



REV. THOMAS HARDY, D.D.

Frontispiece

Preacher, Pastor, Poet /

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HARDY, D.D.

MINISTER OF FOULIS WESTER, PERTHSHIRE, 1852-1910

WITH FOREWORD BY HIS DAUGHTER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF FOULIS WESTER
AND ALL AT HOME OR ABROAD
INTERESTED IN THE PARISH AND ITS DEAR OLD MINISTER
THESE SELECTIONS "OUT OF HIS TREASURE"
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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FOREWORD

THE REV. THOMAS HARDY, D.D.,
MINISTER OF FOULIS WESTER, 1852-1910

BY HIS DAUGHTER

I HAVE been asked by Mr. Kyd, the editor of this book, to write a short account of my father's earlier years. In doing so I should like, in my own name and that of the other members of the family, to thank Mr. Kyd most gratefully for all the trouble he has taken in making this collection, and for the kindly thought which prompted him to undertake the task. To the people of Foulis, this book will always add a pleasant interest to Mr. Kyd's short sojourn among them.

My father was the eldest son of Thomas Hardy, Esq., of Charlesfield, F.R.C.S., and the grandson of Dr. Thomas Hardy of Navity, Fifeshire, minister first of Ballingry, afterwards of the High Church, Edinburgh; and the great-grandson of the Rev. Henry Hardy, minister of the first charge of Culross. Dr. Hardy of Navity was a celebrated man in his day. He was Professor of Church History in Edinburgh University, and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1793. He was one of the first promoters of the Society for the

Benefit of the Sons of the Clergy, and he published several sermons and pamphlets. He had some poetic talent, too, and is thought to have assisted greatly his friends, Logan and Blair, in the production of several of the paraphrases.¹ Although his name is not mentioned in this connection, we, as children, were always told he was the author of the 27th Paraphrase which begins—

Thus speaks the high and lofty one.

and of the 28th—

Attend and mark the solemn fast
Which to the Lord is dear.

His wife was Agnes Young, daughter of the minister of Hutton and Corrie, Dumfriesshire. Mr. Young's wife, Agnes Orr, could trace an unbroken ministerial descent back to the Rev. Alexander Orr, minister of Beith in the Covenanting times, who was imprisoned in the Greyfriars' Churchyard for holding up his child for baptism at a conventicle. My father, therefore, though not a son of the Manse, came of a very old ecclesiastical stock. In my mother's family there was the same hereditary connection with the Church of Scotland. She was a daughter of the Rev. William Liston, minister of the parish of Redgorton, Perthshire, whose grandfather and father were successively ministers of Aberdour from 1723 to 1796, the latter being Moderator of the Assembly in 1787. Before passing from this little bit of family history, I should mention my father's mother, Robina Forrester, daughter of the Treasurer of the Bank of Scotland. She was well known to the older generations

¹ A reference to Dr. Hew Scott's *Fasti* makes it clear that Dr. Hardy's happy facetiousness was in part also an inheritance from his paternal grandfather. A contemporary remarks, "Dr. Hardy's humour was always a kindly humour."—EDITOR.



MRS. HARDY

of his parishioners, as a typical Scottish gentlewoman of the old school. And one other member of the family must be referred to here—his youngest sister, Robina, the gifted authoress of *Jock Halliday*, *Whin Bloom*, and other books.

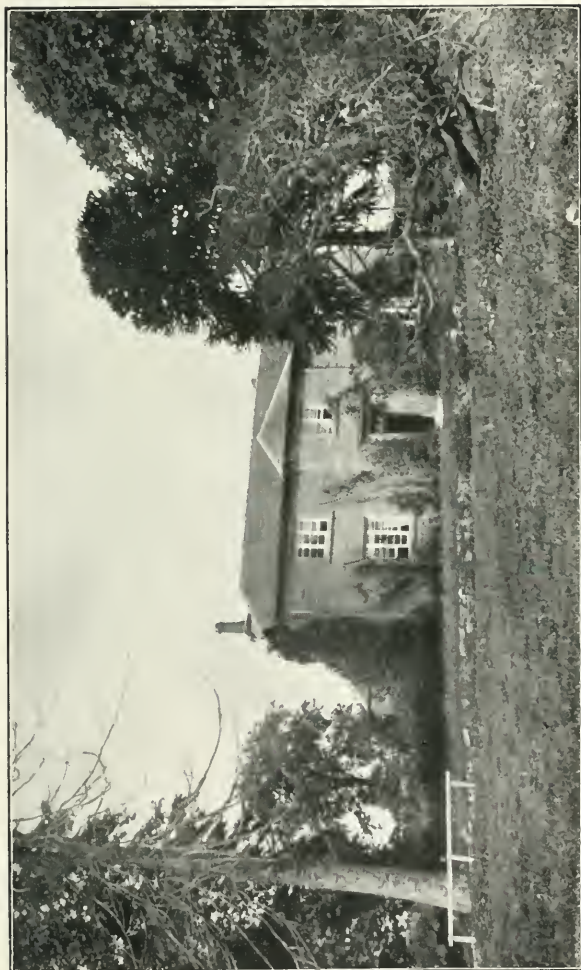
My father was born at Duke Street, Edinburgh, in December 1823, and was educated at the High School and University of that city, proceeding afterwards to Aberdeen for his Divinity course. During his summer¹ terms there he acted as tutor in the family of Sir Robert Abercromby of Forglen, and subsequently was student-missionary under Dr. MacIntosh of the East Church of Aberdeen. After being licensed by the Presbytery of Aberdeen, he became assistant to Dr. Clark of Dunoon, having charge of the Church at Kilmun, then a quiet, Highland village on the shore of the Holy Loch. In 1851 he was ordained by the Presbytery of Hamilton to the newly erected charge of Wishaw. Less than a year afterwards, in March 1852, he was presented to Foulis Wester, in the Presbytery of Auchterarder, by the Hon. Mrs. Moray Stirling of Abercairny—the parish which he has served so faithfully for fifty-eight and a half years.

Few in that parish—or out of it—can remember it as it was in 1852, but one loves to reconstruct its salient features from the vivid memory-pictures he so often drew of it. For he was one of those to whom the outward features of the country-side—the braes, the burns, the dens, the woods were as familiar and almost as dear as human faces. It lies, that quiet country parish, deep in the green and fertile heart of the fairest shire in Scotland, its most strongly marked characteristic the long range of

¹ At that time Aberdeen gave a student special opportunity of time for private work by its "Five Partial Sessions" system.—EDITOR.

southward sloping "braes," intersected every here and there by the wooded "dens" of hill burns coming gaily down from the moorland above to the valley of the sluggish Pow, which forms the southern boundary of the parish. The classic Almond now marks the northern limit, but in those days the parish extended much farther north, embracing portions of Amulree and Logiealmond. In 1852 the population was much larger. Many a cheery little homestead has been swept away or merged in a larger farm. The plough has gone over the site of many a hamlet, leaving only some old ash trees to mark the spot. But the old minister dearly loved to repeat the familiar names of Castleton or Kingcam, and to recall the busy, happy households he remembered there. Foulis itself lies in a shallow hollow on the hillside, almost hidden from the high road, a mere handful of cottages now, but then a thriving village of weavers and riddle-makers, with a great annual feeing market, known throughout all Perthshire, held on the feast day of "Beatus Beanus" the patron saint of the parish, whose memory lingers in the place-name of Bannochy. In the centre of the village is the "lang, white kirk," surrounded by its quaint tombstones and guarded by its Saxon arched gateway. In the square is the fine old Celtic Cross and, away against the western skyline, are the "Stannin' Stanes" and the "Lysin' Stanes." And just out of sight of the village, looking out across the fair vale of Strathearn to the peaceful Ochils lies the Manse, where Dr. Hardy spent his long ministry of close on sixty years.

The selections made in this book give some little idea of his pulpit work—an imperfect idea, for in reading



FOULIS WESTFER MANSE

the printed sermons one loses the careful *leading up* to the subject which was conveyed in the "Preliminary Exercises." The *lessons*, the psalms and hymns were always chosen by him with a view to their connection with the sermon. And no small part of the charm of a service in the kirk of Foulis was the exquisite reading of the chapters. It often delighted the taste of cultured strangers, and it brought home the meaning of the sacred story to the youngest child there. Of the prayers, one feels it is an impertinence to speak. They were so simple and direct that one almost forgot to notice the beautiful and reverent words in which they were expressed.

But apart from all this, Dr. Hardy's was a many-sided personality, and one would fain indicate some of its other aspects. One of his gifts has already been mentioned—his wonderful power of elocution. This made him a great favourite in many places beyond the bounds of his own parish. In the 'sixties and 'seventies, Penny Readings and gatherings of that nature were becoming common, and his Scottish readings were in great demand for such occasions. These were mostly drawn from the works of his best-loved author, Sir Walter Scott, and were generally humorous and always Scottish, such as "Caleb Balderstone," "Bailie Nicol Jarvie," "Meg Merrilies," or "Edie Ochiltree." In a few rapid sentences he would sketch the necessary connecting-links of the story between one appearance of the character and the other; for he knew the Waverley Novels almost by heart. Sometimes he would take the material for his reading from an old song or ballad, like "Tam Glen" or "Oor Gudeman cam' hame at e'en." Sometimes he would read a little poem of his sister's,

the authoress of *Whin Bloom*. Occasionally the reading was entirely original and topical.

And this leads one to speak of another of his talents, the throwing off of parodies and comic skits of all kinds for the papers at election and other stirring times. Shortly after he came to Foulis the Presbytery and the whole district were excited over the Crieff Organ Case. Dr. Cunningham of Crieff was (I think) the second parish minister in Scotland to introduce instrumental music, and it was not sanctioned without long and bitter controversy. Dr. Hardy did yeoman service for his friend, Dr. Cunningham, with poem and sketch as well as by word of mouth. Shortly after that victory occurred the Parliamentary election of 1868, when Sir William Stirling Maxwell was defeated by Mr. Parker. And again Dr. Hardy was the laureate of the cause, this time the losing cause. Perhaps one may quote some lines supposed to be addressed to Dr. Cunningham by the *Strathearn Herald*, which was at that time a radical paper, and had strongly opposed the organ :—

John Cunningham, my jo, John,
When first we did cast oot,
Your nasty bumming organ,
Occasioned the dispute.
But noo, ye're cracking soond, John,
And hand in hand we'll go
And vote thegither at the poll,
John Cunningham, my jo.

