

# SCOTCH READINGS.

SECOND SERIES.

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## *JOHNNY GOWDY'S FUNNY PLOY.*

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IF ye've half an hour to spare, I'll tell ye the story o' Johnny Gowdy's funny ploy ; for, altho' it's a grave story, it's at the same time a gey merry yin, and's weel worth the kennin'.

"There's a snell nicht, Mysie," said Robin Tamson, yarn merchant in the auld Candleriggs, as he presented his rubicund countenance and portly well-preserved form inside the narrow doorway of Johnny Gowdy's wee tobacco and snuff shop at the foot of the High Street of Glasgow, one chill wintry night some eighty years ago, when the law regarding debt and imprisonment was very different from what it now is.

"A rale nippin' December nicht, atweel," responded Mysie, wife of Johnny, "an' it strikes me we'll hae a fa' o' snaw before daylight the morn."

"'Deed, lass, I widna winder, an' if it brings a wee hue o' heat wi't, it's comin's welcome. Fill that, Mysie; ye ken my likin'." And the customer placed a silver snuff-box on the small counter to be substantially replenished.

"Licht broon an' macabaw, I suppose?" asked the tosh shopwife.

"Are ye speirin' my taste that way, Mysie? O'd, if Johnny himsel' was here he'd ken better, I'm thinkin'. He's as familiar wi' my taste in snuff as he is wi' the face o' the auld Tolbooth clock. What's cam' owre the loon the nicht?"

"Oo," replied the shopwife, proceeding to replenish Robin's box, "he's snug seated in the back kitchen there, readin' awa' at the papers, an' up to the tap o' his twa lugs in the French wars."

"Cry him ben, Mysie."

A moment after and Johnny "himsel'" was at the back of the counter, full of inquiring wonderment, the "papers" still in his hand, and his auld flint specks thrown up on his bald and shining brow. Johnny was a short, podgy body, of a somewhat humorsome turn, a sort of short comedy in home-spun hodden-grey, with a persistent disposition to close one eye when tickled—which was often—and laugh with the rest of his features.

"Robin Tamson!" he exclaimed, "is it possible ye're oot in sic a nose-nippin' nicht as this is! O'd, laird, I hope ye've left yer croighley hoast ahint ye at yer ain fire-en', for it's no for exposure on a frosty December nicht like this."

"Ye may weel say't, ye may weel say't, Johnny; but the mist's aye waur than the frost for a hoast, ye ken. It's the neb o' my nose that suffers the nicht; till I had a pinch o' Mysie's famous mixin', my nose was just as cauld when I first cam' into the shop here as the 'black boy' ye hae as a signbrod above yer door-heid. Here, Johnny, tak' a dip."

"Ay!" continued Robin, half to himself and half aloud, while Johnny helped himself at the box, Mysie, meantime, having moved off a bit to serve another customer—"there's waur than coughs an' cauld noses in this world," and receiving back the box from Johnny, he re-applied himself to its comforting contents so vigorously as to cause his concerned cronie to ask—

"What ava's the maitter—onything wrang, Robin?"

"A's wrang thegither, Johnny," replied Robin; "Deacon Spreull's gaun to bring my worldly a' to the hammer, an' sen' me to the Tolbooth. Hae ye an hour to spare wi' me up-bye in auld Jenny Middleton's Tontine taproom, Johnny?"

Johnny jerked his thumb in the direction of his spouse, Mysie, who was busy with a wife customer at the far end of the counter, and closing his left eye, suggested strong doubts on the subject.

"Is't no at a' possible, Johnny, think ye?"

"We'll try her, Robin, we'll try her," and then, turning to his spouse, he said—"Mysie, I'll need to gang oot a wee while, I fear."

"Noo, Johnny——!"

"It's a' richt, Mysie, it's a' richt an' ticht; no a drap, lass, believe me, no a drap 'll cross my craig this blessed nicht! The fack is," he continued, with a fluency of invention which would have made the fortune of a novelist, "the French have jist landed on a hill at the back o' Camlachie, the laird here tells me, an' they're likely to be in the toon playin' Tom an' Herry wi' a'thing the morn's mornin'."

