

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MERCHANT'S SHOP.

JOCK WILL'S career as merchant in the Kirktown of Pyketillim, although every way creditable to Jock himself as a man of enterprise and business habits, furnished in so far an illustration of the saying that a prophet has no honour in his own country. There were people in Pyketillim who had not been able to make up their minds as to the how and wherefore of Jock's position, and who manifested a disposition to treat him in his mercantile capacity accordingly. They had failed quite in finding out how Jock Will obtained the pecuniary means that had enabled him to become successor to Andrew Langchafts; and it was a natural solace to hint a doubt now and then as to the *bona fides* of particular transactions, or the soundness of the footing on which his business was conducted generally. No matter though Jock was steady, pushing, and obliging to all; what business had *he* to be reticent on what concerned himself, and did not concern other people? And if he would have his own way of it, he must not take it amiss if some of those whose natural curiosity he chose so unfeelingly to baffle should also use his shop simply in the way of a secondary convenience; that when they had a pretty large order they should go to "the Broch" or elsewhere for it, and apply at the Kirktown shop only in a casual way, for any temporary eke that was needed to complete their supplies. And all under the implied belief that Jock's

goods were not exactly of the highest character; or else that his prices were open to question. It was somewhat in this way that Mains of Yawal had been affected when taking in his stock of spring seeds. Jock had advertised the neighbourhood of his readiness to supply all these of guaranteed quality at the best prices going, and had solicited early orders to enable him to select his quantities. "Na—na," quoth Mains, "aw 'm nae keerious aboot lippenin muckle to the like o' 'im—Fa kens but he may be at the gae-lattin? We'll maybe get a starn clivver seed to mak' up, gin we rin oot, for convainience; but we'll get better an' chaeper seed fae ither fowk." And Mains did run out; and he came to Jock Will's shop and not merely insisted on having his deficiency in clover seed supplied, much to Jock's inconvenience, who feared falling short of the quantity that customers of a less suspicious turn had ordered, but threepit hard to induce Jock to let him have it at a halfpenny per pound less than he had paid for his stock elsewhere.

Mrs. Birse, it must be owned, had never been quite at ease on the subject of the inner history of Jock Will's start in business; and the letter from her son Benjie, to which reference has been made, seemed unexpectedly to open the way to light on the subject. She instructed Miss Birse how to frame a reply to her brother, the young lawyer, accordingly; and the epistle addressed to Benjamin took the following shape:—

"DEAR BROTHER—Your welcome letter was duly received, and we are glad to hear that you are quite well. This leaves us all the same at present. Your letter is very interesting, particularly about Andrew Langchafts' money, which he loaned to Dr. Drogemweal, by signing a bill for him, and getting it to pay. Mamma bids you tell Mr. Pettiphog that he is always in a bag of debt, and always promises to pay his debt, and never does it. So there is no use of craving him, she says, except a sheriff-officer do it, and *reest* his horse, which he cannot want, having so long roads to travel. Mamma would like if you can tell us more about anybody that has not paid; and the most particular, to know if Mr. Will got all the shop things on credit,

and has paid any of them yet. Mamma thinks he is in debt, because he had no money at the first ; and I would like to know as well as her. Don't tell Mr. Pettiphog that we was asking this. But the shop is *so nice* now, and everbody says that Mr. Will is a good business man.

"Father was not elected an elder, but Mr. Will was the highest among the deacons. Mamma was very angry when father lost ; but says he has himself to thank for it. Last Sabbath, Peter and him was both at the parish church. Mamma said he could go, but I was grieved. She thinks we must not offend Sir Simon too much, and it is father's own conscience that will accuse him if he does not do right. But she would not give him a halfpenny to give to the brod, because the Established Kirk has no right to that now, when it is Erastian.

"Just fancy—they elected Sandy Peterkin to be an elder ; and him is not doing nothing but living mostly upon charity ! Mr. Mac-Cassock *could* not be pleased about it. He is to be called for our minister soon.

"With kind love from all

"Your affectionate sister,

"ELIZA BIRSE.

"P.S.—Write soon, and tell me all the Aberdeen news, and especially if you have got any new acquaintances, and been at any parties."

