chance time doing their

best, were hardly prepared to supply the strong meat that he desiderated. Accordingly, Hairy left it to be understood that he, in his own person, was a sort of concrete embodiment of the establishment principle combined with the theory of independent spiritual jurisdiction. So he generally countenanced the Rev. Andrew Sleekabout at the delivery of his hebdomadal discourse, and then, in an unofficial way, would step quietly down to Gushetneuk to hear a sermon preached in the barn at such irregular hour as might happen, week-day or Sunday.

Johnny Gibb's other friends stuck together wonderfully ; and thus it came to pass that after a summer of preaching in the barn, Johnny took it in his head that a permanent place of worship must be had. It was autumn ; Sir Simon was now at home, and wherefore should he not be called upon to give a site ? It was argued, in reply, that the man who had sanctioned the turning out of their teacher, because he was, in his estimation, a schismatic, was not in the least likely, in this practical way, to promote the establishment of a congregation of schismatics. " He ocht to be taul's duty at ony rate ; an' lat oor consciences be clear't," said Johnny Gibb, and the sentiment was re-echoed by none more warmly than by the gudge, and Sandy Peterkin, whose season's labour, in default of anything in the pedagogue way, had consisted chiefly in hoeing turnips at Gushetneuk, and officiating as raker during harvest.

So Johnny Gibb and the souter were deputed to wait upon Sir Simon. This they did without loss of time, and were received by the stately baronet in his library, with great dignity.

" We're here, Sir Seemon, to see gin we can get a bit seet ony gate."

" A what, John ?" asked Sir Simon, severely.

" A reed or twa o' grun to be a stance for a place o' worship," answered Johnny.

" John Gibb, let me tell you, once for all, that the course you have been following for some time past has my strongest disapprobation. I understand, on credible infor-

mation, that you have been a ringleader in this most mischievous and schismatical movement——”

“It’s been that craetur, Dawvid Hadden, ’t’s taul ye that, Sir Seemon. Only that’s nedder here nor there.”

“I’ll allow no interruptions, sir! Disturbing the peace and good order of a quiet, well-conducted parish, by bringing a set of fanatics into it, to delude ignorant people.”

“We’ve been deein fat we-cud to get them taucht, Sir Seemon, baith in beuk leernin an’ the prenciples o’ the Gospel.”

“You teach them!”

“Na, na; dinna tak’ me up till I fa,’ Sir Seemon,” said Johnny, who was now fighting his way to a broader issue than he had at first meant to raise. “But we hed set up a gweed skweel; a thing that there was muckle need for, as a’ the pairis’ kens; though maybe naeboddy’s been kin’ aneuch to tell ye that; an’ that aisp never haltit wi’ ’s ill win’ an’ ’s clypes, till he gat the man turn’t oot that was o’ mair eese ten times owre nor the pairis’ dominie ever was—speer at ony ane ’t ye like.”

“I cannot argue with you, sir, about the management of my property,” said Sir Simon.

“Weel, weel; it’s but richt ’t ye sud ken the haill heids an’ particulars for ance, fan we’re at it. An’ aw ’m thinkin’ ye’re nae lickly to get owre correct news fae them ’t ye lippen maist till here.”

“I suppose your business with me is at an end?” said Sir Simon, with dignity, rising as if to show his visitors, who had been standing in the library floor all the while, out.

“Deed, it doesna leuk like bein’ weel begun, Sir Seemon,” answered Johnny Gibb, in no way abashed. “We’ve gotten nae answer, mair or less.”

“Answer to what, sir?”

“We made a ceevil request, Sir Seemon, for a stance at ony convainient spot to big a bit kirk upon.”

“Build a church? What do you mean, sir? Do you suppose that I’ll allow people following fanatical and divisive courses to erect a meeting-place within the parish?”

I would as soon forfeit my allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen."

"Ou weel," answered Johnny Gibb, "there's aye been persecutors o' the trowth fae the days o' Herod an' afore 't. But it winna be pitten doon wi' you nor nae ither ane, ye needna think it, Sir Seemon. A good day."

And so Johnny and the souter—who had found no opportunity to open his lips during the interview—made their obeisance, which called forth no response whatever from Sir Simon Frissal, and withdrew.