"The Lord help us!" cried Mysie, unconsciously skailin' a haill skipfu' of snuff which she was in the act of serving to a customer. "O'd, I hope they'll no come doon the High Street."

"I hope no, Mysie," continued the facetious snuff-dealer; "but I'll hae to gang awa' roon to the Council Chambers along wi' Robin, an' see the Provost an' the Bailies a bit; for a' the toon burgesses are to be summoned there this nicht for the protection o' the city, an' we'll maist likely be served oot wi' a baton or a musket, to gie the bit puddock-eatin' French bodies a fell threshin' when they come."

"Eh, me, the Lord keep us!" sighed the terror-stricken Mysie. "D'ye think I should pit on the window-brods?"

"It wad be safer," said Johnny. "I wad almost bid ye

strike a compromise between war and business by pittin' on the 'brods' hauf an' hour earlier the nicht; say half-past nine instead o' ten o'clock; an', Mysie, dinna wait up for me. The foreign loons 'll no be here before ten o'clock the nicht, Robin—eh?"

"Oo, the shop windows are perfectly safe till ten o'clock the nicht; hoo lang they may remain sae's anither question," responded Robin, as the pair prepared to depart.

"See an' tak' care o' yer skin, Johnny, an' no be brocht hame to me on a shutter, wi' yae leg shot aff an' the tither only hauf on—mind ye!"

"Death or glory!" cried back the gallant snuff-dealer, and the twa bosom cronies thereafter passed out into the chill street, and turning the corner of the Cross steeple, they immediately sought the seclusion and comfortable cheer offered nightly at auld Jenny Middleton's snuggerie situated at the head of the once famous "Tontine Closs."

Arrived in Jenny Middleton's, there the twa cronies found Willie Campbell, a "grocer buddy," who own'd a thriving wee Jenny-a'-thing shop at the head of the auld Sautmarket, cornering the east end of the Trongate. Willie kept every-thing saleable in stock, and a few things more, but would answer to no trade designation but the very respectable one of "grocer," his auld faither, decent, worthy man, having been that before him. Willie was a gleg, eident, thrifty, honest sort of a body, inheriting a useful talent for making twopence out of a penny. Willie, therefore, had about equal credit in kirk, bank, and market, and being in addition a toon burgess, he was personally and in numerous other ways "nae sma' beer."

"An' hoo's his lairdship haudin'?" Willie asked, and Robin's answer was prompt and significant:—

"Deil ill, Willie, an', what's worse, no like to be better! Financially, I'm jist an auld cask in the han's o' a fell cooper, an' it's a hanging question whether they'll ca' the

bottom clean oot o' me or gie me anither chance an' 'girr' me up anew."

"Wha's the cooper, Robin?" significantly asked the Saut-market grocer.

"Deacon Spreull, o' the Stockwell."

"Then, the bottom's already oot o' ye, Robin," rejoined the other.

"That's what I'm fell fear'd o'," put in Johnny Gowdy, "the Deacon's mercy's like the North Pole, it's kin' o' cauld awee, an' tho' it's believed to exist it has never yet been yince seen."

"Ye've said it, Johnny, ye've jist said it," acceded the yarn merchant with a heavy sigh, "I'm this nicht, I fear, naething better than jist a gone cask. The grim auld Deacon has me completely in his power. I'm hopelessly involved—bonded, mortgaged, post obited, and, in fact, generally and completely water-logged; an' hoo to come oot o't, or hoo to escape the jile (gaol) is mair than I can even imagine, let alane soberly reason oot. Hech-howe! this is a crookit warld when the penny 'll no rin richt," and the troubled yarn merchant dived his fore-finger and thumb into the centre of his well-filled box, and liberally replenished his capacious nostrils, which had unusually fine accommodation for snuff.

"Gor, laird, an' are things owre bye in the Can'leriggs as bad as that?" asked the Sautmarket grocer, his hair rising on end; and presently adjusting his spectacles he looked interestedly at the yarn merchant, as if searching there for facial proof of the impending financial disaster.

