

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PATIE'S WEDDING.

IT was a natural enough result of the maternal policy adopted in his case that Peter Birse junior should, in a sort of reckless wudden dream, determine that his marriage should not pass over otherwise than in the form of a regular out-and-out demonstration. The news fell on Mrs. Birse with a shock that made her hardy frame vibrate from head to heel. She had hoped that it might be smuggled through in a way that would hardly admit of its attaining the dimensions of a public event at all. But to be told that Peter and his bride had actually invited a company of fully thirty persons, consisting chiefly of farm servants, male and female, and residents in the Kirktown, whose gentility was more than questionable; and that, of all places in the world, the marriage was to come off at the house of Samuel Pikshule, the bellman of Pyketillim, was more than the heart-broken mother could well be expected to bear up under.

Peter was deaf to all entreaty, however. In the matter of the recent settlement, forced on by his mother, he had shown himself a man of safe instincts, inasmuch as, despite the legal acumen of Mr. Pettiphog, he had stubbornly refused to sign a renunciation of the lease of Clinkstyle until he had got formally awarded to him what he considered a sufficient equivalent in the shape of a good round sum of money. With the capital thus provided in store, Peter felt

as independent and confident as a man would naturally do in the circumstances, his purpose being, as his father phrased it, "to lay moyen for a placie come time; an' gin naething dinna turn up ere simmer, tak' a girse parkie or twa, an' trock about amo' nowte beasts." And as the marriage festivities were frowned down and ignored at Clinkstyle, what more appropriate than that they should receive their legitimate development under the hospitable roof of Samie Pikshule, who had been discovered to be a remote relative of the bride, and had accordingly readily given her a sheltering bield when he heard of her excellent prospects.

In carrying out his arrangements, Peter Birse junior went to work in quite a business-like style. True, he was a little perplexed as to form; but in this Samuel Pikshule was able to post him up in a very satisfactory measure; and Peter had called on Tam Meerison, in a friendly way, with a "Hoot, min, ye've gaen throu' 't a' yersel' nae lang syne; an' you an' Jinse maun come an' help's to keep up the spree." The invitation was not to be resisted, and the mole-catcher was pressed into the service, it being left to him and the red-haired orra man, who has been mentioned as an old friend of Peter's, to settle who should be best, and who warst young man; and they drew cuts, whereby it was decided that the mole-catcher was not to have the higher post of honour. Peter had gone to Jonathan Tawse with his best young man on the beukin nicht, and got the publication of banns duly arranged. Jonathan, to encourage him, had remarked, "Ye'll better come an' get yersel's session't the Sunday aifter the marriage." Peter did not seem to see the propriety of this, and demurred, whereat the dominie went on to say, "Ah-wa, man, it winna hin'er ye lang. Fan ance fowk's pitten their necks aneth the yoke thegither, fat's the eese o' a lang say-awa'. I wat I'm muckle o' aul' Mr. Keith's wye o' thinkin'. Mony was the pair that cam' up to him to be rebukit that he made man an' wife afore they wan owre the kirk door again, though they had nae mair thoct o' mairryin fan they cam' there nor I hae o' gaen to Botany Bay the morn. She'll be an

uncommon suitable wife, an yer faimily 'll be weel at the road shortly, Peter, man."

The bridegroom's party mainly assembled at Hairry Muggart's. Clinkstyle was forbidden; yet Hairry lent the occasion his countenance on the calculation that Mrs. Birse would in due course soften down, and it would then be a pleasing recollection to have befriended Peter in his need. Peter Birse senior had been absolutely forbidden to attend the marriage; but Rob, who had so recently become, as it were, heir-apparent, and who had been taking counsel with the red-haired orra man, sadly to the disgust of Mrs. and Miss Birse, was not only determined to attend the marriage, but highly up in spirits at the thought of it. And lucky it was that this proved to be the case. For, as it turned out, the unsophisticated mole-catcher had failed altogether to realise the extent of the responsibilities laid upon him as warst young man. When the red-haired orra man called him quietly aside at the end of Hairry's peat-stack to arrange for the proper performance of their duties, it was found that Molie had made no provision for doing anything beyond the part of a simple layman on the occasion.

"Bleezes, min!" exclaimed the red-haired orra man, "wasnin ye never at a mairriage i' yer life? Nae fusky, nor a pistill nedderin!"

The red-haired orra man hitched half-way round, and exhibited the necks of a couple of quart bottles; one peeping from under the ample flap of each of his goodly coat pouches; and he dragged from the interior of the same garment a formidable flintlock horse pistol, considerably the worse for wear, which he not quite accurately designated his "holster." The mole-catcher, whose sole attention had been given to the decoration of his own person, and who did not feel quite at ease in his high shirt neck and long hat, looked foolish, and said—

"But I never cud sheet neen ony wye."