With this note in her bag, Miss Birse, leaving the "party" at which Dawvid Hadden was guest, had set out to make some calls as collector, and to post the note at Jock Will's shop at Kirktown of Pyketillim.

To the news-gizzened rustic, a lounge about the merchant's shop door of a gloamin, as he purchases his ounce of tobacco, or other needful commodity, is inexpressibly grateful. He can see and hear as much as will furnish topics to keep himself and his cronies newsin for several days. And thus it was that when Miss Birse got to the post-office, she found good part of the available space in Jock Will's shop occupied by customers of the class of farm servants, and amongst them Tam Meerison, Gushetneuk's man and ex-foreman at Clinkstyle. She could have posted the letter at the customary slit in the window, but Miss

Birse chose to take it inside. At the counter was Jock himself, with bland countenance, attending to the more important orders, while the apprentice, dight in an ample white apron, measured out tobacco, whipcord, and siclike. And—could she believe it—at the desk sat Sandy Peterkin, pen in hand, and with a long narrow day-book before him! Miss Birse tripped through the parting group of rustics, and, with extended arm, gracefully dropped the note from between the tips of her gloved fingers into Mr. Will's hand.

"D'ye do to-night?" asked Miss Birse, with an engaging smile.

"Vera weel, thank ye: hoo d' ye do?" answered the merchant, politely.

Then she asked particularly after the welfare of his "mamma;" and then she seemed at a loss whether she should recognise Sandy Peterkin or not; but Sandy put an end to the dilemma, thus far, by nodding familiarly to her as he lifted down the merchant's big ledger. He could not speak at the moment, because he held the quill pen with which he had been writing in his lips in a horizontal position. Miss Birse smiled graciously in return to Sandy's nod. Jock Will invited her into his dwelling to see his mother and as the apprentice was adequate to any business now going, he opened the counter gateway, stepped out, and gallantly escorted her from the shop to the house.

"She disna ken you nor me the nicht, Tam," said a red-haired chap with a very freckled face, and an enormously ample sleeved moleskin waistcoat, as soon as Miss Birse and the merchant had gone out.

"Na, na, Archie," answered Tam; "fat wye cud a leddy ken a Jock Muck like you?"

"Weel, weel, Tam, you an' me tee kens fat kin' o' gentry bides at Clinkstyle; an' faur 'll ye get a rocher, coarser breet nor young Peter, 'er breeder?"

"Sang, ye may say 't," answered Tam. "Div ye min', fan we wus about the toon thegither there, twa year syne, oor needin' to fesh 'im hame ae nicht late, that drunk that he didna ken faur he was?"

“Ou, ay; that was the nicht was ’t, ’t we fell in wi’ ’im stoitin aboot o’ the road atween this an’ Clinkstyle, plaister’t wi’ dubs to the vera croon o’ ’s heid. Weel, man, I thoct aw wud rive my yirnin lauchin at ’im that nicht, fan he begood an’ grat an’ taul ’s aboot that deemie that they said hed the bairn till ’im.”

“Weel; it was keerious. He hed aye a terrible notion o’ you, Archie; an’ leet ye win farrier ben wi’ ’im aboot ’s lasses nor ony o’ the lave o’ ’s.”

“Ou, ay,” said our red-haired friend; “ye see the wye ’t I was orra man, I wasna never fess’t wi’ beasts at even; an’ cud tak’ a roun’ amo’ the deems ony nicht; an’ I ees’t to lat ’im gae wi’ ’s files. Mony a roun’ han’ did the jauds play ’im—he’s a saft gype—but Peter was jist as redd to gae back’s ever for a’ that.”

“Noo lads, noo lads, min’ ye that’s nae discourse to yoke till here,” interposed Sandy Peterkin, suspending his operations at the ledger for a moment, and trying to look severe.

“Hoot, never ye min’, Sandy,” answered Archie, “though ye be made a el’yer ye maunna be owre snappus wi’ fowk.—Weel, man, he was an awfu’ munsie that nicht. We hed to lay ’im doon upon a puckle strae i’ the chaum’er for a file, an’ skirp water in’s face till he cam’ some till ’imsel’.”