The deputation had thus no favourable report to give; and it would have been a hopeless case with the Pyketillim non-intrusionists had it not so happened that at the very extreme corner of the parish there was a bit of land of no very great extent, but on which there were a few houses, that belonged to a laird of more plebeian extraction than Sir Simon, and who lived at some distance. The plebeian laird had at one time made advances to Sir Simon, and been snubbed for his pains. He therefore bore the baronet no great goodwill; and on learning the position of affairs, was not sorry to find that, by ceding to the Free Church folks a little bit of barren ground with some old buildings upon it, he could have the opportunity of materially annoying Sir Simon Frissal. It was not that he loved the Free Kirk more, but that he loved Sir Simon less, and therefore he gave the site on reasonable enough terms. Upon this very inconvenient spot, which was nearly two miles distant from Gushetneuk, it was resolved to build. Next spring the building was set about, the goodman of Gushetneuk devoting a deal of time and trouble to the completion of the kirk, the design of which was a good deal less elaborate and costly than has become usual since. The incidents of the kirk building were very much of the kind common at the time.

Sir Simon Frissal, the lord of the Manor, had again left the locality before it was known that a site had been got, and Dawvid Hadden naturally felt the responsibility that lay upon him of looking after the ongoings of the Nons. In

the plenitude of his good nature, Braeside, though an elder of the national kirk, had gone to Gushetneuk, and offered to give a yokin of his horses and carts to assist in the heavy business of driving material: "For," said Braeside, "the fowk's been aye richt gweed neebours." And the offer had been accepted with great frankness by Johnny Gibb, who added, "I wudna won'er to see you in oor kirk yet, man," at which Braeside shrugged his shoulders and leuch. No sooner had Braeside's friendly deed become public, than Dawvid Hadden, rousing himself to a sense of duty in the matter, communicated with Mains of Yawal. Mains, who, from about the date of the Synod, had, as already mentioned, remained in a state of considerable sourness towards his Free Kirk neighbours, agreed that the act was extremely unprincipled on the part of Braeside, and readily undertook to speak about it quietly to his brother elder, Jonathan Tawse, who, he had no doubt, would "sort" Braeside in proper style for what he had been about. But the greatest explosion on Dawvid's part occurred when he discovered that Johnny Gibb's carting force was actually employed driving sand for the masons from a heap of that material, the accumulation of spates in the march burn between Sir Simon's property and that of the laird aforesaid. He now boldly went and ordered them to stop. It was Tam Meerison, who still remained Clinkstyle's foreman, who was loading his carts at the time; and Tam said—

"Na, sang aw, Dawvid. As lang's I've Gushetneuk's orders to full san', it's nae you 't'll stop me, nor a' the grun-offishers i' the kingdom."

It was in vain that Dawvid vapoured about an "enterdick." Tam said he might get a "dizzen o' enterdicks," if his taste lay that way, but he would take his loads of sand in the meantime. The result was that Dawvid at once wrote Sir Simon, and, as Jock Will, from his public position, was able to say, put on the outside of his letter the word "Hast!" Jock was observant, and could put this and that together pretty shrewdly, and his conclusion by-and-by was that the answer Dawvid received from Sir Simon was some-

thing in the nature of telling him to mind his own business, and not be perpetually meddling with what did not lie in his way. At any rate, nothing more was heard of Dawvid's interdict, and the new kirk was finished and occupied in due course, as will be noticed in its proper place.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CHANGE OF TIME.

A PERIOD of three years had elapsed without bringing any very material alteration in the general aspect of affairs, although Pyketillim had seen one or two changes in its peaceful community. Our old acquaintance, Andrew Langchafts, had disappeared from the locality. The truth was that Andrew had not found the business of merchan' at the Kirktown altogether such a lucrative one as he had at one time anticipated it might be. Probably the people of the place were too staid and sober to appreciate the enlightened commercial principles on which his business was conducted, or to avail themselves sufficiently of the resources of his "entrepôt," though they had been in the habit, some of them, besides Mrs. Birse, of setting on somewhat resolutely on the leading articles which Andrew offered at a manifest "sacrifice." The misfortune was that he never succeeded in leading them far in that department of superior soft goods which he had endeavoured to cultivate. The primitive character of their wants, as well as their practical and economic habits, forbade it. And so this department came in course to be more replete than fashionable. Jock Will, too, who had reached the status of a fully matriculated shopman, had left Andrew, to push his way farther south, which was a great blow to the merchan', seeing Jock had acquired an aptitude for business considerably greater than his own. In short, Andrew Langchafts, finding that things

did not meet his expectations, had been gradually tending to greater slovenliness in his habits. He took a deal of snuff, and, it was said, a little whisky sometimes, though nobody ever saw Andrew drunk; and he was apt to let the shop run out of this or the other commodity. Mrs. Birse, with her wonted sagacity, had a clear comprehension of the situation, and in a quiet communing with Miss Eliza Birse she expressed herself thus:—

“Ah, weel, they may say fat they like; but I’se warran’ that loon Wull hed ta’en’s nain o’ the peer stock afore he leeft ’im.”