"Buff an' nonsense, min! Aw say, Rob!" shouted the red-haired orra man, stretching forward, and addressing Rob Birse round the corner of the peat-stack; "man, ye 'll need-a

gi'e Molie yon bottle 't I gied you to cairry; he hisna fesh'n a drap wi' 'im!"

Rob did not seem quite willing to comply with this suggestion; and the mole-catcher by a happy thought at once extricated them from all difficulty.

"Mithna *he* dee 't 'imsel'?"

"Ay wull aw," said Rob, brightening up and fumbling in his pocket to show that he was not behind in the matter of firearms.

"Dozen 't; it lea'es us terrible bare o' the stuff," said the best young man.

Now the red-haired orra man had given Rob the third bottle to carry simply as a reserve for him, seeing he had not three available pouches. So the thought was a natural one. But he was a man of prompt action.

"Weel, weel, we canna better dee, aw suppose. Come on, Rob;" and away they went full swing, leaving the mole-catcher alone at the stack mou'.

Ten minutes after, and the party was marshalled, Peter Birse junior being consigned *pro tem.* to the care of a couple of sturdy bridesmaids, set out in the loudest rustic fashion.

"Noo, heelie, till we wun awa' twa-three rig-len'ths at ony rate," said the red-haired orra man. And he and Rob set off in the character of sen's to Samie Pikshule's, duly to inquire if there was a bride here. "Are ye load?" queried the orra man. "We needna pit in primin' till we hear some o' them sheetin." They were directly opposite Clinkstyle at the moment, and just heaving in sight of Mains of Yawal. Mains's "boys" had determined to give them a regular fusilade, and the words had scarcely escaped the red-haired orra man's lips when a faint crack was heard in that direction. The orra man stopped, pulled the powder horn from his breek pouch, seized the cork in his teeth, primed his holster, and handed the horn to Rob, with a nod to follow his example quickly. Then they fired; then they marched again, reloading as they went.

"Sang, we winna lat them far awa' wi' 't," said the red-

haired orra man, and Rob, with a loud laugh, declared it was "first-rate."

Had they been in the interior of the parlour at Clinkstyle at that moment, they would have heard these words faintly uttered—

"Ah, 'Liza, 'Liza, that sheetin *will* be the deeth o' me. Mony's the trial 't we maun endure fan we're i' the path o' duty. Maister MacCassock never spak' a truer word."

"My certie, hiv aw tint my gless?" exclaimed the red-haired orra man. "Na, na; it's here i' my oexter pouch. Tak' care an' nae brak yours: we're seer to meet somebody in a han'-clap; an' 't wud never dee nae to be ready wi' the leems for oor first fit. An' some o' Mains's boys's sure to be within cry."

The orra man was perfectly right in his forecast; for they had not gone over a hundred yards farther, when, turning a corner, whom should they encounter but the excellent henwife, proceeding homeward from the Kirktown.

"Hilloa, Meg!" roared the red-haired orra man. "Heth, that's capital. Fa wud 'a thoct it! Oh, Meg, Meg, aw *thocht* you an' me wud mak' something o' 't aye."

"'Serve me—the sen's!" exclaimed Meg, lifting her hands very high.

"Haud my holster here noo, Rob," said the best young man, in a thoroughly business key. He pulled out one of his bottles; then drew the glass from the recesses of his oexter pouch, and after shaking out the débris of dust and cauff that had lodged therein, and blowing into the interior to insure its being perfectly clean, poured out till the whisky ran over the edge and over his fingers.

Meg wished them "muckle joy," primly kissed the glass, and offered it back.

"Oot wi' 't!" shouted both the sen's.

"Eh, my laddies; it wud gar me tine my feet a'thegither—I wud seen be o' my braid back amo' the gutters."

"Feint a fears o' ye," said the red-haired orra man. "Wheep it oot; yer garrin hiz loss time."

"Weel, aw 'm seer I wuss ye a' weel," said Meg, as she

demurely returned the glass to her lips and took it empty away.

"See, I kent ye wudna thraw yer face at it," said our energetic friend.

Then they made Meg promise, as first fit, to turn and walk back a space when she met the marriage party, which Meg assured them she would do. The sen's hurried on; and, after the next volley, they made a detour through a bit of red lan' to meet Mains of Yawal's men half-way, and give them their dram. The orra man did not do things by halves, and not a single wayfarer that they met but had the hospitalities of the bottle thrust on him or her; and in very few instances would less than emptying the glass, as in Meg Raffan's case, suffice. No wonder if the orra man should say, "We'll need-a see an' get a drap mair at the Kir'ton; aw never was naarer nicket i' my life nor wi' that creatur, Molie. It disna maitter, we're a hantle better wuntin 'im."

And thus they went on to Samie Pikshule's.

Meg Raffan pursued her onward way, passing the marriage party with many hilarious exclamations on both sides.