“Ay, an’ d’ ye min’ foo fear’t he was ’t we sud tell ony o’ the neepours sic a feel’s he hed made o’ ’imsel’.”

“Weel, it wasna the first time, though he was never freely so ill’s that nicht. But they say he’s gyaun to get your maiden yon’er, and that Gushetneuk’s to be pitten tee to Clinkstyle to mak’ a richt fairm to them.”

“Aw dinna believe a word o’ ’t,” said Tam, decisively.

“Divnin ye?” asked Archie. “Man, ye wudna ken. She’s a terrible wife yon’er.”

“Ay, she’s a coorse ane,” interjected another of the group.

“Coorse!” exclaimed Archie. “That’s a’ that ye ken aboot it, min. An’ ye hed been wi’ ’er, like Tam an’ me,

ye wudna not till 'a been taul' that there's nae the marrow o' 'er atween this an' Tamintoul, for an unhang't limmer, wi' a' kin' o' greed, an' twa-fac't chaetry."

Sandy Peterkin looked up again with a remonstrating look, but, not heeding this, Archie went on—

"An' yon peer, simple idiot o' a man o' hers; she canna haud fae ill-guidin' an' makin' a feel o' 'im afore fowk's faces, though for that maitter he's far owre gweed for 'er."

"The dother's nae far ahin the mither in some things," said Tam Meerison.

"Ho, there she goes!" said Archie, as he happened to glance outside. "My certie, the merchan' 'll better tak' care o' 'imsel' wi' 'er—Weel, are ye gyaun to be stappin, boys?"

These last words were uttered as Jock Will re-entered the shop. Jock bade his customers good-night very affably as they left, and then proceeded to arrange for closing his place of business.

The reader has not been informed how it came to pass that Sandy Peterkin had come to occupy a position in Jock Will's establishment. It came about very simply in this wise. That Sandy Peterkin was in need of some suitable employment was a fact patent to anybody, and it weighed particularly on the minds of his three friends, the souter, the smith, and Johnny Gibb. Johnny even declared that the idea of a man of Sandy's pairts an' leernin hoeing neeps, or raking in hairst to him, was degraadin, which Sandy did not in the least seem to feel, but did the work contentedly. They did not, like Job's friends and others, proceed to comfort him in a critical way, but having met and considered his case—"Weel," said the smith, "I canna think o' onything better nor tryin' the merchan' to set him to dee his clarkin; he has owre muckle adee till 'imsel', an' Sandy winna be ill to say till wi' the waages."

"Man, that's the vera thing; aw'm seerly dottl't or I wud 'a thocht o' that ere noo," exclaimed Johnny Gibb.

"He vreets a bonny han'," said the souter.

"Bonny! its like the vera copper-plate," added Johnny Gibb.

Johnny at once undertook to see Jock Will in Sandy Peterkin's interest. Jock, like a sensible man, readily fell in with the proposal of his seniors, and Sandy was forthwith put on trial as clerk, much to his own satisfaction, and with no disappointment to the expectations of his friends.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DAWVID HADDEN REPORTS TO SIR SIMON.

IF Johnny Gibb's farm of Gushetneuk was to be reft from him, and he, Johnny, sent adrift from the lands of Sir Simon Frissal, as an incorrigible disturber of the peace, civil and ecclesiastical, it was very evident that the prospect before him gave Johnny no manner of trouble or anxiety whatever. When Dawvid Hadden, in the plenitude of his power as ground-officer, had deliberately stalked about for a day or two on the possession of Gushetneuk, climbing over fences, and sten'in through turnip and potato drills, or kicking up hillocks among new girse stibbles as he went on layin' aff the awcres, it had seemed to Dawvid a settled matter that the obstinate bodie would feel the necessity of making up to him in a somewhat more deferential spirit than that which had marked their later intercourse about the date of the Disruption. But in this Dawvid was disappointed. Johnny was to be seen jogging leisurely about, snodding up the corn yard, turning out his young stock to pick up the natur' girse by the margins of the now cleared fields, or directing the operations of Tam Meerison and the orra man as they laid on a substantial coat of top-dressing on the old lea that was to be broken up; but he heeded Dawvid just as much and no more than if Dawvid had been some insignificant interloper whom it was not worth while to turn off the land.