To the world beyond Strathearn he was perhaps best known as the "Tinkers' Friend." The words describe the relation in which he stood to these "tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast," as he often called them. Leaving to others to draw up schemes

and appoint commissions to inquire into and report upon their condition and habits, he was content to be their Friend, and to know "Granny" and "Hughie" and "Geordie," and all their dependents and descendants as well as he knew his own parishioners. When he celebrated his ministerial jubilee in 1901, amongst many congratulations was one poetical tribute from a Foulis born bard, which contains these lines :—

Where'er a Tink we chance to meet,
On road or market stance,
Twa names to him are passing sweet—
'Tis Auld Fowlis and the Manse.
Deaf Lucky wi' the souback mutch
Wad weary for ye comin',
And Dockit Annie, wi' the crutch,
Your praise was constant hummin'.

Dr. Hardy was also widely known in Perthshire in connection with the Auchterarder Poorhouse. He often went across to see the poor "bodies" there, and he was amongst the originators of their annual Christmas dinner. As long as health and strength permitted he delighted to set agoing the yearly subscription list; and in that, as in everything else, his ways were unconventional. Once, his reminder to the public that their subscriptions were due took the form of a letter from an imaginary *auld wife* in the *Hoose*, wondering if that "doited auld body, Hardy, had forgotten a' about them and their denner." This appeared in the *Strathearn Herald*, and caused a worthy reader to write to the editor remonstrating with him about allowing such impertinent complaints to appear about the poor old minister of Foulis.

The Children's Shelter in Edinburgh was another object very near his heart. Some of the things in this

book were written for its magazine, *City Sparrows*, and to the poor little inmates of the Shelter he was a frequent and most welcome visitor. Indeed, by children of all sorts and conditions he was invariably most dearly beloved. It was all the same whether it was a Sunday School gathered for its soiree, or a lonely little sufferer on a sick-bed, or a dirty, ragged varlet by the roadside. He knew the direct way to the child-heart. Few things gave him more pleasure than a visit to the toy-shop to choose a doll or a wooden horse for some little favourite.

The collection in this book can give little idea of the humorous side of his character. His comic letters and poems, often adorned with inimitable pen-and-ink sketches, were generally too intimate and personal for publication; few of them were ever printed. One, however, written in conjunction with his friend, the Rev. Dr. Milroy of Moneydie, is widely known anonymously. It is called "Auld Lang Syne in Tartan," and is given on page 244.

Another, which he wrote concerning a soiree in a neighbouring village, when that word had just come into fashion, runs thus:—

First a prayer and syne a psalm,
And syne we had oor tea, man.
And lads and lassies laughed and squealed
Into the Swarree, man.

After describing various speakers, he introduces himself as—

A jumpin' jake bit chiel cam neist,
Wi' specs upon his e'e, man;
He was buttoned up aboot the breast,
And his sark ye couldna see, man.

He crackit jokes on Watson's beard,
And ca'd him aye his brither ;
The twa was maist tremendous thick,
And awfu' like ilk ither.

Then there was a man announced to lecture upon
Freedom :—

But the Freedom lad had slippit oot,
And feint a boody see'd him.
So Sword got up his choir and sang
A lang thing ca'd an anthem—
Or the bellman gaed and socht the man,
For Mister Watson wants him.

But, after all, there is still left unmentioned the one outstanding feature of the work of the minister of Foulis, his pastoral visitation. He was fond of saying that a minister of the Church of Scotland belonged to no rank and to all ranks. And truly the idea was carried out in his visiting. He was as welcome in the castle as the cottage, to the old as to the young, to members of other churches as to his *ain folk*. On many occasions the people of Foulis testified to their affection for their minister by handsome and substantial gifts. Especially at the time of his jubilee, when all the country-side and friends from far and near gathered in the "Celestial City" (as the folk of Foulis name their village) to join with the Presbytery and the parishioners in honouring the old minister, the offerings from his brethren and from his flock were most generous and hearty. In the following year his Alma Mater, the University of Aberdeen, conferred on him the degree of D.D.

In December 1909 the Rev. James Chrystal Muir was appointed his assistant and successor in the parish. And perhaps this little sketch may fittingly be closed with the words spoken by Mr. Muir in Foulis Church on the

Sunday after Dr. Hardy's death. He said, "I almost seem to have seen him myself in his younger days and in his hale old age, girt about with his shepherd's plaid, crossing the country by the shortest way or on the old kirk roads which he loved to use that they might be kept open for the Sunday walk to church. I can almost fancy having met him on the moor, fighting his way against the snowstorm and the rain ; caring little for the weather if he might be of service to those in need. Perhaps, as some men do, he felt a keen delight in the wilder moods of Nature, for many a time have I heard that on a stormy day one was sure to meet 'the Doctor.' "

R. F. M. R.



ENTRANCE GATE TO CHURCHYARD

APPENDIX TO FOREWORD

THE Parish of Foulis Wester is of unique interest, having been from time immemorial a centre, both civil and ecclesiastical. Till the abolition of heritable jurisdictions, the Earls of Strathearn held court at Foulis, which was near the seat of the Earl. The Morays of Abercairny are the lineal heirs and representatives of the Earls of Strathearn. The title is now in the Royal Family. Till the latter part of the eighteenth century the main road between Perth and Crieff passed through Foulis village. The site of the present Church was that alike of the Pre-Reformation and of the Celtic Church. The Cross in the village-square was brought there from the Glen-Almond side of the parish. Druid stones at Crofthead, and, above all, the Arch-Druid's Temple on the height north of Foulis village, are links with a very ancient mode of worship.

So late as 1574, Foulis (with Auchterarder, Strogeith, and Tulliekettill) was one of four places only in Auchterarder Presbytery that could boast of having ministers of their own. Crieff, then, had only a "reader" supplied from Tulliekettill.

The church at Foulis was originally dedicated to St. Bean (Beanus, 920 A.D.). The name is in that of the well and brae, west of the Manse, "Bannochy." At Buchanty Bridge, of old time, there was a chapel dedicated to St. Bean. There was also one at Gorthy. Methven means "Vale of Bean." Above the inscription over the entrance gate to Foulis churchyard are carved three leaves, bound together at the stalks. Three brothers, about Malcolm Canmore's time, 1057 A.D., came from France,

their cognisance the three leaves, *feuilles*, and settled, one here, one at Fowlis Easter (Lundie and Fowlis) near Dundee, and one in Ross-shire. Foulis is said to be a corruption of "Feuilles." The three leaves are also on an abutment of Colinton House, Midlothian, once owned by Sir James Foulis. But the most reliable recent authorities on the subject derive all the places of the name from a Gaelic word, very like the English word, and give its original meaning, *i.e.* the meaning of the word Foulis, as sub-stream, streamlet, or burn. Over the Foulis churchyard gate are words from the old Scottish version of the Bible, "Tak heid to thy foot when thou entrest to the hows of God," 1644. Above is the word Jehovah in Hebrew characters.

Notable ecclesiastics connected with the parish have been Principal Taylor, Glasgow University, minister of the High Church there, and Moderator in 1798; the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alison, of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, father of the *Historian of Europe*; the Rev. Dr. Ritchie, Professor of Divinity, Edinburgh University; the Rev. Dr. Smith, fifty years Minister of the Scottish Church, Buenos Aires; the Rev. Dr. Christie, Gilmerton, Midlothian, the Church's Librarian, and, along with the Very Reverend Alexander Ferrier Mitchell, D.D., Professor of Church History, St. Andrews, Editor of the Minutes of the Westminster Assembly.

NOTE OF THANKS

THE Editor of this little book of selections from Dr. Hardy's very varied writings, a phenomenally devoted Perthshire pastor alike while at work and at play, has one regret as the volume goes to press. It is that that side of Dr. Hardy's character, which, along with other lovable ways, endeared him to so many,—his facetiousness, has had so comparatively little place in the volume. "Thousands" of pen-and-ink sketches were dashed off by Dr. Hardy in notes to his familiars, and on any and every occasion when the spirit moved him, yet not one of these is here given. And for the simple reason, that they were of a nature so evanescent or so private, that to fix them in a book was found impossible. And yet the blank created by their absence is such, that the representation of the Doctor this book makes is in consequence decidedly incomplete.

Cordial thanks are hereby rendered to Sir John Alexander Dewar, Baronet, M.P. for Inverness-shire, without whose initial and most kind encouragement the work would never have been undertaken ; to the Church of Scotland's "Christian Life and Work" Committee, for kind permission to reprint articles in *Life and Work* ; to David M. Gibb, Esq., S.S.C., 18 York Place, Session-Clerk of St. James's Parish Church, M'Donald Road, for access to old numbers of the St. James's Parish Magazine (Rev. S. S. Stobbs), articles in which are here reprinted ; to Miss Frances Hepburn, Secretary, Children's Shelter, Edinburgh, for access to old numbers of *City Sparrows*, contributions to which are here reprinted ; to Messrs. Valentine,

Limited, Dundee ; Mr. T. Cook, Pitlandie, Foulis Wester ; Dr. C. Fred. Pollock, 1 Buckingham Terrace, Hillhead, Glasgow ; Mr. A. H. Kyd, Wadham College, Oxford ; and the Rev. James Chrystal Muir, B.D., Minister of Foulis Wester, for kind gifts of photographs here reproduced.

DAVID RUSSELL KYD, B.D.

CLUNY, COLINTON, MIDLOTHIAN,
December 1910.

CLACHAN SERMONS

BEERSHEBA

A CATHOLIC HOMILY AT THE SMITHY

GENESIS xxvi. 17-33.

THE evening preaching was at the smithy. It was the Sabbath after the General Assemblies had closed—as bonnie a summer Sabbath night as ever spoke peace to man. The air was soft and balmy, and the song of the burn was gentle as it brattled away under the green larches and the yellow broom. Only, it was dry ! dry ! “Well-water” was getting scarce with us, and we were longing for “a shoo’r.” The congregation at the preaching was conglomerate—composite. We were U.P.’s, and we were Frees, and we were “oor ain Kirk folk.” But we were all very “friendly.” The summer air, and the peaceful night, and the bonnie bit glen in which we were gathered, made us inclined to goodwill. And we “sat out” (as young ladies say at their dancing parties when they do not dance) we sat out on the knoll—the “knowe”—where the sheep-bitten turf and the broom bushes made “sittings” which many folk at this moment in Edinburgh would be glad to get at a very high seat-rent. The black interior of the smithy is a cosy beild when we hold our meeting in a late autumn evening ; and some

ecclesiastical tastes might prefer the "dim religious light," and the picturesque effect of the little spunk of fire (kindly kindled by the smith for us) as it glances on the strange, nameless surroundings in the midst of which the congregation sit. But this evening there is a more religious light, I think, in the summer sky and the golden sunset behind the hill. The scent of the broom is better than incense ; and, though far be it from me to say that, when our united voices rose in the tune of "French" to "I to the hills," it was a better musical performance than may be heard in St. Giles' or St. George's ! nevertheless, I do say it was—at least to me—more sweet and more heart-touching.