"Na, Hairry, but ye are a feel aul' breet," said Meg to our friend the wright, who was bringing up the rear in his own ponderous style, with a blooming young damsel by his side. "Aw thocht your daft days wus deen as weel's mine. Ye've leeft Mistress Muggart at hame, no. But bide ye still, gin I dinna tell 'er fat wye ye cairry on fan ye win awa' oot aboot amo' the young lasses!"

In point of fact, Meg had already made up her mind to be across next night, and have a hyse with Hairry on the subject generally, when she would, without the least trouble, get the full details of the wedding at first hand.

CHAPTER XL.

THE NEWS OF THE MARRIAGE.

“Ou ay, Hairry, man! This is a bonny wye o’ gyaun on! Dinna ye gar me troo’t ye wasna dancin’ the hielan’ walloch the streen. Fa wud ’a thocht ’t ye wud ’a been needin’ a file o’ an aul’ day to rest yer banes aifter the mairriage?”

Such was the form of salutation adopted by Meg Raffan as she entered the dwelling of Hairry Muggart early in the afternoon of the day after Patie’s wedding, and found Hairry stretched at full length on the decee.

“Deed, an’ ye may jist say ’t, Hennie,” answered Hairry Muggart’s wife. “Come awa’ ben an’ lean ye doon. Fat time, think ye, came he hame, noo?”

“Weel, but it’s a lang road atween this an’ the Broch, min’ ye,” said Hairry. “An’ ye cudna expeck fowk hame fae a mairriage afore it war weel gloam’t.”

“Weel gloam’t!” exclaimed Mrs. Muggart. “I’se jist haud my tongue, than. Better to ye speak o’ gray daylight i’ the mornin’.”

“Hoot, fye!” answered Hairry. “The souter’s lamp wasna oot at Smiddyward fan I cam’ in’o sicht o’ ’t fae the toll road.”

“Ou, weel-a-wat, ye’ve deen won’erfu’, Hairry,” said the henwife. “Ye hed been hame ere cock-craw at ony rate. An’ nae doot it wud be throu’ the aifterneen afore ye gat them made siccar an’ wan awa’ fae the Kir’ton.”

“Ay, an’ dennerin’ an’ ae thing or ither.”

“Hoot, noo; aw mith ‘a min’et upo’ that. An’ coorse the like o’ young Peter Birse wudna pit’s fowk aff wi’ nae-thing shabby. Hed they a set denner, said ye?”

“Weel, an they hedna, I’se haud my tongue. Aw b’lieve Samie’s wife was fell sweer to fash wi’ the kyeukin o’ ‘t. Jist fan they war i’ the deid thraw aboot it the tither day, I chanc’t to leuk in. ‘Weel, I’se pit it to you, Hairry,’ says she. ‘Fan Samie an’ me was mairriet there was a byowtifu’ brakfist set doon—sax-an’-therty blue-lippit plates (as mony plates as mony fowk) natly full’t o’ milk pottage wi’ a braw dossie of gweed broon succar i’ the middle o’ ilka dish, an’ as protty horn speens as ever Caird Young turn’t oot o’ ‘s caums lyin’ aside the plates, ready for the fowk to fa’ tee. Eh, but it was a bonny sicht; I min’ ‘t as weel’s gin it hed been fernyear. An’ the denner! fan my lucky deddy fell’t a hielan’ sheep, an’ ilka ane o’ the bucks cam’ there wi’ ‘s knife in ‘s pouch to cut an ha’ver the roast an’ boil’t, an’ han’ ‘t roun’ amo’ the pairty. *He* was a walthy up-throu’ fairmer, but fat need the like o’ that young loon gae sic len’ts?’ says she. ‘Ou, never ye min’, Mrs. Pikshule,’ says I, ‘gin there be a sheep a-gyaun, it’ll be hard gin ye dinna get a shank o’ ‘t—It’ll only be the borrowin’ o’ a muckle kail pot to gae o’ the tither en’ o’ yer rantle-tree.’”

“Na, there would be a richt denner—Nelly Pikshule wasna far wrang, it wudna be easy gettin’ knives an’ forks for sic a multiteed.”

“N—, weel, ye see, puckles o’ the young fowk wudna kent sair foo to mak’ eese o’ them, though they hed hed them. Samie ‘insel’ cuttit feckly, bit aifter bit, on a muckle ashet wi’ ‘s fir gullie, ‘t I pat an edge on till ‘im for the vera purpose; ithers o’ ‘s han’t it roun’; an’ they cam’ a braw speed, weel-a-wat, twa three o’ them files at the same plate, an’ feint a flee but their fingers—a tatie i’ the tae han’ an’ something to kitchie ‘t wi’ i’ the tither.”

“Eh, wasnin ‘t a pity that the bridegreem’s mither an’ ‘s sister wusna there to see the enterteenment,” said Meg, rather wickedly. “Weel, ye wud start for the Broch syne?”

R



Sami Tikshule.