"Fat's that preen-heidit ablich deein there, Tam?" said

Johnny Gibb, as he saw Dawvid Hadden cross the fence, with his attendant carrying the measuring chain.

"Ou, he's been at it yesterday an' the day baith, layin' aff the grun," answered Tam Meerison.

"Humph!" quoth Johnny, as he turned away homeward, "a bonny layin' aff, or than no; he mith 'a sav't himsel' that tribble at ony rate."

"The maister has a richt ill-wull at that mannie," said the orra man, when Johnny Gibb had got beyond earshot.

"Ill-wull!" answered Tam Meerison. "Man, he disna think 'im worth haein an ill-wull at: peer win'y smatchet, gyaun aboot preten'in that he's Sir Seemon's awgent. Little to me wud set the dog at 'im: ye wud shortly see foo he wud tak' owre the dyke, chyne an' a' thegither."

Tam did not set on the dog, however, but pursued his labour.

"Nabal vratch," soliloquised Dawvid Hadden within himself. It was not that he had heard the sentiments uttered by Johnny Gibb, for the two were a couple of hundred yards distant from each other at the time that Johnny had spoken; but, as Dawvid fixed his squaring pole, he had allowed the "tail" of one eye to wander toward Johnny in the hope that, in place of going away in contemptuous disregard of his, Dawvid's, presence, he would come towards him, if not in a supplicating, then in a bellicose spirit; and Dawvid flattered himself that he knew the precise attitude which, as a man in authority, it was becoming to assume in either case. Johnny simply turned in the other direction to attend to some trifling concern affecting the temporary convenience of his stirks. "Nabal vratch; hooever, they gae far aboot that disna meet ae day—Fat can he mean cairnin on the tap-dressin' that gate? He winna get the gweed o' that in ae crap, nor twa.—Ou weel, it'll pit the grun in gweed hert for somebody, ony wye."

In this mood had Dawvid Hadden begun his layin' aff: in this mood he continued it. It has been already narrated how Dawvid paid a friendly visit to Clinkstyle, and what communings took place on that occasion. There-

after, the ground-officer set about the onerous duty of reporting to Sir Simon Frissal the result of his land-surveying labours. The statement was fully more verbose than lucid; yet Dawvid contrived to make it abundantly apparent what he conceived should be done with the farm of Gushetneuk, at least. Of it Dawvid reported thus:—

“The pleace is two small and John Gibb has not led it owt according to plan which is allways very disrespectfull to superiors and obstinat small farms is bad for increasing pauppers under the new poor law i have been applied too by severals but told them the new plan had not been decided which it was likely you would not need no new tenant when you could get quiet well behaved people among the old tenants the superfacies off the new farm is 173 acres arrable encloodin the commodation road and the smal belt which is not more nor an acre and a half. the fire howse at Gushetneuk would stand and with improvements which they is willing to do at their own coast would be shootable for Mr. and Mrs. Birse. there sun which is also called Peter is to be the farmer and is a remarkable good marketman and steady and is much respected by Mr. Sleekaboot and considers him one of the best disposed young men that comes to the parish church and never a sunday out of it. I also noes off tenants for the smith’s and shoemaker’s crofts. no more at present.”

To the ground-officer’s laboured production Sir Simon’s reply was brief; and these were its terms:—

“DAVID—I intend coming home per mail coach on 23d inst. Please give the gardener your assistance in making the approach tidy and clearing it of dead leaves and rubbish. Also intimate to the people whose holdings are out, that Mr. Greenspex, my agent, and I will meet them on 25th. John Gibb, the smith, and shoemaker, are to wait on me the previous night.

S. FRISSAL.

“October 10th.”

With the contents of this note Dawvid Hadden was highly pleased. It was now past doubt that his plan of re-letting was approved, and he carried in his pocket a warrant of expatriation, as it were, against the three men, who of all Sir Simon’s tenantry had set most lightly by his authority. Yet Dawvid was not void of magnanimity.

"Weel, Hairry, man," said he, addressing our friend the wright, "I'm a kin' o' sorry for the souter an' the smith—the smith in particular—he's a gweed tradesman, an' a humoursome chiel—though he hae a gey sharp tongue in's heid files—but ye see they hedna ither till expeck. I warn't them weel fat it wud come till lang syne."