We were a composite congregation. And the minister—honest man !—took a queer text, "*Beersheba*." Many of us, doubtless, said to ourselves, "Beersheba ! what's he to be after, this night ?" He began to crack away about *wells*, and, well-water being, as I said, a scarce commodity, we all pricked up our ears to listen. And indeed, as he went on, making mention of this and that and the other spring-well, here or there, that we all knew by name, it made one wax dry in the mouth and long to get up and go for a drink. We have many grand old wells in the neighbourhood, and the minister amused and "entertained" us by describing the meanings of the old Celtic names they bore. Some of them had sacred names—having been called after ancient saints. Some names had reference to old clan battles, and so on. And this brought the worthy man to his text—at least to the passage of Scripture in which it stands. And he described the old patriarch sojourning in the land of Gerar, and bidding his men dig a well here and a well

there, wherever they made their camp ; and how every well that was dug, Abraham, as we would say, *christened* it, gave it a name. And then we had a grand picture of the old patriarch and the old king standing, one on either side of that grandest well of all—Beersheba, the well of the Covenant, and making a solemn vow, like sensible, God-fearing men, that they would be at peace.

Next—as our honest man put it—we “skippit” over two or three pages of the Book of Genesis—and it may be five-and-twenty or thirty years of human life—and here comes the *son* of Abraham into this same land of Gerar, with *his* sheep and cattle and folk. And, woe’s me ! hard work Isaac’s shepherds must have had, poor lads ! howking out the stones with which the folk of the land had filled the old wells. The stones being flung out, the water sprang again, the weary herds were watered ; and some old weatherworn herdsman would step forward and tell them what the name was which Abraham had given to this well and to that. And the old names came back to the old wells, and probably stuck to them till the descendants of Abraham and Isaac, long after, entered and possessed the land.

But now—says the minister—as he stood with his Bible in his hand and his glasses sticking in to mark the place, and his white hair glinting in the setting sun, and looking round into all our faces—now there were three wells—three *new* wells dug one after the other. Old Abimelech had been gathered to his fathers ; but young Abimelech reigned, and he and his people thought this well-digging must be put a stop to. So over the *first* dug of these wells rang the fierce cry of battle, and possibly the blessed spring-waters were polluted with

human blood, shed in bitter strife. The well got—and bore for who knows how long—the ugly, ill-omened name of Beer-Esek, “the well of battle.” The *second* of the wells bore a name almost as ill-omened and as sad. There was perhaps no bloody strife, but it was amidst looks of bitter wrath, and scowls of scorn, and words of cutting bitterness, and vows of vengeance, that the thirsty cattle were driven in to be refreshed with its newly springing water. And men never, in after years, sat by it, or drank of its waters, without remembering it as Beer-Sitnah—“the well of hatred.” Blessings on the happy day that saw that *third* well dug, on terms of peace and friendly brotherhood, under God’s common sky! The motto—the “word for the day,” was Rehoboth, ROOM—“there is room enough for us all.” The Gerar men went their way, and the men of Isaac theirs, parting to their respective tasks at the Rehoboth well, if not with any words of very gushing friendliness, at least with the conviction that wells of *battle* and wells of *hatred* were things for which there was no good reason; and that it was better to live and let live, since there was *room enough*. Isaac and young Abimelech met face to face where their fathers had met face to face before them, and at the old well they renewed the old covenant of peace—at *Beersheba*, the well of the Covenant—a name of better, higher omen, even than *Rehoboth*.

And now (said the old minister, looking round on us all), you are folk of *all the three kirks* sitting here to-night, and hearkening to this old Bible story. May I venture to apply the story to *everybody here*? Have not we in the past dug more than enough of wells of *strife* and wells of *hatred*? Do you not think if the three

kirks could but stand around one covenant well, and make oath of peace—and union for the days to come in the service of their common Saviour, that it would be the best and brightest day that has dawned on Scotland's Christianity since that day when the fetters that had long sorely bound her fell broken from off the old Kirk of Scotland, and her sons signed the covenant of *their* day on the great flat headstone in Greyfriars Churchyard—ay! signed it with their very blood? Give us, at this day, a *Beersheba* vow, solemnly pledged among us all—a covenant of peace and concord for the days to come! It would be like life from the dead to Christ's Kirk and folk in Scotland!

But—if we cannot have—if we are not yet ready for—BEERSHEBA, let us in God's name at *least* have *Rehoboth* now! Let us be done with *Esek* and with *Sitnah* now, for they have hindered Christ's work, and grieved Christian hearts, and they make Scotland a laughing-stock to the civilised world. In the name of the Prince of Peace be it Rehoboth—room for you and room for me to do our work without hurting, without hindering, the one the other.

“Pray that Jerusalem may have.” Tears were on the cheeks of some of us as the united voices rose in the solemn concord of “St. Paul's” on the summer night, and then we took our ways home from the smithy, thinking within ourselves that the signing of another “Covenant” would be a grand thing for old Scotland! We'll *hope* for *Beersheba*. But, in the meantime, we can aye be quietly doing some little thing to make it *Rehoboth*.

ESTHER

"IF I perish, I perish," was the keynote of her noble story. We all remember a beautiful poetical thought—the jar which held the sweetly scented rose-leaves, and their perfume so clinging to the jar that, even when it was shattered, the fragrance still lingered in the fragments. That might be said of the old chosen race. It was true of them long ago. It is true of them still to-day. Their holy land, theirs no more. Exiled, scattered over all the lands of earth, oppressed, despised—literally, as a nation, shattered—the sacred perfume, breathed into them long ago, lingers in their hearts. Through all the centuries they have never lost their nationality, their love of race. They have never lost their faith in God. And God will yet ingather them. He has said it, and that will be for us—we sorely need it now—as life from the dead! And, looking at Esther—this little bit of a tiny fragment of all the scattered thousands, this orphan, exile girl, flung adrift on the foreign heathen shore—how the traces of the healthful spirit of the old sacred perfume are clinging to her young life! Think of her! Her home in the holy land—only as a faint dream of memory, perhaps, can she recall it. Her father and

her mother sleeping in their far-away graves—she can scarce even dream of their faces or their voices. Heathenism all around her. And yet, in the heart of this young thing still lives, and grows with her growth, love of God and love of race—a true child of old Israel. The story tells how God made this brave young heart the instrument of saving, in an hour of deadly peril, the lives of His people scattered over the wide Persian Empire. “If I perish, I perish,” was her battle-cry; and as truly as ever a young Scottish soldier faced death in a battle charge, she perilled her young life that day.

How many a noble life would never have been what it was had not God blessed its early days with the influences of a wise, God-fearing home. Don't let us forget what Esther owed to the home of her orphan childhood, and the training hand and sound instruction of Mordecai. It was none the less true that God's hand fitted Esther for what she had to do, because God was pleased to do it through the training of Mordecai. Many people don't like Mordecai. They picture him as hard and sour and narrow. They draw his likeness from their—perhaps mistaken—ideas of Shakespeare's Shylock; and they think poor Esther must have had a somewhat strict and cheerless home for her girlhood, and that she must have feared more than loved her uncle. Well, nobody supposes Mordecai to have been a silly, pliable, fond, doating old uncle! Had he been so, Esther would never have been the Esther of this story. And I warrant Mordecai's discipline was wisely firm, and his religious instruction thoroughly sound and systematic. Very likely it

resembled what old folk amongst us remember of their long-ago days, when the 119th Psalm was committed to memory verbatim, with the Shorter Catechism and the "proofs." Whether Esther loved her uncle or not—and I think she did—no one can doubt his loving her. She was whirled out of his hands one day by a power which it would have been utter madness for Mordecai to dream for a moment of resisting. And she was carried away and shut up within the closely guarded gates of the royal palace. The book does not mention it, but don't you think you can hear the wail of misery with which the bereft, lonely man flung himself on the ground? Poor Mordecai! if he had spoken our tongue it would have been, "My bairn! my bairn!" and we should have recognised the tones. Look at him hanging about these closed and guarded palace gates day after day. It minds you of a wise, faithful dog lying waiting long and patiently on the threshold. But the dog hopes to hear the loved master's footstep. Mordecai had no such hope; only he liked to think he was near where his darling was. He may have been—he probably was—firm and serious, not light-hearted and mirthful; but he was kind and loving, and his Esther was the very apple of his eye. But surely his young girl "rose in the world," as we would say. Yes, and made a great match, and became a queen! Ah! do not mock the poor man. The word of Ahasuerus was absolutely, utterly resistless. It was as though some messenger of God Almighty—in the shape of a wild beast bounding from the forest, or a wild whirlwind from the desert—had borne off his child! The poor Jew could only bow his head, and know that

God had done it. Death had been nothing. But, oh, how Mordecai shuddered when he thought of *whither* his child had been carried!

For Mordecai was as strictly conscientious a Jew as ever stepped. You will call him narrow-minded and bigoted. And even so do many speak of our brave old Scottish Covenanters. Narrow they may have been, and they did at times magnify molehills into mountains. But who does not admire their gallant firmness and fearless daring, and their sufferings to the death? Easy to say now, Why couldn't they acknowledge the bishops and use the Prayer-Book? Had they been latitudinarian, and yielding, and compromising, where now, for us, would have been the precious blessing which their swords gained for us—Religious Freedom?

Mordecai had much of the Covenanter in him. To the great HAMAN, the Prime Minister of the mighty Empire, next to the king himself in power—to him every knee is bent, every head is bowed, as he passes out and in. To Mordecai that man is of the accursed race of AMALEK—a race whom God had commanded His people evermore to hold as an enemy. And ever as the great man passes him Mordecai draws himself to his full height, and haughtily regards him with a scowl of bitterest hatred—the foe to God and to God's people. Is Mordecai far wrong? The man's jealous and revengeful heart contrives what modern language might describe as a deadly, explosive, destructive bomb-shell, to be launched in air over the area of the whole, wide, Persian Empire, for the utter extinction of every Israelite within its bounds.