"Aifter we hed gotten a dram; an' wuss't them luck. But jist as we wus settin' to the road, sic a reerie's gat up ye heard never i' yer born days! Aw'm seer an' there was ane sheetin' there was a score—wi' pistills an' guns o' a kin kin'. The young men hed been oot gi'ein draps o' drams; an' *they* hed their pistills, an' severals forbye; an' the tae side was sheetin, an' the tither sheetin back upo' them, till it was for a' the earth like a vera battle; an' syne they begood fungin' an' throwin' aul sheen, ding-dang, like a shoo'er o' hailstanes."

"Na, sirs; but ye hed been merry. Sic a pity that ye hedna meesic. Gin ye hed hed Piper Huljets at the heid o' ye, ye wud 'a been fairly in order."

"Hoot, Meg, fat are ye speakin' aboot? Isna Samie Pikhshule 'imsel' jist a prenciple han' at the pipes fan he likes? Aweel, it was arreeng't that Samie sud ride upon 's bit gray shaltie, an' play the pipes a' the road, a wee bittie afore—he's ill at gyaun, ye ken, an' eeswally rides upon a bit timmer kin' o' a saiddlie wi' an aul' saick in aneth 't. But aul' an' crazy though the beastie be, I'se asseer ye it was aweers o' foalin' Samie i' the gutters, pipes an a', fan a chap fires his pistill—crack!—roun' the nyeuk o' the hoose—a gryte, blunt shot, fair afore the shaltie's niz! Samie hed jist begun to blaw, an' ye cud 'a heard the drones gruntin' awa', fan the shaltie gya a swarve to the tae side, the blower skytit oot o' Samie's mou', an' he hed muckle adee to keep fae coupin owre 'imsel'."

"Na; but that wusna canny!" exclaimed both Hairry's auditors simultaneously.

"Samie was fell ill-pleas't, I can tell ye," continued Hairry Muggart. "'Seelence that shottin this moment!' says he, 'or I'll not play anoder stroke for no man livin'.'"

"Eh, but it wusna mowse," said Mrs. Muggart.

"Awat Samie was on 's majesty. 'Ye seerly don't k-now the danger o' fat ye're aboot,' says he. 'It's the merest chance i' the wordle that that shot didna rive my chanter wi' the reboon o' 't.' An' wi' that he thooms the chanter a' up an' doon, an' leuks at it wi' 's heid to the tae side. 'Ye

dinna seem to be awaar o' fat ye're aboot. I once got as gweed a stan' o' pipes as ony man ever tyeuk in's oxt'er clean connacht the vera same gate,' says Samie."

"Weel?" queried Meg.

"Hoot! Fa sud hin'er Samie to hae the pipes a' fine muntit wi' red an' blue ribbons. An' ov coorse it was naitral that he sud like to be ta'en some notice o'. Nae fear o' rivin the chanter. Weel, awa' we gaes wi' Samie o' the shaltie, noddle-noddlin aneth 'im, 's feet naar doon at the grun' an' the pipes scraichin like onything. For a wee filie the chaps keepit fell weel in order; jist gi'ein a bit 'hooch,' an' a caper o' a dance ahin Samie's they cud win at it for their pairtners; for ye see the muckle feck o' the young chaps hed lasses, an' wus gyaun airm-in-airm. But aw b'lieve ere we wan to the fit o' the Kirktoon rigs they war brak'ing oot an' at the sheetin again. Mains's chiels wus lowst gin that time, an' we wus nae seener clear o' the Kirktoon nor they war at it bleezin awa'; an' forbye guns, fat hed the nickums deen but pitten naar a pun' o' blastin' pooder in'o the bush o' an aul' cairt wheel, syne cul't it, an' laid it doon aneth the briggie at the fit o' the Clinkstyle road, wi' a match at it. Owre the briggie we gaes wi' Samie's pipes skirlin' at the heid o' 's, an' pistills crackin' awa' hyne back ahin, fan the terriblest platoon gaes aff, garrin the vera road shak' aneth oor feet!"

"Keep 's and guide 's!" said Meg. "Aw houp there wasna naebody hurtit."

"Ou, feint ane; only Samie's shaltie snappert an' pat 'im in a byous ill teen again. But I'm seer ye mitha heard the noise o' 's sheetin an' pipin', lat aleen the blast, naar three mile awa'."

"Weel, aw was jist comin' up i' the early gloamin' fae lockin' my bits o' doories, an' seein' that neen o' the creaturs wasna reestin the furth, fan aw heard a feerious lood rum'le an't hed been Whitsunday as it's Mairti'mas aw wud a raelly said it was thunner. But wi' that there comes up o' the win' a squallachin o' fowk by ordinar', an' the skirl o' the pipes abeen a'. *That* was the marriage—Heard you! Awat, aw heard ye!"

"Oh, but fan they wan geylies oot o' kent boun's they war vera quate—only it disna dee nae to be cheery at a mairriage, ye ken."

"An' fat time wan ye there?"