"Ou ay; they war baith owre heidie, ye see. Prenciple's ae thing, but jist to rin yersel' clean intill a snorl disna dee."

"Ye was a wise man that drew in yer horns a bit, aw can tell ye, Hairry."

"Weel, weel," said Hairry, with a somewhat forced laugh, "it disna dee to bide at Room, an' strive wi' the Pape. An' I'm a kin' o' mair oonder the Sir nor aiven the like o' them."

"Be thankfu' 't ye are 's ye are, Hairry; for Sir Simon was onything but pleas't aboot you gaen aboot makin' speeches at some o' that non-intrusion meetin's, I can tell ye. An' though I say 't mysel', that maybe sudna say 't, it wud 'a requar't only twa scraips o' the pen fae me fan aw was makin' oot my report to gar Sir Simon tak' a vizzly backar't; an' syne I wudna gi'en a goupenu' o' sheelocks for yer chance."

"Muckle obleeg't to ye, Dawvid," said Hairry, in a tone indicative of earnestness, not unmixed with anxiety. "It's nae fae you 't I've kent sae lang 't I wud 'a dredit an ill turn, though I ken weel ye've a hantle i' yer poo'er."

"Ay," continued Dawvid, quite observant of Hairry's state of feeling, "fan ye was gaen clampin doon to that bit hole o' a skweel ilka ither nicht, an jawin awa' amo' yer nons, Sir Simon says to me, 'Dawvid,' says he, 'do you know that that fellow Muggart's been repeatedly down haranguin thaese poor ignorant fanatics?' 'I'm not awaar hoo a'en, sir,' says I, tryin' to mak' as licht o' 't 's aw cud. 'Well,' says he, 'keep your eye upon him, an' let me k-now.'"

"Eh, did he raelly say that, Dawvid? Weel ye ken, I never tyeuk nae active pairt, 'cepin twice. I was in favvour o' the prenciple, ye see; but the like o' Gushetneuk an' them carri'e't things owre gryte a len'th."

"Weel, weel, Hairry, ye better lat sleepin' tykes lie noo. The places is to be set aboot the twenty-foift, so ye 'll need-a be owre by. My plan's been afore Sir Simon this aucht days, an' I hed's letter the streen, fully approvin' o' 't; so there 'll be little adee but get the lawyer to tak' oor enstruc-tions, and vreet oot the dockiments."

"An' *will* there be ony cheenge than, Dawvid, forbye fat ye've mention't?" asked Hairry.

"Ye 'll see; ye 'll see. We maunna cairry clypes oot o' the skweel. Hooever, aw'm gaen up to the Manse to call up' Maister Sleekaboot, an' converse wi' 'im aboot ane that he was recommen'in' to me. Gweed nicht wi' ye."

Dawvid went on to the Manse accordingly, and knocked at the front door.

"Ou, jist say it's Maister Hadden that wunts 'im for a minute," said Dawvid, in answer to the inquiry of the damsel who opened the door to him. Mr. Sleekaboot came down from his study, and found Dawvid seated in the parlour, dangling his hat between his knees.

"I'm glad to see you, David; your wife is quite well, I hope; and the children?" said Mr. Sleekaboot.

"We're a' vera muckle aboot the ordinar', sir," answered Dawvid. "Gweed be thankit. I've call't up aboot yon that ye mention't—the settin' o' the crafts, ye ken."

"Oh! Sir Simon returns this month?"

"We've arreeng't things jist is I taul ye, an' ye can lat me ken whuch craft, the smith's or the souter's, it would be maist agreeable to get for this person that ye're interaistit in."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Sleekaboot. "I'm really much obliged to you, David."

"Dinna mention 't, sir."

"It's not that I would desire to dispossess any man; far from it; but as you said Sir Simon could not allow these people to remain after what had come and gone, I thought I might as well recommend a most respectable man to you—a most *respectable* man."

"Fat's his name, sir? aw'll better book it at once," said Dawvid, putting down his hat on the carpet, and pulling

out a crumpled book of the penny diary order, together with a bit of black lead pencil, the point of which he dipped into his mouth, in preparation for writing.