“Mamma! Fat makes ye think that?” asked Miss Birse.

“Speer at Widow Wull fat wye *she* paid for that braw French merino’t she’s been skyrin in this towmon noo; an’ a velvet bonnet—she wud need it!”

“But he was shopman, an’ would get them at prime cost.”

“Weel, weel, I’m seer he’s weel oot o’ the road at ony rate; for that saft breet, Peter, wud ’a never made it oot wi’ Mary Howie as lang’s he was i’ the gate wi’ ’s sleekit tongue.”

“Oh, mamma, don’t be always speakin’ of Peter in that manner.”

“Lat that gang than. At ony rate, Meg Raffan taul me nae langer syne nor the nicht afore the streen that An’ro Langchafts was jist at the gae-lattin, and wud lickly need to gi’e up the chop a’thegither ere lang. Noo, ye ken, he has a hantle o’ rael gweed claith upo’ yon back skelfs; an’ I’se warran’ gin a body war to gae in wi’ a poun’ note or twa i’ their han’ he sudna be that mealy mou’t about the best that’s yon’er, gin he gat the offer o’ siller.”

“But fat wud be the use o’ buyin’ pieces o’ cloth?”

“Ou, ye ken, yer breeders’s never oot o’ the need o’ new claes. There’s Benjie, noo that he’s livin’ i’ the toon, leernin a genteel buzness, maun hae a spare stan’ or twa; an’ forbye I’ve been thinkin’ ’t that gray fer-nothing o’ yer fader’s, that the tailor docket the tails o’ the ither year, ’s

jist growin' some aul' fashion't, aiven for him; ye see genteel fowk notices the like o' that. Awat it's been a richt thrifty coat, for it was bocht the vera winter that Benjie was spean't; and though there's little eese o' a gweed thing for the like o' him, it's jist eenoo 't fowk's lickly to get a rug o' something that wud answer the purpose."

There is no reason to doubt that Mrs. Birse had at any rate attempted to carry out the proposal here outlined. But what took her, as well as sundry others of the people of Pyketillim by surprise, was to learn in a few months that Andrew Langchafts had come to terms for his whole stock-in-trade and the goodwill of his business, the purchaser being none other than his old apprentice, Jock Will. And Jock, something smartened in manner since he left the locality, but still retaining his undemonstrative aspect, and his quiet, soft chuckle as of old, was speedily settled as the merchan' of the Kirktown. How it was, nobody could have told probably, but from the day Jock Will commenced business and Andrew Langchafts retired, the shop had more of the aspect of business about it; and very soon the public were compelled to recognise in Jock, who had "flitted" his mother to the Kirktown as the head of his domestic establishment, a capable, obliging, and thriving business man.