"As bad, an' even waur, Willie," rejoined the all but broken man of yarn, "the Deacon maun hae his money immediately, or he threatens to roup me oot—stick an' stow."

"Weel," put in Johnny Gowdy, "it's e'en a black frost wi' ye if ye're to lippen to the tender mercies o' Deacon Spreull. The Deacon, it's baith weel an' wide ken'd, is a

hard creditor; he could 'whussle' a psalm tune an' skin a debtor alive. As faur as I can see, there's naething for ye, Robin, but to conveniently dee; that's the sair logic o' the position," and the adviser closed his left eye, and laughed with the lee side of his face.

"Dee!" exclaimed both the yarn merchant and the Saut-market grocer in a single breath.

"Ay dee, Robin; to escape the Deacon's grup ye'll be obleeged to e'en dee."

"Dee at just sixty!" retorted the man of yarn, "fack no, I'll no try that trick yet; I'm e'en sixty, as I say, but, according to Scripture, I've ten years guid to the fore yet; an', mair than that," he continued, "I've a solid kist here (tapping his stout chest) an' a bit o' soond clock-wark here (touching his deeply-furrowed brow) which should gi'e me a firm haud o' life till eighty guid. I'll dee to plesure neither deil nor deacon!"

"Hoots man! ye dinna unnerstan' me, Robin. There's only yae way o' being born, but there's fifty ways o' gettin' to heaven, an' still mair ways o' leavin' this worl'. To illustrate my meaning, a man that's sair pressed an' pitten tae can conveniently dee by proxy, or by hoaxy, ye unnerstan'."

"By proxy, or by hoaxy!" interjected the perplexed man of yarn.

"Baith ways," persisted the snuff dealer, "break in business the morn, Robin, dee suddenly the next day, an' come to life again in Greenock the week after. Willie there, an' mysel', 'ill see that ye're decently confined an' interred; an' if ye're anxious for posthumous fame, we can e'en pit up a bit canny stane owre ye, an' tell as big a lee about yer piety as ithers. Listen:—

#### HERE LIES

ROBIN TAMSON, Yarn-merchant in the auld Can'leriggs o' Glasgow, who departed this weary sojourn thro' a wicked

wilderness o' thorns, to enter a better life—at Greenock! Much respected; deeply regretted, etc., etc.

His yarn is broke : his hank is spun :  
His fecht is focht : his race is run !”

“Weel, laird,” resumed the ingenious snuff-dealer, “are ye gaun to tak' my grave advice—an' dee to escape the jile?”

“I'm a corp before this day week, Johnny, I may as weel dee in my bed as be killed on the street by the French—eh,” laughingly rejoined the man of yarn.

So, it was there an' then definitely fixed and arranged that Robin Tamson, toon burgess and yarn merchant, in the Candleriggs, should, in view of extreme possibilities, die an' be buried by “hoax-y,” as had been humorously suggested, on an agreed day of that week, and should, by some spiritualistic transmutation, come to life again in Greenock the week following and so end his years in peace and financial comfort. Thereafter the three friends separated.

Things had gone all right thus far, when, in the course of the next afternoon, a rap-tap-tap came to the yarn merchant's door, which was promptly answered.

“Weel, mistress,” said Johnny Gowdy to the deceased yarn merchant's widowed spouse, as he and Willie Campbell stood together at the door of the bereaved house; “hoo are ye stannin' yer sair heart-trial?” and half-closing his left eye, Johnny threatened laughter with the remainder of his face, a result which the gravity of the situation alone forbade.

“Oo, just come yer wa's in; I'm haudin' fairly. I hope I see ye baith weel?”

“Oh, Peter Dumdick!” merrily put in Willie Campbell, “we're baith thrivin' like spring cabbages—fresh-lookin' an' overflowin' wi' usefu' blossom,” an' there an' then the worthy pair passed gravely inside.

“An' hoo's the corp, Betty?” resumed the snuff-dealer, as the pair followed the mistress of the house upstairs. “I was speirin' after the corp, Betty; ye're absent a wee.”