Mr. Sleekaboot gave Dawvid the name of some unknown person, a sister's daughter's husband of Jonathan Tawse, and Dawvid booked it in proper style. "It will be a particular favour," added the minister, "and he will be entirely indebted to yourself for it, David."

"Ou, I'm aye willin' to dee a fawvour to them that's enteetl't till onything o' the kin'. Ye'll maybe advertteese 'im to leuk in aboot upo' me at's convainience."

"And don't mention my name, you know, David, in connection with the matter; being of a secular nature, my motives might be misunderstood."

"I un'erstan' ye perfeckly, sir," said Dawvid; then he again put up his diary and black lead pencil; and soon thereafter bade the minister a formal good night, and went away home.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SETTLEMENT OF MR. MACCASSOCK.

THE settlement of the Rev. Nathaniel MacCassock, as Free Kirk Minister at Pyketillim, was an event that afforded an altogether new experience in the place. To the younger people the placin of a minister was something which they had never witnessed in any shape. Their seniors could remember the time when Mr. Sleekaboot was ordained as minister of the parish. But that was a different style of thing altogether. Sir Simon Frissal had, of his own good will and pleasure, "presented" the Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot, without consulting any individual more or less; and the Presbytery had mainly carried the matter through, without anybody in the parish being a bit the wiser. When the ordination "trials" were completed, and the settlement was to take place, they fixed it, as the use and wont is, for a week day, whereat certain of the parishioners grumbled, because the Presbytery had been unmindful of the fact that the neeps were pressing for hoeing at the time. And one or two doubted whether a week-day service was constitutional.

"Aw'm fell dootfu' aboot gyaun naar them ava, fader," said Mains of Yawal, then a promising young man, addressing his male parent; "the neeps is spin'lin' up till they'll be connach't; an' they've nae poo'er to gar fowk gae to the kirk on ouk days, 'cepin o' the fast-day."

"It'll be siccarer to gae, loon," said the judicious senior

"Ye wudna ken fat mith happen. Sir Seemon 'll be there 'imsel', an' the factor wi' 'im, nae doot, an' they wud seen see gin oor seat war freely teem. Tak' ye a stap owre bye an' see fat like a birk he is. As the aul' by-word says, 'It's aye gweed to hae yer cog oot fan it dings on kail.'"

Like an obedient son, Mains of Yawal had obeyed his father's injunctions, and patiently witnessed the ordination services. Then the Presbytery had the ordination dinner, from which, it was said, every individual member of the reverend court departed in a more or less "glorious" state. Mains of Yawal did not say this, but on that very evening he had occasion to witness a part of the tail of the ordination programme for which he had not bargained. The old man, as his custom was, before retiring to rest, went out in the quiet summer gloamin to the hillock at the western end of his cosy stob-thacket house, and cast his eyes abroad over as much of the farm of Mains of Yawal as they could take in from that point of vantage. He gazed and gazed again in the direction of the lower part of the farm, past which the road from the Kirktown of Pyketillim led.

"Jamie!" cried he, "fat's that makin' sic a reerie amo' the stirks doon i' the Shallhowe? Seerly the tod, or a set o' cairds rinkin about the pumphel. Rin awa' doon, man, an' see fat's onsattlin the beasts fae their lair."

He was a notionate old fellow the elder Mains of Yawal, and would be obeyed. So when Jamie went down till he had full command of a point a little beyond where his father could see to, what should he behold but a gentleman in white neckcloth, with his hat far back on his head, and seated on horseback, completely locked into the corner of the lower field among the growing corn. He had deliberately ridden off the road, in at the yett; there could be no doubt that the rider was responsible for that aberration and not the horse; and after traversing the field in various directions to the infinite astonishment of Mains of Yawal's stirks, which had some dim notion, evidently, that the proceeding was not in proper ecclesiastical form, he had got, as it were, jammed into the neuk of the field. There the rider, who, on finding

further progress impossible, had been thrown back on the previous proceedings, was hilariously reciting part of a speech he had delivered in the manse that day, and the horse was occupying his time by nibbling grass off the top of the feal-dyke. Our young farmer, who knew perfectly well the name and local habitation of the reverend brother of the Presbytery who had been caught straying in this odd fashion, was naturally incensed, and rated his obfuscated reverence severely for "blaudin the corn" in such an unwarrantable fashion. And his reverence, in tones of serene contentment, replied, "Ho-ot, man, hoot; jist lead ye my horsie oot; I'll pay all damages. We hae-na or-dination dinner every day, min' ye."