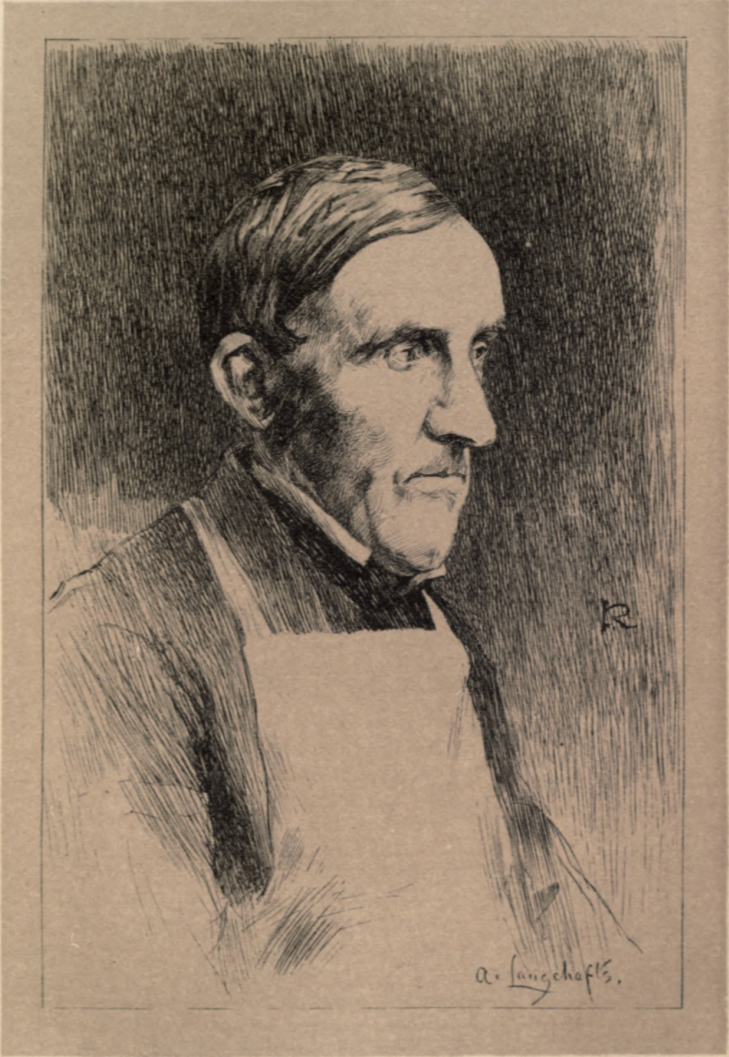
At Gushetneuk, too, some changes had taken place. Willy M'Aul had acted as Johnny Gibb's principal servant for several years, and then, as Johnny averred, he had got to the stage that he "wud nedder haud nor bin' wi' tryin' new protticks," in the way of farming and farm implements.

"Ou, weel, man, an' foo sudna he get an iron pleuch as weel's anither?" asked Mrs. Gibb.

"A timmer ane's sair't me for therty year an' mair; an' Hairry Muggart's as gweed a pleuch-vricht's there is i' the kwintra side," replied Johnny.

"Ou ay, but it's the fashion, ye ken; an' Hairry an' you tee's grown some aul' style, maybe."

"Weel, weel; I'll be naething but deav't about it," said Johnny; "you an' the lassie's jist as ill's he is. It's



a keerious thing that ye sud baith tak' 's side to argue me oot o' 't."

This meant that Johnny had conceded the iron plough, just as he had been induced to concede other things under the same combined influence. But while Johnny would not yield a point in this way without something very like a grumble, he was secretly not ill-pleased to witness the spirit of enterprise manifested by his servant, who really conducted things very much according to his own mind. In due course, however, Willy M'Aul announced his intention of seeking enlarged experience in husbandry by obtaining an engagement with a leading farmer in another locality.

"An' fa'll I get i' yer place, laddie?" asked Johnny Gibb.

"Ou, Tam, maybe?" said Willy M'Aul, tentatively.

"Tam Meerison, ye mean—wud he be willin' to come, noo?"

"Willin'! jist gi'e 'im the chance, an' ye'll see."

"Weel, we've seen Tam saucy aneuch aboot bidin' here ere noo."

"Oh ay, but Tam's turn't owre anither leaf sin' him an' me sleepit i' the aul' chaumerie thegither, an' Jinse aboot the toon."

"Faur is he?" asked Johnny.

"Dargin, an' livin' in a bit hoosie near the fit o' the hill I'll speak about it till 'im gin ye like."

Tam Meerison and Jinse, his wife, were liftit in no ordinary degree, at the prospect of Tam getting back to Gushetneuk, for which they were indebted to Tam's old tormentor. And thus the matter had been settled. Willy M'Aul had left on amicable terms to push his way in life, and his place had been supplied by Tam Meerison, who was now the father of a family of three. Tam was a really affectionate husband, and esteemed Jinse just as highly as the day she became his wife. Therefore it seemed to him to be in a measure Paradise regained, when he had the kind of work day by day which he liked and was fully competent to do, and when Johny Gibb not merely did not

grudge his going once a week to see his family, but made Jinse Deans and her offspring heartily welcome to spend a day at Gushetneuk at all times when they chose to do so.

It came about after this that a certain portion of the tacks on Sir Simon Frissal's property ran out; and amongst these was the farm at Gushetneuk. Conjecture, therefore, was naturally rife on the subject of Johnny Gibb's haudin'. Some wondered whether Johnny Gibb would wish to retake it, some whether Johnny, in that case, would have the hardihood, after what had come and gone, to moot the subject to Sir Simon. At any rate, it did not seem likely that Sir Simon would have much difficulty, in the circumstances, in deciding how to deal with such a troublesome character.