This brings us to the crisis of the story. It was

for this God had placed Esther in Mordecai's house, its atmosphere strongly charged with faith in God and love of race. For this God took her from the sorely wounded heart of Mordecai, and placed her in the heathen palace, and on its queenly throne. And now the time has come, and Esther is called—indeed by God Himself, though it is through that earthly voice which she has learned from her infancy to trust and to obey—called on to peril her young life for the saving of the lives of her race throughout all the land.

The noble young patriot! She dared the deed of peril. But we lose half the grandeur of her deed of daring if we do not take note of *how* she dared it. We can all fancy a wildly excited, passionate woman, maddened by the story of her kindred's wrongs, rushing headlong, on the spur of the moment, into the royal presence, blind to all danger, to pour forth her loud and fierce complaint. It was not so with Esther. A really heroic action is always marked by calm self-possession. So was it here. With Esther there was no hurry, no fury, no senseless fainting in terror, no helpless despair, no foolish clamour. Her uncle's message by Hatach placed the case quite plainly and fully before her mind. She knew the peril. "If I perish, I perish," was no mere empty phrase. She was—and she knew it—fully as likely to perish as to live. But the gallant young heart said, "Duty must be done; it is for my God and for my people." And calmly, collectedly, systematically, did the young girl-soldier go about it. Esther had never read the *Pilgrim's Progress*. But she knew something of that wondrous weapon that served Christian well in an hour of trial

and peril. It was called "All Prayer." To that Esther had recourse; and she set them all to prayer. For the next three days Mordecai—so the calm, brave, true-hearted girl directs—is to set on foot what our modern phrase would describe as prayer-meetings, over all the wide land, wherever Israelites are dwelling. Ay, and in the very heart of the heathen palace itself were to be prayer-meetings! Esther dons her dear old Jewish girl-dress, and kneels with her seven Hebrew maidens, wearing theirs. You think you can hear their voices mingled in some of the grand old Psalms of David—in some of the solemn prayers of their fathers' church! Ay! and you can hear Esther's voice, in Esther's own simple words, beseeching, imploring her fathers' God to deliver His people in this hour of peril. And God did deliver! What a picture it would make, that slender figure,—in queenly robes now, and wearing all her court grandeur, the calm pale face, the upward glance of prayer, as with unfaltering step she draws near the awfully closed doors. The poor maidens follow, trembling; and they, too, are in their court finery.

Then there is the hush of startled silence of the court. All knew her peril. And there is the monarch's startled stare at this strange unheard-of intrusion—this breach of all court law and etiquette, we may call it; well for us that in this land we know not etiquette like it!

And there is the terrible moment of dead stillness in the breathless chamber, when, as she is kneeling at his feet, the monarch *hesitates*.

Thank God! the prayers—the prayers of scattered Israel in the prayer-meetings—the maidens' prayers,—

Mordecai's,—ESTHER'S prayers, move that heathen tyrant's heart, for even heathen kings' hearts are in the hand of Him who heareth prayer—thanks to prayer, there is the glitter of the golden sceptre as it is held out! And Esther rises, the peril past, and at least the first step in her noble task accomplished.

THE WEAVER'S SHUTTLE

JOB vii. 6.

THE words are those of JOB. Poor man! in one sense his days must have seemed to drag along *slowly*. He says as much himself. He, like many a one, knew what it is to "watch for the morning." In the night he cried, "When shall I arise, and the night be gone?" and when he arose, it was to face the long weary day of pain. It is the happy days that go swiftly like the shuttle. It is the hours of the children's bright, blithe holiday that seem to dance away rapidly. The days of the busy, active life filled with work, and care, and thought, and absorbing interest, *they* rattle by swiftly.

But the Patriarch knew what he was saying. God's hand was laid on him with a fell disease, which to all appearance—unless the Almighty should please to interpose and spare—would very soon end his days. It was drawing nearer, nearer, every day. The sands in his hour-glass were rapidly sinking. The man in the condemned cell knows the feeling. The inevitable hour seems to come on with awful swiftness. Job knew that, unless God pleased to speak the word, his end was inevitable, and very near. Of recovery otherwise, Job

had “no hope.” And to him it seemed that “his days were swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”

Can we wonder that, in all the ages of the Christian world, those words of Job have been always read in a wider sense than that in which he spoke them? It is true, not only of Job’s days, but of the days of all mankind—of every human being—that they are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle. This is just another of the many texts by which the word of God seeks to impress upon all our minds a greatly needed lesson. And, as if with a view to make even the most thoughtless think, these texts—as we all know—are not only many, but beautiful, and varied, and striking. Man is described as a stranger, a pilgrim, a sojourner. Human life is a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and vanisheth away. It is the shadow of the thin, airy, unsubstantial smoke—only its *shadow*! It is like the tale whose telling seems to shorten the hour by the fireside of a winter night. It is like the web, soon finished, and “cut off” from the loom, and carried away. As the wise woman of Tekoah said to King David, “We must all die, and be as water spilt on the ground, that cannot be gathered up again.” And here, for *another* simile to imprint the truth, is one of the most graphic, and quaint, and striking of them all—the weaver’s shuttle.

But alas! my friends, the shuttle has vanished from amongst us! Most of those here to-day never saw a shuttle—never heard its busy rapid *click*. So, you must let me try to take you back in thought to the days of your fathers, when from almost every house in the little village that nestles round our old kirk here, and in many a now vanished hamlet not far away, that music could be heard

from early morn on to late, late night, as in skilled and practised hands the shuttle did its faithful work by its each swift passage to and fro. There was many a good, quiet Christian life lived in the old *clachans* of those days ! They were a race of right, good, true-hearted Scotsmen, those fathers of the hamlet in the old handloom days !—industrious, frugal, neighbourly ; constant readers of the Bible, they knew it well, and reading and treasuring many an old book besides. True patriots they were : with a lively interest in the welfare of the nation, they scanned, in eager groups, the news-sheet which—only at what we would think pretty long intervals—reached them. They were proud of the British soldier, in those battle days ; and faithfully they followed the story of his marches and his victories, with perhaps a special thrill of heart when some regiment that wore kilt and bonnet was the foremost on some battle day to uphold the glory of the British Flag. They were loyal to the throne. And he would have been a bold man who ventured to speak to the men of the clachan in the handloom days about selling their Father's kirk for some such consideration as a kailyard or a cow's grass ! Between cottar and laird, and between master and man, in those days, there was mutual respect and confidence. And thinking of these men I say, Would God we had much of their old spirit alive amongst us at this day in Scotland !

Often, to these old weavers, must have come home very pithily this quaint allusion of Job to their familiar shuttle. True, the handloom shuttle has gone, with the old handloom and the old weaver. But the weaving art is essentially the same all through its history in the world. There was doubtless in existence a shuttle—or something

of the kind—when the Hebrews learned the art from the Egyptians. And if any of those who have only known the world since the Clachan shuttle ceased to click and the handloom disappeared will look into a modern factory, they will see there something doing the shuttle's work, and that with a rapidity which will make the simile of Job more intelligible and more impressive than ever.

And now, friends, let us leave the weavers and the shuttles and think what the text—with, of course, the Gospel lamp shining on it—is saying to you and me about our *days*—Click ! Click ! Click ! They are going on swiftly—*more* swiftly than the sound once familiar to some of us. I seriously wish you could at this moment hear that old sound ; there was something very peculiar and impressive in it—not exactly like any other sound of the kind. The *tick* of the timepiece speaks its own warning message, telling of the rapid seconds flying on. The *whirr* of the reaping machine in the harvest-field comes to our ears like the hum of the busy bee, as if saying, “There is much to do, and I am in a hurry to have it done !” But the click of the old shuttle seemed to speak always of work being done by human hands, neatly, tidily, in purpose-like fashion—busily, but steadily—with no undue or confusing haste—cheerfully and contentedly. And right faithfully and well the shuttle did its work. Each time it travelled to and fro the proper work was done, the right threads were woven in, the right colours wrought. The web *grew* to pattern. Each *click* indicated so much of good work done. The shuttle gave forth—as in a *minor* key—the song which the poet has described as ringing forth, “week in, week out,” from the

sturdy hammer-strokes of him who plied his task beneath the spreading chestnut tree — “something attempted, something done.”

And so, dear friends, the days that speed so swiftly are the shuttle-strokes that are weaving our life-webs. Let *our* webs be woven to the pattern which our Saviour set for us in that life of His! Ours may be—as we often think it is—hard work and trying. Wasn't *His* hard work who wrought at the joiner's bench in Nazareth? Were not *His* after years harder still—hardest of all at last? and all for us! Work to the pattern! Let the shuttle-strokes, each one, carry threads that will make ours real Christian life—threads, such as love to Him, trust in the Heavenly Father, thoughts of the Heavenly Home, patience, temperance, kindness to others! Threads, these, that may be inwrought in *any* life-web, be the work however homely and however hard.

And, brothers! sisters! if the days do pass swiftly—if the web must ere long be taken from the loom—thank God! He has purchased—He has promised—a life *beyond*, where the days pass with no painful swiftness—where there is no “beat of time,” and no fear of the blessed peace and rest ever—ever—coming to an end.

ALLON-BACCUTH

GENESIS xxxv. 8.

MANY readers, I should think, know a picture by one of our best Scottish artists—"From Dawn to Sunset." The old grandmother lies dying in the old-fashioned box-bed: and they are all gathered round, as country phrase has it, "waiting on." All the painter lets us see of the dying woman is the uplifted hand. But how he has, by little artistic touches, made that hand to tell the story! The withered, wrinkled hand! You see it has been a strong, shapely, hard-working hand—feeble now! And how wonderfully that hand is made to express contentment and patient trust, and tender, loving, farewell blessing!

It has often seemed to me that by one single artistic touch of this kind the Bible has presented to us Deborah, Rebecca's nurse. Allon-baccuth, the oak of weeping, under which they buried her, is the *hand*—the one single touch by which Deborah is pictured for us on the Bible page. And not only so, but nurse Deborah, as Allon-baccuth presents her to our imagination, is the *hand* in the whole Bible-picture of the patriarchal life: and the hand lets us see how much of real refinement, of family affection, of family memories and associations,

must have dwelt amongst these eastern folk of long ago—far more than we are apt to give them credit for.

When any of us at any time are laying in the grave the remains of an old friend, how vividly the incidents of all the years of the friendship gone by come back to us! Of the group that gathered under the oak-tree it was most likely JACOB whose memory went farthest back. And no doubt it was with him as it is with us, and it seemed to him but yesterday when he was a child, and DEBORAH his good kind nurse! ESAU was not there. At least it would be a wild dream of fancy to imagine that even in his roving, restless life he had by any chance been there. But supposing for one moment that he did stand on the outskirts of the mourning group, an unknown, unexpected onlooker—Esau would have been as true a mourner as any there; and all the more so because, perhaps, in the days of his childhood the good nurse and he were not always quite the best of friends.