"Weel, it was gyaun upo' seyven o'clock."

"An' ye wud a' be yap aneuch gin than!"

"Nyod, I was freely hungry, ony wye. But awat there was a gran' tae wytin's. An aunt o' the bride's was there to welcome the fowk; a richt jellie wife in a close mutch, but unco braid spoken; aw'm thinkin' she maun be fae the coast side, i' the Collieston wan, or some wye. The tables wus jist heapit at ony rate; an' as mony yalla fish set doon as wud 'a full't a box barrow, onlee't."

"An' was Peter 'imsel' ony hearty, noo?"

"Wusnin 'e jist! Aw wuss ye hed seen 'im; an' Rob his breeder tee, fan the dancin' begood. It wudna dee to say't, ye ken, but Robbie hed been tastin' draps, as weel's some o' the lave, an' nae doot the gless o' punch't they gat o' the back o' their tae hed ta'en o' the loon; but an *he* didna tak' it oot o' twa three o' the lasses, forbye the aul' fishwife, 't was bobbin awa' anent 'im b' wye o' pairtner, wi' 'er han's in 'er sides an' the strings o' 'er mutch fleein' lowse. It's but a little placie, a kin' o' a but an' a ben, an' it wusna lang till it grew feerious het. I'se asseer ye dancin' wusna jeestie to them that try't it."

"Weel, Mistress Muggart, isna yer man a feel aul' breet to be cairryin on that gate amon' a puckle daft young fowk?"

"Deed is 'e, Hennie; but as the sayin' is, 'there's nae feel like an aul' feel.'"

"Ou, but ye wud 'a baith been blythe to be there, noo," said Hairry, "an' wud 'a danc't brawly gin ye hed been bidden."

"An' Samie ga'e ye the meesic?"

"Maist pairt. They got a haud o' a fiddle—there was a cheelie there 't cud play some—but the treble string brak, so that wudna dee. An' files, fan they were takin' a kin' o' breathin', he wud sowff a spring to twa three o' them; or

bess till 'imself' singin', wi' the fiddle, siclike as it was. Only Samie eeswally sat i' the tither en' to be oot o' their road, an' mak' mair room for the dancers, an' dirl't up the pipes wi' a fyow o' s that wusna carin' aboot the steer takin' a smoke aside 'im."

"Na, but ye hed been makin' yersel's richt comfortable. Hedna ye the sweetie wives?"

"Hoot ay; hoot ay; till they war forc't to gi'e them maet an' drink an' get them packit awa'—that was aboot ten o'clock. An' gin than," continued Hairry, "I was beginnin' to min' 't I hed a bit traivel afore me. Aw kent there was nae eese o' wytin for the young fowk to be company till 's, for they wud be seer to dance on for a file, an' than there wud lickly be a ploy i' the hin'er en' at the beddin' o' the new-marriet fowk; so Tam Meerison an' me forgaither't and crap awa' oot, sin'ry like, aifter sayin' good nicht to the bride in a quate wye—Peter was gey noisy gin that time, so we loot him be. We made's gin we hed been wuntin a gluff o' the caller air; but wi' that, fan ance we wus thereoot, we tyeuk the road hame thegither like gweed billies."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE MANSE SCHEME.

LIKE most events of a similar character, the marriage of Peter Birse junior served as a nine days' wonder to the people of Pyketillim—neither more nor less than that. Yet to the diplomatic mind of Mrs. Birse, the nine days had not expired, when it seemed good that means should be taken to certify the world of the fact that, despite the untowardness of recent events, the family of Clinkstyle had suffered neither in social status nor ecclesiastical character. It was not very long before this that that "big beggar man," the Rev. Thomas Guthrie, had perambulated Scotland in behalf of the Free Church Manse Scheme. In the course of his travels he had visited the Broch, and addressed a public meeting in the recently erected Free Kirk there. To that meeting Johnny Gibb, the souter, and the smith had tramped all the way from Pyketillim. They had listened with profound interest to the speaker's graphic story of parish kirks in the Highlands, where the scant handful of worshippers sat "like crows in the mist;" kirks through which at their fullest you might not merely fire a cannon ball, as some one had said, but "a cart-load of whins," without hurting anybody. Their indignation had burned keenly as there was set before them the picture of the minister's family forced to leave the comfortable manse, the pleasant home of many years, and go away, the mother and children to the distant town, while the persecuted minister himself was fain to take

up his abode in some miserable out-of-the-way hut that the laird had no power to keep him out of; a hut so miserable that summer rains and winter frosts and snows alike visited him through the roof and sides, till the poor man had almost, or altogether, sunk physically under the discomforts of his cheerless abode. After all this, set forth with mingled humour and pathos, while the deep, eloquent tones of the speaker told with hardly greater force on the ear than the gleam of his singularly expressive face did on the eye, it needed but the faintest indication in the way of direct appeal to make Johnny Gibb determine to put down his name as a subscriber of £5 to the Manse Fund. The subscriptions asked were payable in one year, or in five yearly instalments, and Johnny Gibb said, "Ou, we'se pay't aff at the nail; fa kens fat may happen ere five year come an' gae?"