"Oo, the healthiest corp I ever saw or heard tell o'," truthfully answered the "widow," "put owre a pund o' pope's eye steak to its dinner the day, was unco sair on the toddy bowl, an's jist fell mad for snuff; a thrivin' halesome corp atweel."

"Hillo, Johnny, is this yersel'?" shouted the corpse from the room above. "I ken the sough o' yer hamely voice, an' that o' auld Willie Campbell, tae! Come awa', freens! come awa'! Ye're richt welcome here," and the corpse, with its feet in warm slippers, a pair of horn "specks" across its rubicund nose, an' a snuff-box in its han', heartily invited its late bosom cronies to tak' a dip oot o' its box.

"An' what about the ither world, Robin; is the place ocht better than this?" facetiously inquired the snuff-dealer.

"Weel, Johnny, my experience that way is but limited yet; I've never got heicher up than this bit attic bed-room. But atween the three o' us, I wad bate on the comforts o' the Gleska Can'leriggs against a' the worlds I've yet seen or heard tell o', atween this and the Jamaicas. 'Ye see, Johnny," he humorously added, "a body can aye get a grup o' yarn in the auld Can'leriggs o' Gleska, an' yarn's a healthy reality, altho' I never cam' across the word in Scriptur'."

"Weel," rejoined the snuff-dealer, "ye'se likely to ken mair about the ither world before the morn's mornin', Robin; we mean to coffin ye the night."

"Hoot-toot-toot!" laughed the deceased man of yarn, "ye're carryin' the joke owre faur, lads."

"It's necessary, Robin," put in the Sautmarket grocer, "absolutely necessary."

"What!" exclaimed the horrified man of yarn.

"Absolutely necessary, as Willie has jist said," insisted the snuff-dealer. "In strict truth, there's nae ither way oot o' the hole; for the Deacon, we've jist learned, hearing o' yer sudden demise, has got decree against yer body corporate, an' has gi'en lang Tam Sinclair, the ill loon, an' his wee man, Jock

Cluggie, instructions to come here the nicht an' arrest yer corp!"

"What!" again exclaimed the deceased man of yarn, and, unable to articulate more, he sat back in his cushioned arm-chair for several moments, the picture of blank astonishment and collapsed nerves.

"Arrest my guidman's corp!" screamed his faithful "widow," who had followed the twa cronies into her husband's bed-room, "before that happens there'll be twa corps in the room—lang Tam Sinclair being yin o' them!" and Mrs. Tamson picked up a fireside poker which was lying handy, and suggestively flourished it in mid-air.

"Stop! stop!" put in the inventive snuff-dealer, "the easiest way's aye the best; we'll try an' sort the thing amang oorsel's, and then let chance an' the deil guide the rest. There's aye twa sides to a question—a richt side an' a wrang yin; and the richt side in this case, Robin, is jist to feenish the grim joke by yer lairdship gettin' inside the kist (coffin), preparatory to the beagle's arrival. The 'box' 'll be here by an' by—it's trysted—an' I fear so will the beagles. We'll need to work the ploy confidentially amang han's; a' in the hoose are in the secret, I suppose?"

The man of yarn nodded dubious affirmation, his mouth still agape.

"Weel," continued the ingenious snuff-dealer, "consent ye to the kistin' (coffining), Robin, an' if lang Tam Sinclair and his dumpy shadow, 'Cluggie' Jock, insist upon sittin' up wi' yer corp a' nicht, yae sepulchral grunt frae ye, or the mere liftin' o' a spectral han' against the can'le licht, winna fail to skail the beagles, an' set yer pointed body free."

"But the 'kistin'' o' me, Johnny," objected the deceased man of yarn, "that's the gruesome part o't."

"Toots, Robin; ye'll be as snug as the snuff in yer box there. What's a coffin after a', but jist a bit o' plain clean fir, newly aff Johnny Wright's plane, an' wi' a bit cleadin' o'

black claith nail't roun't for deecency's sake. The case is gruesome a wee, Robin, there's no' a doot o't; but reject it, an' what's the consequences? The deacon 'll pit ye in a stane coffin in the Tolbooth prison-house, an' my certie, that wad be waur than the widden yin."