I fear this digression is hardly to be justified; only let the indulgent reader bear in mind that the habits of Pyketillim are to me of perennial interest, whether the date be a quarter or half a century ago, or more.

Well, while the scheme, of which the reader knows, relative to the possession of Gushetneuk had been maturing, the subject that specially occupied Johnny Gibb's thoughts was not the renewal of his lease, but the settlement of Mr. MacCassock. Johnny had been at pains to stir up the people of the Free Kirk to a sense of their privilege in electing a minister; and he had had the satisfaction of seeing a full meeting present on the day of election, when Mr. MacCassock was unanimously chosen. Then Mr. MacCassock had his "trials," and, albeit the souter was Presbytery elder at the time, Johnny felt it incumbent upon him too to travel to the Presbytery's place of meeting, and sit through a five hours' "sederunt," in order that he might lose nothing in the procedure that was fitted to edify. Some parts of the exercises to which Mr. MacCassock was subjected were confessedly beyond Johnny Gibb's intelligent comprehension; yet he and the souter returned from the Presbytery with the steadfast conviction that he was a "gran' scholar," and "poo'erfu' i' the original langiges;" and the congregation readily accepted their report on this point. That Mr. MacCassock was an able preacher they all knew of their own

knowledge. Mr. MacCassock had now passed his "trials" with approbation, and following on that they had next settled the details of the ordination. They did not reckon brevity the soul of wit, nor attribute to it any desirable character whatever in such a matter, and so Johnny Gibb and the souter, who had got a remit on this head from the congregation, had pleaded it almost on the ground of a personal favour that three of the fathers and brethren should take part in the services; the moderator to preach the sermon, then one brother to "address the newly-ordained pastor," and another to "address the people." This was all agreed to, and the 23d of October was fixed for the ordination.

"The vera day 't Sir Seemon comes hame!" exclaimed Mrs. Birse, addressing her daughter, who had just returned from some piece of visiting. "I' the face o' fortune fa said that, 'Liza?"

"I heard it at the shop."

"The chop! Fowk 'll get a' ca'd aboot clypes there; I think they mith get something ither adee nor turnin' owre a' the claicks i' the kwintra."

"Well, mamma, if it please ye any better, it was Mr. Gibb himself that told me."

"Gushetneuk 'imself? It wud set him better to bide at hame, an' leuk aifter that sweer fangs o' servan' chiels o' his."

"An' he bade me say that there 'll be a great turnout, for the ablest speakers i' the Presbytery's all to tak' part; an' he wud expect to see every one o' us there that day."

"To see 's a' there! Weel, weel! Easy till 'im that has naething to loss or win. But it's jist aye the gate wi' them 't hisna faimilies o' their nain; there's nae en' to their selfitness. Fat wye cud ye expeck Patie an' yer fader there fan the tacks is to be set immedantly aifter?"

"Well, mamma, ye know well aneuch that if Peter offen' Mr. Gibb, he needna think to get Mary Howie to be 's wife. An' ye've helpit a' 't ye cud to get 'er till 'im yourself."

"Peter! Peer man, aw doot he hisna sol't 's beets wi' 's

transack amo' the lasses. But an' he war goodman o' 'Newtoon,'s Dawvid ca's't, an' Mary Howie needin' to gae awa' to the frem't, she maybe winna be sae saucy, aiven though an inhaudin, unedicat taupie chiel in a kwintru chop sud be garrin'er troo that he's wuntin'er—Fat sorra wud he wunt'er for but to get's han's o' the siller that Gushet's len'it'im, or I'm sair mista'en?"

"Mamma!" exclaimed Miss Birse, with vehement emotion. "That's not a proper way to speak of Mr. Will; and him one o' the deacons too. I'm sure he don't deserve that fae no one belongin' to the Free Church," and Miss Birse flung herself on the parlour couch in a state midway between sobbing and sulking.