Where—when the mourners met beneath the oak—were ISAAC and REBECCA? Sitting alone together in remote and silent Hebron? Was Rebecca wearying to hear tidings of the coming pilgrims, longing to see again her darling son, and her faithful old foster-mother?—expecting (perhaps somewhat anxiously)—to look on so many new faces—glad to think of child voices sounding in her home again?

Or—and, for all we know, it *might* be *thus*—Was REBECCA gone by this time to her MACHPELAH rest? and was ISAAC now a lonely, aged, blind, and widowed man? Had ISAAC known what was passing that day at Bethel, how his memory would have wandered back to

that happy, peaceful eventide of long ago, when, lifting up his eyes, he saw the distant camels, and the stately cavalcade and escort that was bringing home to him his fair young bride !

But, farther back still would have gone—had *she* been there—REBECCA's thoughts and memories ! With the name, the image of "DEBORAH" would have come back to her the scenes—the faces—the voices of the happy home of her childhood, and all the incidents of all the years that followed.

Very close must have grown the friendship of these two women during the many long years that passed ere Rebecca came to know the joys, and cares, and the new love of motherhood. In many an hour of peaceful eastern tent-life they would sit together talking of their old Padan-Aram home, and all its "folk," and all its memories.

Then,—when the twins were born,—if Deborah was like any nurse a little up in years that any of us have ever known, we can readily believe that she proudly stepped forward and claimed as hers of right to have the entire superintendence and direction of everything connected with the upbringing of the children.

And if in that household there were, as years went on and the boys grew toward manhood, little partialities and jealousies, one wonders what part did nurse Deborah take in these ! Of course we do not know, but I think if the guesses of many readers of the story could be gathered, *this* would be a favourite conclusion—that nurse's darling was not the mother's darling, not the gentle, peaceable, well-behaved, always-at-home Jacob, but rather the wild, daring, dashing, restless Esau,

always in some scrape, often long away from home, often causing much anxiety, often giving her and every one else much trouble and annoyance. Depend upon it, that was the boy who won nurse Deborah's heart. Like Desdemona of a later day, she loved to listen to the adventures and the hairbreadth 'scapes of a bold roving life. And yet—blessings on the memory of many an old nurse that many a reader may cherish!—a nurse's heart is roomy. There was, doubtless, room in the heart of Deborah for *both* the lads. She loved Rebecca, and she could not but have some love for the boy Rebecca so dearly loved, even though there was, as she thought, less in him to like than in her own wild, bold, honest, warm-hearted Esau.

When poor blind Isaac was cheated by his artful wife into misbestowing the birthright blessing, how are we to read the story as to Deborah? Did she know what took place? or was it a secret and sacred family matter, that even the old nurse was not informed of it? Perhaps she only knew in a general way that there was something wrong among them all, a family trouble, a "casting out," as we say in Scotland. Anyhow, poor Deborah saw with pain the two she had loved and trained as children—both her darlings, even now that they were men—she beheld them part not as brothers should. She saw them leave the old home and take their diverse ways in the wide world.

Deborah could not but, to a considerable extent, "lose conceit" of her favourite Esau when he went off and formed connections and took to a mode of life which vexed his mother's heart. Many a bitter word, probably, Deborah said regarding the heathen wives.

And yet, for all that, the old heart might be clinging faithfully still to the "laddie" she had nursed and scolded. ESAU was still in her thoughts by day, and in her dreams by night, for all that had come and gone.

But what would poor Rebecca ever have done but for Deborah that "waesome" day when her darling Jacob, girt for his long lonely journey, tore himself away from his mother's arms, and left the home of his childhood? How Rebecca's wail of parting must have rung through the nurse's heart! She knew the voice so well! It brought back to her mind the tones of the childish cries of long ago! And Deborah was a blessing and a comfort to Rebecca in those days when the home seemed to be so empty and so silent. They knew *that*, these folk who lived that old tent life, as well as we do in our modern houses,—the faces they loved to look on gone from sight, the voices it was joy to hear, sounding no more!

And the two women in the days that followed would sit and talk of their darling exile who was bending his wandering steps away to their own old homeland. Each night they would be wondering where this night he would be resting, and praying that his fathers' God would guide him and keep him safe! They did hear, at last, that the wanderer had got settled among their own folk far away in the old country. We can have no definite idea of how long the news took to reach them. And it is difficult to guess how irregularly, with what long intervals, by what various modes of chance communication, they continued, from time to time, to hear about the marriage, and the *second* marriage, and the young folk that were fast clustering round the distant Jacob

It is amazing how often, when reading our Bibles, we have to give ourselves a *shake* and call to mind that there were no electric telegraphic miracles, and not even commonplace ordinary postal performances, in those days. Still, the cord of communication, imperfect and indefinite as it may have been, sufficed to link Rebecca's heart and Deborah's very warmly and tenderly to the new family springing up in the old home in the far east. To think of it! the children of their own Jacob playing round the house and beneath the trees where Rebecca herself as a child had played, while Deborah was watching over her!

We can only guess that it may have been about this time that Rebecca's death occurred. Indeed to track the unrecorded history of Deborah through the outlines of the old story is something like trying to make one's way over a wide snow-covered moor, guided only by two or three old landmarks here and there. But it is not difficult to think of the bereaved heart of Rebecca breaking down somewhere about this time. She had given too much of it to that boy. And it was her foolish fondness for him that had banished *him*, and broken *her* heart! Poor woman, she had little to think of, when she looked back, little of that kind that has made many a mother's heart strong and calm and cheery, though the son she loved was far away from her.

And so, at last, the broken-hearted woman, in the deserted childless home, breathed her last, with words of tender farewell to the poor blind trembling helpless Isaac; and tended, to the very last, by the old foster-mother who had cared for her foster-child all her days.

We are only picking our way through the snowy

moor ; and *this* is no real solid landmark, only a guess. But, surely, it may be guessed, that one solemn request the dying mistress made to the faithful nurse ; and that a solemn promise in 'reply the faithful nurse gave to her dying mistress. We cannot clothe the prayer or the promise in the fashion of the old eastern tongue wherein mistress and nurse spoke, the one to the other ; but we can think we see the pleading eyes of Rebecca, and hear her tones of tender entreaty, as she beseeches Deborah, for love of her and hers, to *swear*, that, when Machpelah has taken her within its peaceful gates, the nurse that nursed her childhood will go and carry her dying love to her boy ; and be, in *his* home, what his own mother would fain have been. And we can hear the solemn tones in which Deborah's vow was made. We can see that wise, strong, gentle face of hers. No need for saying that Deborah kept her vow. How she managed it is not one of our landmarks. But it was probably an ancient proverb, known in some shape or other to old Deborah, that where there's a will there's a way. And by some friendly caravan of merchants or pilgrims, and after who can tell what adventures, the brave old woman reached Jacob's family circle, safe and sound. Let us remember it was her own old home she came to ! and she had been long away from it. What a joy and blessing was the coming of the old nurse ! She brought to JACOB memories of his childhood and his home ; and she brought him his mother's last tender word of blessing. And she was in that household what many a nurse in her old age has been in many a Christian home in our day. She came to the young wives as one known and loved long ago amongst their

own "folk," and in their old land. And she brought with her the aroma of the old faith in God—of the promised land. And as, from day to day, she gained the love and trust of the children and the youths, she could tell them many a tale from the romantic history of their fathers in that fair and wondrous country to which God had led them.

And then, yet once more, had Deborah—aged Deborah—to say good-bye to the land she left when her life was young. Faithful to the last—faithful to the chosen race with whom she had cast in her lot—the frail and worn-out nurse set her face, along with them, to the land promised them of God. She had been a blessing to them, the old nurse. But as they tenderly prepared for her conveyance on the march, she mourned that she was only a *burden* to them now. Would she ever reach, ever see, the promised land again? They were all kind to her, careful of her, old and young constantly by the litter in which she was borne, or in the tent that sheltered her by night. And many a word of faith and hope in God's promises, from the lips of good old Deborah, fell on young hearts which, it may be, long afterwards remembered them. But she knew her sands of life were running fast away. And they would try to cheer the old nurse, and tell her that she would yet reach with them the land which she had seen and had so often described to them, but which they had never seen.

And they did reach it. Here! here was Bethel, at last! Bethel! where their father beheld the wondrous ladder for the angels reaching from heaven to earth. Yes, here was Bethel, and perhaps the ladder vision which she had so often pictured in simple words to

listening childhood, brightened and cheered the last soft dream in which the good old pilgrim fell asleep.

Ah! how often since that day has the word gone through the house that "Nurse" was dead, appalling, stunning the young hearts, and wakening in the older hearts tender memories and very solemn thoughts.

The wail of grief that rose when they were laying the old nurse beneath the big oak tree at Bethel—that is all the Bible says of her. But how much it tells! How many hearts, old and young, she must have gained the love of! But the wail of grief was not the end for *them*, or for *her*. The old nurse's life among them had not been idle. Perhaps she bore among them some loving pet name having homely allusion to the "busy bee" that lurks in the name of "Deborah." And the old nurse had indeed gone about amongst them, visiting each and all with her good, hearty wholesome influence. And I have said the wail at the oak tree was not the end for them. Who can tell when and where the good seeds she sowed in her busy life sprang up afterwards? The brothers—when they were vexed at what they had done to Joseph—mayhap they heard a whisper at their hearts, "What would good nurse Deb have said?" And Joseph, when he was living his good, wise, manly life in Egypt, may have been often thinking of Deborah and her lessons.

And for *her* the wail was *not* the end of it. No! she reached (for did not the ladder vision say something of the kind?) a better, fairer land than Canaan.

A LITTLE GIRL-MISSIONARY OF LONG AGO

See 2 KINGS v. 3.

THE dear little maid ! her story “ wafts you to summers of old.” She brings back to you the tones in which you first heard the tale told in your mother’s homely words. I am sorely tempted to begin and tell it as we used to take it into our heads in days of childhood. But to-day I venture to ask my gentle readers to think of this little lady as a *missionary*.