"That seems to be the only cauld alternative, Johnny," gravely assented the broken merchant.

At this juncture, the deceased man of yarn's "weeping widow," who had shortly left the room, returned thither with a supply of hot toddy, which she placed on the table, and said—

"Ye'll be nane the waur o' a heart-warmin' tumbler o' toddy this freezin' nicht, frien's, the mair sae, that the grim subject ye've in han's aboot as cauld as the air ootside."

The "dram" was indeed a welcome visitant, much more so, as the deceased laird remarked, than either lang Tam Sinclair or the trysted "kist." But they had no more than got richtly "placed" at it, when in the middle of a further elucidation of Johnny Gowdy's comic "plot," a loud knocking was heard at the front door outside. In ten seconds Susan Plooks, the more than middle-aged house domestic, suddenly thrust her head inside the room, exclaiming—

"Guid save's! there's a shirra offisher, an' a wee man wi' cluggs on at the door. The lang chiel has a bit o' paper in his han', an' talks o' 'law,' an' the 'Tolbooth.' I tried to keep him oot; but the lang rascal wad be in, an' the wee yin wasna the eicht pairt o' an inch behint him."

"What!" yelled the deceased man of yarn, "are the beagles in the hoose then, Susan?"

"Oh, sir, I cood nae keep them oot; they're stannin' in the lobby waitin' to 'pin the corp' they say; what's yer orders?"

"Intae yer bed, Robin, instantly," exclaimed the snuff-dealer, "there's no a moment to lose!"

"Mattie," said the deceased laird, addressing his spouse,

“gang ye doon an’ keep the loons in play a wee while I get under the blankets, an’—oot o’ this weary wilderness o’ thorns!”

“Yes, Robin,” said his spouse, “but noo that the enemy’s inside the castle gates, there’s naething left us, I fear, but honourable capitulation; but I’ll insist on guid terms, tak’ ye nae fear.”

Obviously there was now no way of escape save in the carrying through of the grim joke, and to this doubtful end the inmates of the house practically set themselves, and that, too, with an energy and determination which promised high success. The man of yarn was without loss of time denuded of his vitality, and placed in bed as stiff as a poker, the room cleared of the table “cheer,” and the candles blawn oot and removed. Thereafter, the twa cronies betook themselves to another room to await the hazardous issue, which, anticipatory of further results was now practically in the hands of the mistress of the house and her domestic servant and confidant, Susan Plooks, a strong, muscular wench. In a very short time Mattie, supported by her confidential domestic, Susan, was down stairs, and boldly confronting the two beagles.

“Weel, gentlemen, what is’t ye want? what’s yer business here at this sair time?”

“Oh, it’s legal business we’re after, mistress—legal business,” Lang Tam replied. “I’m certainly sorry a bit to disturb yer hoose at this trying time, but I have a warrant here (pulling out a piece of paper) to arrest the corpse of—eh—ch—(consulting the paper) Robert Thomson, late yarn merchant in the Candleriggs, an’ wi’ the trusty help o’ my man, Jock, here, I’ll dae’t, mistress, beyond let or hindrance; an’ let wha likes oppose me, it’ll be at their ain personal risk, for my faith, Jock an’ I will soon lay their feet fast in the auld Tolbooth prison owre-bye.”

“Um!” grunted Jock, suddenly bringing down one of his cluggs on the floor with an alarming thump, and

instantly he stuck his two thumbs into the two armpits of his rather loose-fitting waistcoat, and spreading out his large hands, threw himself into an attitude closely resembling the first position in dancing. Now, Jock was the physical opposite of his master; for while Tam was lang and thin, Jock was wee and stout. Jock, otherwise, was a graphic Scotch study to such as could enjoy the rich humour of odd personal character and dress. He was "heid-theekit" with a Kilmarnock bonnet of great circular dimensions, and which was a sort of family heirloom, having originally been owned and worn by Jock's father—a Gleska carter. He was also stoutly "foundationed" with a pair of enormous cluggs, which had gained him the expressive nickname of Cluggie Jock, while the face, beneath his bonnet, had the consistency and very much the appearance of a well-boiled bread pudding. Regarding Jock's master, Tam Sinclair, he was a tall thin pike of a man, with a cadaverous countenance and a pair of small grey eyes set under bushy heavy eyebrows of sinister aspect. Tam had the sight of only one eye, having, it was said, caught a fatal inflammation in the other by looking through "keyholes" in the ardent pursuit of his peculiar vocation.