It was not that Johnny made a boast of his subscription to the Manse Fund; far from it. As he knew that the souter and smith had other claims which emphatically forbade their following his example, he was at pains to make it appear to them that the sum he gave was in a manner a representative contribution from the Free Kirk in Pyketillim.

"Ye see we'll need a manse oorsel's," said Johnny. "Nae doot we'll get it a' back, an' mair wi' 't; an' still an' on there'll be a hantle adee till's a'. But fa cud hear the like o' yon onbeen roos't to the vera itmost? Oh, but he's a gran' speaker, Maister Guthrie; keepin' awa' fae's droll stories, he's like some o' the aul' ancient woorthies't we read o'; an' aw was vera glaid to hear 'im crackin wi' oor nain minaster, an' speerin about the kirk an' siclike."

Nevertheless, Johnny Gibb's subscription to the great Manse Scheme became the subject of talk among the Free Kirk folks in Pyketillim, and of laudatory talk, too; inasmuch as it was deemed a very liberal act, following on sundry other very liberal acts done by Johnny in the building of the kirk. Would any one else do the like? was the question asked by various people at various other people; and these latter doubted it, although they could give no conclusive reply.

A few days after the events recorded in the last two chapters, Miss Birse had raised the question with her mother, when Mrs. Birse took occasion to enlarge on the merits of Mr. MacCassock, and not less on the zealous services already rendered in the interest of the Free Kirk and that of the minister by the family at Clinkstyle. A manse Mr. MacCassock should have; but, while anybody might gain a certain *eclat* by a "supperscription till an Edinboro Fond," Mrs. Birse desired to give her valuable services in the shape of a social meeting to be held at Clinkstyle, in direct promotion of the local Manse Scheme.

The proposal was one that, on the whole, commended itself to Miss Birse. Both mother and daughter felt that the intended soiree, to give it the correct designation, could not fail, from its novelty and splendour, to excite attention, and dazzle the intellect of Pyketillim in a way that would tend, among other things, to wipe out all recollection of Patie's unhappy wedding.

The success of the soiree for inauguration of the proposal to erect a manse to the Rev. Mr. MacCassock was, on the whole, gratifying. The persons invited to attend it included Johnny Gibb, the souter, the smith, the merchan', and Sandy Peterkin, even. The mole-catcher was not asked. It was necessary to stop somewhere in the social scale, and Mrs. Birse resolved to draw the line just over the head of the mole-catcher.

"It's nae't we wud wuss to lichtlifie the creatur," said Mrs. Birse. "He's gweed aneuch in's nain place; an' sma' blame till 'im though he ken little aboot menners; fowk wud need to min' 't's upfeshin wasna vera lordlifu"—Willna we seek Hairry Muggart? Deed, we'll dee naething o' the kin', 'Liza. That's jist like ane o' yer fader's senseless projecks. He may be never so aul' a neebour, an' never so weel-will't to mak' 'imsel' eesefu' noo; but yer fader sud ken brawly that he hisna been gryte spyauck for him ony wye. He's jist been a rael oonstable man, though he has aye a fair tongue in's heid; an' *he's* been owre ready to be goy't owre wi' 'im—little won'er nor he was defate o' bein'

made an el'yer. The fowk kent owre weel fa it was't was proposin him; a man't hed made 'imsel' sae kenspeckle at the first ootset, an' syne for love o' the wordle turn't aside in sic a Judas-like menner."

In point of fact, Hairry Muggart had no claim to an invitation to the soiree on the ground of principle; and although Hairry, after he knew his fate in so far as his croft was concerned, had once more pronounced himself an adherent of the Free Kirk, it was a weak thing in Peter Birse to suggest that he should be invited. Peter, for his own part, would have felt Hairry's presence comforting, and he urged that his friend was a "gran' speaker." He was reminded that his chief care ought to be to improve the occasion in the way of re-establishing his own somewhat obscured ecclesiastical reputation.

The exclusion of Hairry Muggart was unlucky in this wise. Our old friend Dawvid Hadden, in returning from one of his business journeys in the late gloamin, and in excellent spirits, had observed the unusual brilliancy of the lights at Clinkstyle, and jalousin that something must be going on, Dawvid, as he passed the henwife's door, with a levity of tone meant to arouse sore recollections in the henwife's breast, but which he speedily had reason to repent, cried in—

"Fat's been adee wi' yer braw bohsom freen the wife o' Clinkstyle, the nicht ava?—Is she gettin' 'er dother marriet neist?"

"Dear be here, Dawvid, fat wud gar the like o' you speer a question o' that kin'?" said Meg Raffan.