I seem to hear some gasps of astonishment. “ A missionary ! the poor child who was carried off, screaming, sorely against her will to the heathen land ! that’s not the way missionaries go to their work.” Perhaps not always. But oh ! Christian women-missionaries—of *all* churches, in all lands ! and Christian women-workers of all kinds, of all “ persuasions,” of all grades ! look once more, to-day, at this old child-story. You knew and loved it long ago. Look at it thoughtfully, and then say if the little maid of Israel is not entitled to take her place in your honoured ranks. Indeed, I expect to hear you admit that her enrolment in the ranks is of older date than yours—her title of “ prior creation.” Yes ! she

“went before you to the field,” did her work ere yours began !

You say she went to the heathen land sorely against her will. That is not the question. God, in His way (and that is always the best), took her from her home and placed her where her work was to be done. And when the time came for doing her work, for speaking her little, God-given message, there was no shrinking, no fear *then* ! She spoke her simple message from her little honest heart—with all her heart, and God blessed her work. It was successful.

Don’t tell us, with a smile, that it was very *easy* work, that she had a little gossip, a little talk with her poor afflicted lady ; and, of course, liked to tell all about her home—all the more because it was now a far-away home. If all of us who speak (in any form—pulpit speech or homely talk), if we could but always have the matter in our hearts as she had in her little heart the story of her home, would not the preaching and the talk be better ?

And don’t tell us, with another smile, that she made a good exchange ; the grand princely Damascus mansion for the wee bit croft home in the holy land ! Who knows so little of the human heart as not to know that the little girl of Israel would have given fifty times over all the Damascus palace and all the gold it contained for a sight of the old croft cottage yonder ; and she would have given all the rich meats and dainties for a poor bit bannock baked by her mother’s hands at home.

And further, you women-missionaries in heathen lands, you know—*you* know—the eerie feeling of thinking in the watches of the night that you alone, you alone of all around you, in the whole encampment or canton-

ment, in the whole "country-side," *you alone* know and pray to the one true God in Heaven. And so you understand something of what must have been in the wee lassie's heart, who knew that in all the grand big house no one but herself, the child amongst them all, knew about God.

Here comes a little bit of advice, signalled by this wee lassie from the Naaman Palace to Christian *homes*, to Christian *parents*, let us say, in Scotland. I think I can almost hear our little missionary saying, oh, so fervently and humbly, in the dear language of her fatherland, what I can only say in plain homely phrase (as many a Scottish lassie has said it), "Oh, but I bless my father and my mother for the Sabbath nights' lessons that made us bairns to understand and love the Bible!" Emigrants often cannot think what they should take with them to the far land. Would every emigrant but take this little girl's story, and do as *she* did! take with him his father's faith in the living God and Saviour; he will never, never rue the day he took it.

The story of the little maid seems to speak some word to all of us. Missionaries, ministers, Christian workers of all kinds may take encouragement from her story.

I wonder if the little maid has anything to say to young folk of our own land going to *service*. Don't you think, young friends, that this poor little woman found one or two rather uncomfortable things about her new place? Probably no one in all the house except her mistress could speak her tongue. Then the house was at present a dismal one, no mirth, no music, and there were no *prayers*! She saw them kneeling to many

heathen images, and she could have no tidings from home. Oh! she must have been weary, weary. It was not a "comfortable place," and mind, it was not a place that she had chosen. What did she do? Did she pridefully "keep herself to herself," and not care a bit for the heathen folk she was among? That plan is fashionable somewheres. No, she took to her little heart her share of the sorrow of the house. That opened, by God's hand, a door for her. She spoke her word as God gave it, and all came right. I think that perhaps our little maid went to Israel in Naaman's cavalcade. I think she saw her old dear croft and her father and mother again. Though perhaps also the Naaman house sought many a visit from her, and loved to have it.

To those who rule, and to those who serve, in Scotland nowadays, the old Bible story says this: "Let the two classes consider one another in Christian kindness, and it will be the better for both."

OUR HARVEST THANKSGIVING

YES! my friends! we do well to meet in this church to-day, to offer thanks to God for harvest mercies.

We are hearing a good deal at present, from certain ministers and others, about "the old paths" and "the old ways." Well! *here*, at least, is a religious service which (without committing ourselves to *all* that is so recommended) has come down to us from *very* "old paths" and "old ways" indeed!

In happy, sinless Eden, they thanked God for the flowers and the fruits that blessed their garden; and the good old patriarchs acknowledged *their* well-watered pasture lands, and their precious little grain patches, and the increase of their flocks and herds—all as gifts of God. And the wanderers of Israel, as the manna glistened in the morning dew on the desert sands, knew that God was giving *them* each day their daily bread. And—when settled in their own promised and *gifted* land of Canaan—they wrought for harvest, as men do still, there was by God's appointment, the solemn offering to Him of the "first fruits"—the earliest sheaves—to Him, *their* "Lord of the Harvest" as He is ours.

Then, the seemly custom, ordained—sanctioned—of God, for "*Man*" who "liveth by bread," passed, as a thing of course, into the Christian Church. It was a

simple rite, doubtless, in the early days of pure simplicity; and in the farther-on centuries, taking various form and fashion—in days when they loved to worship with symbol and with ceremony. When our fathers broke away from Rome, and when they cast off much that was good and true, as well as much that was of type and ritual, they were wise enough to see that this custom—old as the world—deserved still to live; that, in some solemn fashion or other, children of the Heavenly Father, in the blessed Church of the Redeemer, should still continue to render thanks for harvest mercies.

And here, in this place—look round, friends! on this very district of your own, and think of it!—here, men have owned harvest as coming from a higher hand since—who knows when! Aye! back in the days when the worship was within the circles of the old “standing stones.” Aye! and when yonder tall sculptured stone first began to give some rude mysterious shadowing of the Gospel of the Cross.

And on this very site whereon we now are, they have thanked God for harvest, often in devout and solemn Romish fashion. And, in this very church, on many an appointed autumn Sabbath of the years gone by—the harvest labours done, the harvest safely gathered home—our fathers met, as we meet to-day, with Prayer and Psalm, with Scripture lesson, with plain and earnest preaching of the Word, to render harvest thanks to God.

Christian friends! should not we carry on the custom? There is a tone of remark, in these modern days of ours, which it often pains one's heart to hear. “The harvest thanksgiving” is spoken of lightly—decried as something “old-fashioned and out of place now.”

Old-fashioned! Yes, *indeed* old-fashioned! Old—as we have been saying—old as Eden’s fashion. *Old-fashioned*, thank God! in Scotland! And destined, let us trust in God, to last while there shall still be seed-time and harvest on Scottish soil. While Scottish men and women shall live by bread, may they ever own their fathers’ God.

Old-fashioned—true! But *out of place in our days!* How? or why? The scoffer lightly tells you that “the olden days were so different from ours”! The men and women, for instance, who met to worship in this church in the autumns of last century—they had been, during the preceding week, all personally engaged in the harvest work. The victual was hand-shorn with the old sickle (our old friend the *heuk*). The “harvest rig” was crowded with the busy throng of shearers—all friends and neighbours—and resounded with the merry, good-humoured talk and jest and laughter. Besides, most of those who gathered in this kirk for the “thanksgiving” had each their own little harvest from croft or pendicle. And the “harvest” was an event of real interest in their year’s life. A *good* or a *poor* harvest touched—and very nearly touched—every heart and every home amongst them. The bairns’ bread was at stake. Nowadays it is altogether different. Our modern machinery does all the work—defly clips the grain stalks with the nimbly-moving, sharply-cutting shears, and flings off each gathered sheaf, all firmly cord-bound and ready for the stooking. And nowadays, moreover (it is added), we depend not on our *local* harvest—not on the harvest of all Scotland, or of all Britain. Grain, ripened in all the various lands of earth, comes swiftly over many an ocean,

and is poured into our markets. So bread cannot but be within the easy reach of all homes, unless, perhaps, the very poorest.

And *this* is why—as we are told—we are less called upon than were our fathers to thank God for harvest ! Because God in mercy has taught us to reap far more easily and swiftly, and at far less cost, the grain He makes to grow for us on Scottish soil ; and because He gathers for us besides, in mercy, a full share in the harvest of the world, feeding us almost as He fed wandering Israel, blessing all our homes, but specially poor homes—because of *that* we have the less need to thank Him.

Men who talk thus would be consistent if they said honestly, “We believe in machinery ; we believe in the progress of the race ; we believe much in man’s cleverness and enterprise ; but we don’t believe in God.”

My friends, not in this foolish fashion, but rationally and seriously, let us look this day at our harvest in Scotland. We shall find it saying something to us which we shall do well to lay to heart. The facts before us are these. God has mercifully granted to us in *this* district a good and plentiful crop. And He has in mercy permitted us to gather it home in safety. There are not *many* districts—I don’t know if there is *any* district in Scotland that can say the same. In the words of an old hymn of childhood—

Not more than others we deserve,
Yet God has given us more.

And when we think of many a farm home throughout Scotland where this day the very serious losses of the

harvest are causing deep concern, and the still outstanding and sorely damaged grain occasioning grave anxiety, almost hopeless fear, we may well come to the throne of grace with hearts that *tremble* amidst their thanksgivings. God help the sufferers! He has been *very* merciful to us! Ah! men may talk lightly of "grain from abroad making it all right." All right, indeed! But what of those whose commercial life depends—whose means of living hang on the harvest?

Let us go home, friends, and think of God's goodness to us here, and of those, the many elsewhere, who, in the dealings of providence, have this day sore hearts concerning harvest.

We have been asking in our hymn of praise "what we shall render to the Lord for all His goodness." Take with you a homely answer. Suppose our old friend "the prodigal son," remembering in the far land how good to him his father had been, could have sent a message in the language of our hymn of praise, inquiring how his father would like him to show his gratitude, don't you think his father's answer would simply bid him "*come home*"? That is what God wishes *us* to "render" to Him. He wants each one of us to *come home* to Him, and dwell in the peace and joy and hope He has for us in Jesus Christ.

And suppose the prodigal *home*, and still seeking to make some return to his father for his goodness, don't you think his father might ask him for *his* sake to bear with, to '*gree* with that "elder brother" of his? That is a lesson which we Christians of Scotland have *much* need to practise more than we do. Our kirks—*they* fight; our ranks and classes—*they* stand aloof from each

other ; our trades, our political parties—*they* have their jealousies. And yet, here we all are, eating the common loaf which “our Father” gives us, from the harvest of His whole round world, and we are all asking “what we shall render.” Let us be *brothers* and *sisters*, let us *agree* ; and, my friends, there is not one of us but will find, every day of this week, opportunities of *thus* thanking our Father for the harvest with which He is blessing us.