"Where is your husband's body, madam?" authoritatively demanded Sinclair, "I must know, and at once!"

"Dinna tell the loons whaur, for their impidence, mistress; I wad daur them first; at the warst it's but twa to twa," and Susan made the disheloot fly aloft in the face of Jock, who jumped in his cluggs with anger, and once more threateningly shook the legal "snitchers" at her, grinning angry defiance.

"Let me 'tie' that woman's hands, Sinclair," shouted Jock, no longer able to hold his temper, "she's a wild 'assault and battery' jaud!"

"A what?" yelled the stung domestic, "ye'd ca' me a saut and peppery jaud, wad ye! O'd, my wee man, I'll saut

and pepper ye!" and flying at Jock, she seized him by the collar, and most vigorously clooted his chafts with her unromantic weapon of defence—the "wat dish-cloot."

Instantly there was a mixed and general scuffle, with nervous screamings and loud cries for help, which hurriedly brought out the twa cronies from their place of hiding. The sight that there presented itself was highly ludicrous and amusing. In the centre of the lobby Jock and the valiant domestic were in hard grips, and Susan, who had the best end of the stick, was energetically "clashin' awa'" at poor Jock's pudding cheeks, who was in turn making violent efforts to put her determined wrists within his dreaded snitchers. At the far end of the lobby, near the door, the house dog, a large mastiff was successfully keeping Lang Tam at bay in a corner—Tam excitedly "fechtin'" the furious brute back with his stick and yelling to all and sundry to "cry the desperate britt aff!" In the rescue of Sinclair from the dog, Jock himself had been fatally neglected, and on looking round they found poor "Cluggie" completely *hors-de-combat*—Susan, the valiant domestic, having laid him across her massive knees in real nursery fashion, while she was heartily belabouring him with the awful "dishcloot" on that particular part of the human body where, according to Lord Bacon, a kick hurts honour very much.

"Come, come, gentlemen," began the snuff-dealer in a mollifying tone of voice, "this is a most unseemly squabble, an' a corp in the hoose!"

"I am here to arrest that same corpse!" rejoined Sinclair, reproducing his warrant.

"Oh, ye'll get it, an' welcome," replied the other; "but for decency's sake, gentlemen, please to consider the feelings of the bereaved widow."

Hearing this, Mattie, the bereaved widow, lifted her

apron to her face and wiped away a rebellious tear. Susan, the valiant domestic, would very probably have followed suit with the "dishcloth," but remembering to what an ignominious use it had but a moment before been put in the fundamental threshin' of Cluggie Jock, she loftily abstained from its use.

"Regarding that," said Sinclair, "I must see the corpse, so that I may know it's in the house."

"Ye'll certainly see the body, Mr. Sinclair," said the bereaved widow; "but ye'll maybe exkase my presence. Mr. Gowdy 'ill show ye Robin's corp," and with the corner of her apron she wiped away a second rebellious tear.

"This way, gentlemen," said Johnny Gowdy, and leading the way up, he entered the room, which was but dimly lighted by a single halfpenny "dip," and drawing aside the curtains he showed the deceased laird lying dimly discovered, with an ashen countenance (well rubbed with flour) and an expression of repose on his honest countenance, which plainly proclaimed him to be now at peace with all men, and especially with—Deacon Spruell! He then quickly retired, leaving the two beagles alone in the room.

"Weel, Jock, my man," began Sinclair, "here we at length are, there's the corpse, an' neither deil nor bogle 'ill lift it frae my sicht this night. Did ye hear what auld Tamson dee'd o', Jock?" directing his thumb over his left shoulder in the direction of the corpse.