"Ou," answered Dawvid, "ilka window o' their hoose is bleezin o' licht like a new gless boocet. There maun 'a been fowk there."

"Fowk there!" exclaimed Meg. "Weel, an' there hinna been that, ye're nae mark. Oh, Dawvid, Dawvid, it's a gweed thing for some o' 's to hae the markness o' nicht to fesh us hame files. Nae doot fan fowk meets in wi' company moderate things is exkeesable, but seerly it's gyaun owre the bows to foryet faur ye've been."

"Fat div ye mean?" said Dawvid, sharply; "I wasna there, I tell you, woman!"

"Hoot, noo," answered Meg, with provoking persistency, "I'm nae refleekin o' ye, Dawvid, man; mony ane plays waur mistak's, an' lies doon i' the gutters, or tynes their road a'thegither, comin' fae their freen's hoose."

"They're no freens o' mine; an' I'm not i' the haibit o' goin' there," said Dawvid, with rising dignity.

"Dinna be sayin' 't noo, Dawvid. Fa sud be inveetit to Clinkstyle but Maister Hadden, Sir Simon's awgent; fan fairms has to be mizzour't aff an' arreeng't for them 't 's to get them, fa can dee't but him? Wow, sirs—wasna there!"

"It's a lie, I tell ye!" roared Dawvid, and as he roared he marched abruptly off, shutting Meg Raffan's door with a snap.

"There maun hae been something or ither gyaun on, that's seer aneuch; the creatur *has* a drap in, or he wudna been tiggin wi' 's. But he's nae sae far on but he wud 'a notic't onything oot o' the ordinar' as he cam' bye." So mused Meg Raffan with herself. And Meg resolved to find out all about it on the morrow. Her first movement was to catch Hairry Muggart as he went past in the morning to his work, but all Hairry could tell was that there had been a "pairty—some kin' o' a kirk affair," whereupon Meg suggested that, all things considered, it was extreme ill-usage to Hairry to have failed to invite him; and Hairry hardly denied that he was disappointed, seeing he had some services to speak of, not the least considerable of which were the friendly lift he had endeavoured, against his better judgment, to give Peter Birse senior when he wanted to be made an elder; and the element of respectability thrown into the initial stage of Peter Birse junior's wedded life by his presence at his marriage. However, Hairry bore it with what resignation he could.

The same afternoon found Meg Raffan at the Kirktown shop. Her object this time was to gather news, not to distribute. It did not tend to promote success in this operation that Jock Will was in the shop along with Sandy Peterkin.

Had Sandy been alone, Meg felt confident she could have pumped him to the extent of his knowledge. With Jock Will present, Sandy was not accessible, and to pump Jock himself was a different matter. Jock was bland and civil, and his replies to Meg were candid and literal; but he could not be drawn out by leading questions, and as little would indirect thrusts in a bantering style serve to betray him into inadvertent admissions. Meg was somewhat nonplussed. She had got very little beyond the point to which Hairry had been able to advance her, and now, with her artillery almost exhausted, and Jock Will giving distinct indication that his time and patience also were exhausted, she felt the difficulty of hanging on longer.

"An' yer mither *is* keepin' middlin' stoot?" asked Meg, as she made to leave, with an emphasis indicative of special concern for Mrs. Will's state of health.

"Ou, she's fine," answered Jock, who was unaware of any cause that Meg had to doubt a previous assurance she had got on entering that Mrs. Will was "vera weel, thank ye."

"I thocht she was leukin warsh like fan I got a went o'er the tither ouk; but 't's so seldom 't we see ither noo-a-days."

Meg's drift thus far was obvious; and Jock Will could not do less than invite her in to see his mother. Once into the house, Meg lean't her doon for a crack. The merchant naturally had to return to his business, and so soon as he was gone the henwife came to the point at once, with the exclamation—

"Ou, they war tellin' 's there was a feerious interaistin meetin' about the kirk at Clinkstyle the tither nicht. An' it's nae ca'd about clypes, Mistress Wull, fan aw say 't yer nain sin was richt muckle thocht o', an' 'll seen be ane o' the heid deesters. Awat he needna wunt the maiden of Clinkstyle, an' he wulls to tak' 'er."

With this preface, Meg speedily got out of the unsuspecting widow every particular that she knew about the Clinkstyle manse meeting, and had asked several searching

questions bearing on the subject collaterally, to which Mrs. Will had been unable to give any answer whatever, when Jock, who had been scarcely ten minutes absent, looked in again.

“*Noo, merchan’*,” exclaimed Meg, with an air of perfect satisfaction, “ye’re fear’t that we sit owre lang gin ance we begin an’ clatter aboot oor nain transacks. But we’re aul’ acquaintances, min’ ye, an mony’s the cheenge’t we’ve seen sin’ we kent ither. I was jist o’ my fit fan ye cam’ in— Eh na, aw cudna bide langer; nae the nicht.”