And it is all very well to say that “bread is cheap and within the reach of all.” Ah, me ! only last week, in some of the lanes and closes of Edinburgh, I saw poor bairns whose thin, white cheeks and hungry eyes were *very* different from what one sees at *our* happy cottage doors here. Men and women, thankful for your harvest mercies, “deal your bread to the hungry.”

[*On a Very Stormy Winter Day.*]

‘ASK!’ ‘SEEK!’ ‘KNOCK!’

MY GOOD FRIENDS—I am surprised and much pleased to find that so many have ventured to face the storm and to gather here to-day. Considering the weather, and the shortness of the day, and the probability that we may have more *drifting* before nightfall, I wish to make the sermon at once *short*, and such as can be easily carried home.

“ASK!” “SEEK!” “KNOCK!”—Matt. vii. 7.

That is the text; and the sermon is *three stories*, thus:—

I. “ASK.”—Every Scotch man, woman, and child loves the name of Jeanie Deans. Our own Sir Walter has told her story in his own inimitable fashion; and we have all read it. Well, just call to mind that bit of the story where Jeanie is brought by the kindness of the good Duke of Argyle into the presence of Queen Caroline. The poor, modest, country lassie with her hair snooded, and her tartan plaid over her shoulders, stands abashed and trembling in the presence of this grand lady. But the Duke has told her that if she can interest this lady in her story, she will win the pardon of

her sister Effie. It is *that* thought, the thought of "puir Effie," that nerves Jeanie's heart. "Puir Effie!" lying in the Edinburgh prison, condemned to be hanged on the gallows tree for child murder! Jeanie's pure, true, brave heart loved her sister Effie, misguided and sinning as she was. One single word of (slightly?) false swearing from Jeanie's lips at the trial would have saved Effie's life. Jeanie would not, even for *that*, swear false. But what on earth was there—not a sin—she would not do for Effie? From Edinburgh to London she had "trampit" wearily but bravely. Her tartan plaid and her homely tongue and her honest heart had gained the Duke. And now, to gain the ear—to touch the heart of this great lady! Effie! Effie's life was maybe hanging on this moment, and the words that might be spoken! And Jeanie was a *wise* beggar. She went about her *asking* in the right way. She lost all thought of ladies and dukes, and of where she was. She never paused a moment to think about what words she would use; but just out of her full heart, spoke in her own natural, homely phrases about "Effie"—"Effie in the prison! a puir young craitur, no eighteen year auld, that couldna be ca'd fit either to leeve or dee! and a word frae the king's mouth would save her life! Oh! ma leddy!" cried Jeanie, as the tears ran down her cheeks, "When the hour o' trouble comes—the hour o' death—it's no what we hae dune for *oorselfs*, but what we hae dune for *ither folk* that it's maist pleasant to think on." It was thus, with her whole heart's longing for Effie's life, in her homely, simple unthought-of words, that Jeanie Deans, at the feet of Queen Caroline, that day *asked* for what she wanted—and she got it.

Dear friends, at the Throne of Grace *ask* you in *that* way, and you will get it.

II. “SEEK.”—Here is my second story. It is a true one—as you all know—for it happened in this very place some years ago—amongst these woods and on that hill side. One day the news began to be whispered that “wee Jessie” was missing. Everybody knew the little winsome creature of six years old, with her blue eyes and her flaxen hair, “the sweetest thing that ever grew beside a cottage door.”

I need not describe the anxious search, to you, everywhere, up the water—down the water—through the wood—along the heathery brae ; everybody—young and old—joined it. I doubt not most of you were there. The “folk” of this place turned out day after day, and went ranging, searching, *seeking* for any trace of the lost darling. They sought and searched as for hid treasure ; and she *was* precious in many hearts, the little playful chatterbox with her old-farrant ways, and her bonnie smile ! And I needn’t tell the story of her being *found*—and that we all wondered how—in what way—the kind hand of God had kept the wee lamb in life day and night—day and night—till that day when there was the scream of joy and wonder as they found her lying, in soft child slumber, among the brackens. Long ago they would have talked about being carried away to “fairyland.” We knew better. We made a wiser guess, when we thought that surely He whose little lamb she was—He without whose will not a sparrow falleth to the ground—had bidden some gentle, wise ewe-mother on the hillside to yield her shelter and her nourishment to the little helpless, homeless waif. In that long search,

all were joining. All were *seeking*—anxious—oh, most anxious—to find. But do you remember the look that was on the *father's* face? Do you remember how the *mother* went *seeking*?

With something like the eager anxiety of *that* search, “seek” *you* for (what is it you need most at this time?) peace—guidance—strength—joy—hope—better, stronger hope of the promised home? “SEEK” for it as you sought that time for the missing bairn.

III. “KNOCK!”—this is a story which the late Dr. Guthrie told. Dr. Guthrie of the ragged schools—Dr. Guthrie, the big broad-shoulder'd, broadly speaking, tender-hearted, humorous Scotsman, that could, better than any man of his time, win tears and laughter, and their hearts, and their money, and their prayers, from any audience he spoke to. No man then could tell a story better.

It was a wild winter night—cold, bitter, sleet lashing the pavements. Dr. Guthrie, late that night, had been down in the Grassmarket, where his blessed work lay, called to some poor sick-bed—and returning home he was passing the door of what was then called the “Night Asylum” or the “House of Refuge,” or something like that. It had been something grander in its day, for there was a huge, heavy, strong, forbidding gate, with iron nails, and a very formidable big iron knocker high up on the gate. Dr. Guthrie described what he saw, as only *he* could do it—the poor wee ragged, half-naked laddie, with the pale pinched face of hunger, drenched to the skin, the sleet lashing his bits of bare feet, and the bit heart sinking in the wee breast in wretched sobs. The Doctor told how he drew from the child the outline

of a common Grassmarket tale—father in jail, mother drunk, the door “lockit,” he was seeking shelter for the night. He had “knockit” (with his poor wee bits of knuckles) and *cried*, but they “wudna come,” the knocker was “ow’r high,” “he couldna *gru*p it.” “So I took that knocker in hand (said the friend of ragged laddies), and I did make it sound through and through that ‘House of Refuge.’” I need not tell you that the laddie got shelter that night, and was in the ragged school next day.

Friends—if we but knew it, we are as much in need as that wee laddie was that night. And, if we feel our helplessness to knock as we would need to knock, doesn’t the Bible tell us of a Saviour who will speak for us at the door, and of a Holy Spirit who will touch our poor hearts, and help us to reach the knocker—and to “KNOCK.”

THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM

ON a severely stormy winter day like this we cannot help sending a thought to those who would fain be with us here, but cannot. We do well to think of them, and lift a prayer for them. Many of them, I doubt not, are doing as much for us to-day !

We may fancy that David in this Psalm—so well known and so much loved—is giving utterance to his thoughts and feelings on some Sabbath day when he was far away beyond reach of the House of God. There must have been many such a day in the course of his wild adventurous earlier life. Even in those earlier years David never lost his trust in God, nor his love for God's house. And, in his more prayerful and settled later days, we know how many a happy hour he spent in that house, and with what delighted zeal he moulded and led its music.

This Psalm begins with a plaintive wail for the House of Prayer from which he was debarred. Our own Scotch metre version is allowed to give his opening words more truly and more tastefully than any other—

How lovely is Thy dwelling-place,
O Lord of Hosts, to me !
The tabernacles of Thy grace
How pleasant, Lord, they be !



FOULIS WESTER CHURCH FROM THE WEST



FOULIS CROSS

With the instinct of a born poet, David takes a metaphor from the days of his desert wanderings. Evidently he is thinking of *thirst*—"longing, yea, even fainting,"—"heart and flesh crying out"—as if, "Oh! for the sweet green speck amidst the bare and barren sands—the *oasis* and its gushing crystal spring!" So longed David's soul that day for access to the living God in His holy house.

With this *keynote* of the Psalm in your mind, you will find no difficulty in forgetting for a moment David, and David's times, and his surroundings, and thinking, instead, that you hear the tones of the Psalm coming, in homelier words, from some honest Scottish heart of our own day. You think you hear a good old Christian man or woman away in some lonely moorland cottage—home most unwillingly absent from God's House, and uttering the very feelings of David's fine old song. These next verses are to the very life Scottish, and Christian, and modern. You see the very inside of the lonely shieling. You hear the frail old body's waesome soliloquy, "The time was when these old limbs were strong and 'soople'; they could carry me up the hill and over the moor! and now it is all I can do to totter to the door and look out. But oh! it is fine to be at the open door—a breath of the sweet summer air and a look at the blue sky and the sunshine on the brown moor. And how easily and swiftly yonder bird wings its flight through the air! Oh, if I could exchange the weary old limbs for wings like yon, how easily would I reach the House of God! Happy bird! that can wheel round the old grey tower and nestle quietly under the old roof. Oh, dear me, if I could but so reach the

place where the holy song and the solemn prayer have so often cheered me ! ”

And then—how naturally, how beautifully, with that thought—rises in the old Christian’s heart and memory the very House and its gathered worshippers as a picture of other days ! The very echo of the morning Psalm tune (some dear old favourite) is in his ears. “Blessed ” (happy) they who are gathered there ! They will be “still ” (at this very moment) praising God. “Happy they ” is still the catchword of the poem. Happy they who have this day “gone the gait ” *I* can never more hope to go ! And then the old, dear, familiar “kirk road ” rises to the mind—its very picture in all the details—winding through the sweet valley of the Balsam trees, with their fragrance fresh after the early rain. So was it in the mind of the Psalmist as he thought of the beauties of *his* land. To an old Scottish heart the homely moor, and the quiet glen, and the scented *Birch* trees may come, perhaps, more readily. But it is all the same. To the Eastern Psalmist long ago, and to the Scottish Christian of modern days, the way to the House of God, alike, is dear. And the little bands of neighbours, winding churchward and joining company, is a homely touch we should not forget. “They go from strength to strength.” That means, the kirk-going band grows as it goes. And these happy folk, “every one of them in Zion ” (in the kirk) “appeareth before God.”

Now mark ; at this point the Psalm rises into its higher flight of faith and prayer. It was often so with David’s prayer-psalms, beginning low and sad, with longing and sighing, and closing in an outburst of strong

faith. The leap into the higher, purer, brighter atmosphere of faith is taken thus—lovely and to be longed for as is God's house, it is not *only* there that the Lord of Hosts hears prayer—"Hear *my* prayer, O Lord of Hosts!" Hear my prayer though I cannot join in the worship of the Sanctuary. "Give ear, O God of the wandering Jacob!" How naturally thoughts of *Jacob* come in. God heard *his* prayer when he was away from home and in a strange land, showed him what a blessed connection subsists between heaven and earth, and made that lonely resting-place among the old stones that night to be BETHEL (God's house) to him. The loneliest shieling on the barest moor can be "Bethel" on the loneliest, dreariest of stormy winter Sabbath days. The Psalm began with the keynote, "happy *they* who can *go to church*." But it closes with a much wider word of blessing. Yes! David loved the Lord's House. A day there was better than a thousand. He would rather wait outside the door—like a faithful Eastern servant couched on his mat at his master's door—and so catch but the faint echo of the worship, than mingle in idle revelry. For he knew the rich blessing God gives in His holy house—the *sunshine* of His grace—the *safety* of His *shielding* care.