"I didna jist hear," answered Jock, "death's been sae fell busy this winter that folk's no noticin' every case about doors. There's a poo'er o' deaths takin' place in the toon enoo; folk are deein' noo that never dee'd afore. Oh, it's nae lauchin' maitter to some folks, I can tell ye. Eh, but that's a wild win' that's blawin' ootside. Did ye hear that 'slash tae' that the muckle airn gate at the closs-mooth gaed the noo?"

"Are ye frichtet for the corpse, Jock, or what?"

"Me frichtet! no a bit; there's a big lump o' the man here," and Jock valiantly struck his breast.

"Well, Jock, we'll gang below; the kitchen 'ill be a heap mair comfortable than this chilly room; but bring doon the bottle and the glasses wi' ye."

"Yes, I'll—I'll—I'll bring the bottle alang wi' me, if ye but tarry a second."

"Follow up then, quick," Sinclair shouted back from the landing, carrying the lantern before him to save his footing.

"Hy! hy! hy!" yelled Jock, ramping his cluggs on the floor as loudly as he could, "come back, Tammas, an' no leave me to fecht my way oot o' a dark room, wi' naething hamelier than a cauld corp in't! Hy, Tammas, whaur are ye?"

"At the stair-fit, Jock; what are ye waitin' on?" cried back Sinclair, briskly pushing his way towards the kitchen.

"Lordsake, if the lang loon hasna left me to graip my way oot! My lamp awa,' tae, an' my bonnet to look for! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

To simple-minded and credulous "Cluggie" the situation, comic in one view of it, was tragic in the extreme. The room was dark, the hour near midnight when ghosts are most abroad, the rising wind was moaning around the house like an unquiet spirit, and he—Jock—was alone in the room with a corpse! Cautiously, and with bated breath and quickened pulse, he stepped about, searching for his lost bonnet. Once, nay twice! he thought he heard a groan, as if coming from the bottom of some damp underground cellar; a sort of indescribable sound, the expression, obviously, of a being in pain. He started back in alarm.

"L—Lord—sake!" he ejaculated, his knees beginning to sink under him, "talk about nice quate corpses? There's a lot o' lowse mistakes in the world! S—S—Sinclair!!" he shouted aloud, but the only response he heard was the wind

outside shaking the old casements and slamming with weird power the big iron gate at the "closs-mouth." His overwhelming inspiration was to cut the spot at once, but then—his lost bonnet! There would have been a fine handle for Sinclair to joke with! His bonnet was not much in itself, although an heirloom in the family; but his courage, nay his very character as a man, and his reputation as a sheriff-officer's assistant was at stake! He couldn't, wouldn't run! The bonnet must be recovered, and his courage established at whatever cost! He looked about once more. Ah! yonder it was! a dark lump, as seen in the dark, at the end of a long white something. Under the mutual inspiration of native courage and raw whisky Jock had for the moment either forgotten or become heedless of the presence of the corpse. So he stepped hastily towards the object, and seized—the dead man's cowl!

"Wha's that!!!" said a low, deep, sepulchral voice, obviously that of the confined corpse, "wha's that!"

"Ah!—ah!!—ah!!!" yelled the terror-smitten Jock, with chops fallen widely apart, and wheeling about, he dashed blindly out of the spirit-haunted room, reaching the stair-foot in three splendid leaps, where he lay for some moments yelling—"Murder! ghosts! help, Sinclair! help!" In a couple of seconds Cluggie's frantic cries for help brought the astonished Sinclair to the stairfoot.

"Oh, the Lord help us, Sinclair! what a fright I got! D'ye ken, the corp spoke to me!"

"Ye don't mean it, Jock?" said Sinclair.

"I'm tellin' you its as true's yer stamin' there," earnestly replied Jock, his teeth rattling in his heid like dice in a box.

"Fudge, fudge, that'll no dae, Jock," rejoined Sinclair. "The dram's been makin' ye baith hear an see dooble this nicht."

"Dooble or single, Sinclair. I only wish I saw the auld

tyke's corp daicently at rest in the Ramshorn kirkyard."

Ah! there it was again! a noise as of someone walking about in the dead man's shoes overhead!