That same gloamin, as Hairry Muggart plodded on his way homeward, after finishing his day’s work for Sir Simon, Meg Raffan, by the purest accident, turned up in his way, as he passed between the offices and the Lodge gate. Dawvid Hadden was walking alongside Hairry, newsin, the two being now, as Hairry put it, only “freens fae the teeth outwuth.” Hairry stopped at once to converse with Meg, and Dawvid made a sort of broken halt too, though his disposition evidently was to step on.

“Na, Dawvid,” said Meg, “ye gaed aff in a bung the streen fan I wuntit ye to tell’s aboot yer pairty at Clink-style. Fa wud’a thoct it o’ ye, noo?—a brow new hoose to be biggit for a manse till this lad MacCassock. Nae word o’ enterdickin them noo. Na, na; they’ll be gettin’ a stance for’t at the boddom o’ the Greens, gin they like, a’ throu’ fawvour, an’ haein a freen i’ the coort. That is cheeng’t wardles.”

Dawvid was taken aback by the audacity of Meg’s address; but in the presence of Hairry Muggart it was necessary to assume an air of *nonchalant* knowingness, and so Dawvid replied—

“Weel, Meg, ye’re the ae best han’ at gedderin a’ the claicks o’ the kwintra side’t I ken. Fat for sudna the man get a manse, gin’s fowk be willin’ to big it till ’im? That’s nae buzness o’ yours nor mine nedderin, seerly?”

“Keep’s an’ guide’s, Dawvid, ye’re dottlin a’thegither. Hinna we a’ seen fowk lang ere noo rinnin aboot preten’in’ to hae buzness, layin’ doon the law to a’ kin’ o’ kirk fowk, bun’ an’ Free alike?”

"Is Sir Simon raelly gi'ein a stance than?" asked Hairry, with a good deal of earnestness.

"Speer at Dawvid there," said Meg. "He's aye the fountain-heid o' buzness."

Dawvid looked somewhat embarrassed, when Hairry turned to him inquiringly; but recovering his composure and dignity, he said, with some asperity, "Gin ye be edder to gi'e heid to a' the idle jaw't ye hear, Hairry, or till imawgine that I've naething adee but reel aff to you aboot fat Sir Simon inten's to do; an' mair sae gin ye think that I wud dee onything o' the kin' withoot ony regaird to fa mith be in oor company at the time, ye maun be sair leeft to yersel', man; that's a' that I'se say aboot it."

"Ou, dinna be sae sanshach, Dawvid," said Meg, with great equanimity. "Hairry disna need me to tell 'im aboot the begeck that the guidwife o' Clinkstyle gat aboot the fairm o' 'Newtoon;' an' nedder o' 's wud coont 'er sic a saunt as to think that she cud a forgi'en you for that yet; forbye't it leet the haill kwintra ken foo kin' she was to be, leukin oot for some o' 'er neebours; only't they war rather farrer ben wi' the laird nor some fowk't we ken wus awaar o'. Hooever, she's managin' to coort the fawvour o' this minaister lad wi' makin' a fraise aboot a manse till 'im. An' fat think ye has she garr't Peter dee, but pit's han' i' the moggan, an' gi'e a five poun' note, nae to be ahin your freens, Gushetneuk an' the merchan'. An' the Miss is to be at it colleckin amo' them, to gi'e something a' owre heid. Jist bide ye still noo, an' gin ye dinna see a manse biggit ere this time towmon, an' the minaister lad waddit till the quine Birse or some ither ane, my name's nae Raffan.

Good part of this was certainly meant to be heard by Dawvid Hadden, but by the time the last sentence was uttered, Dawvid had gradually moved on till he was almost beyond earshot, when Meg, lowering her key, and in a considerably altered tone, said—

"Ye see we canna dee ither nor lat at 'im files; an' there's naething nettles Dawvid waur nor to be lickened wi' the wife o' Clinkstyle—*Was* he there? Ah-wa', Hairry.

As seen speak o' 'im bein' socht to dine wi' Sir Simon. Na, na; they've hed their sairin o' ither—an' chaep o' them. But awat ye loss't-na muckle yersel' o' nae bein' there. It's a gweed thing fan near-b'gyaunness an' gentility rins thegither; but aw 'm thinkin' Gushetneuk hedna miss't 'er for settin' the fowk 't she inveetit doon a' roun 'the parlour'—fat ither—like as mony born dummies. The wife 'ersel' was bleezin' in a mutch an' gum floo'ers, makin' oot the tae, in gryte style, an' the Miss sailin' aboot like a vera duchess amo' them. Aul' Peter hed been set on to mak' a speech; but did little, peer stock, but swat an' pech't, till some o' the lave tyeuk up the sticks. Hooever, a manse they're to hae; that's the short an' the lang o' 't.—Noo be toddlin, Hairry, for Dawvid's wytein ye oot at the yett there; nae doot he'll be sayin' we're speakin' aboot 'im—Gweed nicht."