"Hoot, 'Liza," said Mrs. Birse, in a cooler tone, "I wasna meanin' to lichtlife him—Gweed forbid. We a' ken weel fat kin' o' an upfeshin he gat; an' gin he be able to hae a chop noo it's the mair till's credit; only, ye ken, the like o'im canna hae the same respeck's a man o' edication like Maister MacCassock, 't's been weel brocht up a's days, an' gane throu' the College, like yer nain broder, Benjamin. But aw *was* provokit at that bodie Gushets gaen on that gate, 's gin he war enteetl't to rowle the roast owre a'body."

"He only wantit's a' to be there, because there'll be gran' preachers; and Gushets' ain people'll hae some strangers wi' them," said Miss Birse.

"Weel, ye ken, Patie has a gryte prefairrance for the Pairis' Kirk, an' it winna dee to swye nae creatur's conscience, 'Liza, ye ken that yersel'. An' yer fader is *not* stoot. I was thinkin' 'im leukin' jist rael wainish't-like about the queets the tither day; it's raelly a gryte harassment to the like o'im to be gar't shave an' cheenge his claes on an ouk day."

Of course Mrs. Birse had it her own way; although, with the exception of Peter Birse senior and Peter Birse junior, the members of the family at Clinkstyle did attend the ordination services. The Free Kirk of Pyketillim was crammed on the occasion; and Johnny Gibb looked altogether like one who reckoned it a high day. There had

been a promise of long standing on the part of his friend "Maister Saun'ers" at Marnoch to pay him a visit, and now Johnny had pressed fulfilment of the promise. Mrs. Gibb was not improved in pedestrian powers, so Johnny made Tam Meerison yoke the cart, and in that useful vehicle Mrs. Gibb, himself, Maister Saun'ers, and Jock Will's mother, rode pleasantly enough to the Free Kirk. The merchan', carefully done up in a stan o' blacks, came on behind in the company of Mrs. Gibb's niece, Mary Howie, who was also escorted by Willy M'Aul, whose muscular frame, and ruddy, open face, formed a good contrast to the merchant's careful style and semi-demure air. Willy, who had been for a time a stranger in Pyketillim, was there to hit at least two dogs with one bone, if he might, by visiting his home, and at the same time attending the ordination services. And if one might judge, it was no unpleasant experience for him again to meet certain of his old acquaintances, in whose company he now found himself. He had moreover been specially invited to take tea at Gushetneuk with his old master and mistress, and in company with the perspicacious Maister Saun'ers from Marnoch.

It is needless to say how impressive the ordination services were; how closely, for three long hours, they were listened to by a crowded congregation; and how the psalmody swelled up beyond its wonted volume. It was the mole-catcher who now occupied the precentor's desk, but the mole-catcher was a modest man, and on great occasions he would always have Johnny Gibb in the lateran also, to give him assurance, for Johnny's presence of mind never deserted him. And Johnny's voice had a grip in it. At the points in the metre he could ring out with a penetrating "birr" that set straggling elements in the general body of sound at defiance, and when occasion required, overbore in its prolonged twang even the shrill piercing note of the principal female voice. When the service had ended, and Mr. MacCassock had received the usual "cordial welcome," the congregation betook themselves to their several homes. Mr. MacCassock having as yet no manse, and

there being no other suitable accommodation available, it had been found necessary, reluctantly, to give up for the present the idea of "entertaining" the brethren of the Presbytery.

As the congregation were in process of gradual dispersion by the various routes leading to and from the Kirk, the carriage of Sir Simon Frissal came along the highway with that dignified baronet, who had just arrived on his autumn visit to the locality, in the interior. Johnny Gibb's mare, Jess, which was already under way, manifested an evident disposition to keep pace with Sir Simon's fleeter steeds as they passed, and Johnny, who was in command of Jess at the time, did his best simultaneously to check the vivacity of the animal, and accord the customary recognition to his laird by lifting his hat. Whether Sir Simon deigned to return the salute of the tenant of Gushetneuk was not clearly determinable; at any rate, Jess by her capers made very sure that the baronet should not pass without having his special attention fixed on her master.