"There's dootless somebody in the hoose, Jock," said Sinclair, getitng out a short baton emblematic of both authority and defence.

"There's nae doot o' that, Tammas; it's either the corp or its unlaid ghost. Tak' my advice, Sinclair, and fling the job up."

"Never!" rejoined Sinclair, valiant to outward appearance, but tremblingly alive to the peculiar eeriness, not to say horror of the situation. "Fling the job up! an' a' because a starving cat has got intae the hoose an's playin' Herry wi' the collops in the pantry. Never! my reputation, Jock, my reputation!"

"Life before reputation ony day, Sinclair," sincerely said Jock. "I'm for hame oot o' this onyway."

"What! desert the post o' duty, Jock? Never! Come, sir, lift up your lamp, an' follow me! I command ye!"

"Gang on then, Sinclair, in the name o' Beelzebub! Gang on an' I'll—I'll—I'll follow!"

Reaching the foot of the staircase, Sinclair, who was most valiant in leading the van, suddenly stopped short, and turning to his terrified man, Jock, he ordered him to ascend the staircase first.

"Na, na, Sinclair, that cock 'ill no fecht. Ye're the captain o' the company; gang ye up first, an' I'll follow."

"What! frightened, Jock? insubordination? terrification? not possible?"

"Faith ay, Sinclair, I'm no gaun to recklessly risk my nerves, no to say my very life, for eighteenpence; I'll drap the barrow first."

"Coward! follow me!" and therewith, they began to ascend the stair leading to the deceased merchant's bed-room.

At this critical moment, the corpse was seen by both in the act of descending the staircase in its "deid-shirt."

"Good Lord, deliver us?" yelled Jock and, flinging down his lantern, he precipitately fled the spot, reaching the stair-foot in a sort of rolled-up lump.

Nor was the boastful Sinclair long behind him. Endorsing his assistant's active proposition, he promptly seconded it, without even the thought of proposing an amendment.

"Is't hame or the Tolbooth?" hurriedly asked Jock as he gathered together his mixed up limbs and senses.

"The Tolbooth, in the name o' the police!" as quickly answered Sinclair.

In a trice the pair were once more on their lost feet, and were just on the point of making a satisfactory *exit*, when the large mastiff—which had been sleeping below the kitchen bed—rushed to the door, wakened by the tumult, and judging the escaping pair as robbers, the dog made a fierce seizure of Jock's hindquarters tearing away in one large mouthful the whole "seat" of his breeches, their owner being just saved from serious bodily injury by the prompt snap of the closing door.

"Jock," said Sinclair, when the pair had gained the safety of the Candleriggs plainstones, "it's a mercy ye got yer threshin' frae big Shusie before that thief o' a dowg bit the hinner en' oot o' yer breeches, eh?"

"Um!" snarled Jock, "the dowg's the warst o't."

Sinclair and his man, Jock, never completely recovered the "fricht" they got that night, and they were both stout believers in resurrected ghosts till death.

As for Robin Tamson, he never came to life again in—Glasgow. But an awfu' close likeness to the deceased man o' yarn was for years afterwards in business co-partnership with a son of his in Greenock in the wholesale sugar way, and if ye but "heard the breath" of auld Johnny Gowdy's grandson on the subject, owre a toddy-dram, as I

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have often heard, he could maybe tell ye a thing or twa on the matter that wad afford ye anither laugh.

Regarding Jock's "rived awa'" breeches, the "breach," I have heard was never legally repaired; although Jock, I understand, filed a case against somebody in connection therewith in the Camlachie Court o' Session. The case, like the damaged bit in Jock's breeks, was never satisfactorily closed.

Jock, however, pretty successfully mended matters by marrying a widow, getting thereby a new pair o' auld breeks, formerly the property o' her late guidman. The widow's former "man" having been a fine fat fodgel Rug'len Bailie in his day, wi' a wame like a military drum, the breeks, as ye may guess, were a fine, lowse, comfortable fit, Jock wore them till his dying day, and left them as a legacy to his widow, recommending them as a useful marriage present to her third man.