But there is the wider grasp of faith with which the Psalm closes, "No good thing will he withhold"—from whom? From the kirk-goers? No! but "from them that walk uprightly." That does not mean anything narrow or pharisaic. In modern phrase it is—that all who trust Him in Christian faith, and live Christian life, the Lord gives—*grace*, while the "travelling days" last; and *glory*, when the travelling days are done.

And then comes the close. The opening was, "Happy the folk for whom it is possible to go to the House of God!" Happy *they*? But now it is, "happy is the man, O Lord of Hosts, that (whether in the lonely home or in the crowded kirk) TRUSTETH IN THEE."

OUR SUMMER SACRAMENT

What mean ye by this service?—EXODUS xii.

I

MY DEAR FRIENDS—I am going to-day to “give out the Sacrament.” That was the old phrase which described the seemly and solemn fashion of our fathers, when the day was intimated beforehand, on which, God willing, the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper should be dispensed. I sincerely hope the “giving out” has not taken wings and altogether flown away with the Saturday and Monday, and, I may almost add, the Fast Day.

What a wonderful institution that Passover was? Was there ever a national institution like it? If the Nile is Egypt, the Passover is, as it were, the origin of the chosen nation, sent rolling down in living picture through all its generations.

The Passover was national. They may talk of their modern socialism, but here is pure socialism. In the blessing of emancipation from bondage which the Passover commemorated, every man, woman, and child, and slave of Israel shared. There were no exclusively privileged ranks then. And it was homely. Each household, each family, had its slaughtered lamb, and its

blood-sprinkled doorway. To every individual family circle came the blessed freedom, and all of blessing to follow, which that freedom promised. The Passover had in it all of tender and impressive association that belongs to a family solemnity or festival. And as, year by year, the day came round again, wouldn't it be with them as it is with us and our summer Sacrament, for long the only one in the parish? It is a marked day in our congregational, family calendar. We often think of who were with us this time last year, and not now.

The text points to a remarkable feature in the Passover observance. The child asks, "What mean ye by this service?" It is said, and probably said with truth, that this was really a part of the ordained programme—that really whenever the Passover was solemnised, a child of the house was taught and trained to lisp the Hebrew words containing this question, and that some older child or some older member of the household recited, as part of the solemn service, an account of God's deliverance of Israel from bondage. They tell us that even yet, when Jewish families in any of the various countries over which they are scattered, observe their Paschal Feast, this remarkable and impressive part of it is faithfully followed.

How wisely does the hand of God manage a thing like this! What an efficient method of imprinting the lesson on the minds of all the homes of Israel in all the years? The little boy, proud to learn his little bit of a recitation task, and that boy growing up to be the bigger boy, who would be as proud to commit accurately to memory the story of God's kindness and might. Thus impressed on a young heart, would the story be

soon forgotten? Our education departments, and our inspectors and School Boards might take a hint, and try if more simple methods than those in cumbrous operation, might not succeed better.

Oh how unlike the complex works of man—
Heaven's artless, easy, unencumbered plan !

But, parents, be sure that you take home the hint. Bible and Psalms and Catechism, imprinted on young minds and memories in Scottish homes, have made Scotland what she is. The Nile is Egypt. The Passover was Israel. The Bible is Scotland.

The Passover looked back and it looked forward. It had a twofold task to accomplish. Looking back, as it went down the stream of time, it was always telling what God had done for Israel. That was the historical work of the Passover. Looking forward, it was always telling what God designed to do for Israel and the world. That was the prophetic or typical work of the Passover.

And, my dear friends, let us, in connection with our thoughts of our approaching Lord's Supper, think of this. The old Passover had been observed through long long ages, in many and many a family circle, till one night a family circle met in an upper room in Jerusalem, and ate together the "Paschal Supper." We may indeed speak of our Saviour and His disciples as a family circle. For our sakes, He left kith and kin, and was homeless in the world. These disciples were His kindred. And, as a Jewish family, they met. So poor for our sakes was He, the very room was borrowed.

By the time that circle sat around their Paschal table, the twofold work of the old Passover was ended. It had

told Israel's history well-nigh to its close. And its prophetic (typical) work was ended. The Lamb of God—the reality—had come. The type, the symbol, might pass away. And so it did. The Saviour's own hands that night might be said to take from the table the last remnants of the old feast, and, inspiring these with new life and a new message, sent them (as His own New Testament, Christian Festival, His Supper) down the stream of time, to be unto all believing in His name, in all that world which He came to save, a blessing far far beyond what the old Passover in its day could ever be.

And again, my friends, look with what grand simplicity does the Almighty hand carry out its purposes. Something was needed by which all hearts that love and trust Jesus Christ the Saviour might remember Him—hearts loving Him in all the lands of earth, throughout all the world's changing ages, amongst all the varied babel of the thousand tongues, amidst all the disputes and divisions, the fall of churches, the birth of new sects. There was to be some keepsake of the Saviour that should be ready for all these hearts and hands, at any time, anywhere, in any circumstances, always, till He came again. What should, what could that keepsake be? It might have been to search far far away. It might have been costly to purchase, impossible for the poor, the weak, the ignorant, to get. Many a poor broken heart might have been crying, "Oh where has that keepsake gone? Who has it? How shall I have it?" My Christian friends, there it is. The simple rite to which in His name I bid you! As free as air—unencumbered—simple, speaking its own world-wide symbol-tongue, which all can understand—that bread

and wine solemnity, which had its birth in the upper room of Jerusalem that night, is floating through the world amidst all the sects and all the creeds—above the creeds—among them, not of them. There it is, ready to bless them all. It speaks its own simple truth only—speaks it silently, in symbol. It is like the little child of the text. If asked why do you love Him? What has He done for you? The child in symbol answers with the bread and wine.

II

It is a lovely day in early June. The sky is blue and the soft summer air is delicious to breathe. Many have come from distant homes, walking pleasantly over moor and hill, through woods and by burn sides. The hawthorn is in richest perfume, the birch sweetly fragrant, the larch softly green, the chesnuts and the rhododendrons and the azaleas are in their beauty, and the clachan with its thatched roofs and its blue smoke lies gently nestling round the old kirk and the kirkyard.

There is many a quiet, restful, solemn “daunder” taken this morning through the kirkyard. The grass is newly mown and all is nice and well cared for among the resting-places that are dear to many hearts. In other years there used to be confused mounds, and rank herbage, nettles, dockens, and other things unsightly. There is nothing of that kind now. The oldest legible stone, bearing date 1670, is set up where it can be well seen, and is well cared for; and the old schoolmaster’s,¹

¹ John Coldstream, born 1676, for forty-five years schoolmaster, “concerning whom his living monuments will continue to exhibit [his character] with greater fidelity than the suspected eulogy of an epitaph.”

of the same century, with its pretty Latin epitaph, has its own honoured place. There are old-fashioned family tombstones, solid and stately. There are little graceful crosses in stone and marble. There are many little child graves, where the flowers planted are always fresh—never allowed to wither—never forgotten. And there are graves, where the little cup or mug holds always some fresh-gathered daisies, that speak as eloquently of tender memory as any marble could.

Many a grave is visited on the morning of the Summer Sacrament,—we think of those who are not with us to-day! The tones of the old bell have floated musically through the summer air, and over the hamlet roofs, and away to the woods on the hillside, and the quiet breathings of the harmonium are speaking their gentle message to the hearts of worshippers as they quietly take their places within the House of Prayer.

The kirk is long and narrow. It has been the *nave* of an older and grander building. The pulpit and the choir seats are at one end; a gallery at the other. I don't think it matters much. But if any one cares to know, we worship looking to the East. For about two-thirds of the length of the church, the book boards are on this day covered with the "fair linen cloths." And these pews are filled with most solemnly reverent "intending communicants." The rest of the space, and the gallery, holds those who seem to be by no means uninterested or unsympathetic spectators.

Tokens! No! The old metal tokens are gone—though, by the way, they are being diligently hunted for by eager collectors, and will probably in after years be very valuable coins indeed! Communion cards—blank

—have been given away freely to all who want them, and those only need to have the name and address pencilled on them. The Communion table is thus as it ought to be, practically free. Any one who wishes may communicate. As to placing the names formally on the roll, the Kirk-Session of course manage that.

But now we come to the solemn service itself.

I for one am thankful always that Presbyterian worship is free. We may sing any psalm or hymn we like, and read any portion of the word we think fitting. Nevertheless, we of the clachan have a great liking to do, in many little things, as our fathers did before us. I know that for forty years and more—and I believe that for long before that—"Psalm 43rd and 3rd" to the tune of "Jackson" has opened the Communion Service. There may be many a grander hymn; but it seems to me—and I think to many who sing it with me—that the old Psalm says just what he would like to say at such a time. I have thought so many a year, I think so still.

O send thy light forth and thy truth;
Let them be guides to me,
And bring me to thine holy hill,
Even where Thy dwellings be.

Isn't it fitting as an opening song of prayer! And then I don't think that any one of us has very often been at all disinclined to throw our hearts on a Communion morning into the words with which it closes

Why art thou then cast down, my soul?
What should discourage thee?
And why with vexing thoughts art thou?
Disquieted in me.

And oh! the bold burst of faith that follows has cheered many a trembling heart at the holy table.

Still trust in God ; for Him to praise
Good cause I yet shall have.

We always end the singing of such words with a hearty choral *amen*. There used to be among the old bodies of long ago a delusion that *amen* was the exclusive property of "Prelatists" and "Papists." But we begin to know that we have as good a right to use a good word like that as they have ; and many a time, I am sure, the musical *amen* of our choir is silently echoed back from many an honest Scotch heart as if that were saying fervently, "Eh, ay ! so may it be ! so may it be ! amen !" I think we are liking the *amen* the better, the more we know it.

Our Morning Prayer.

We all know the special solemnity that belongs to "the morning prayer" of a Communion Sabbath. Scotch people seem always to have a particular regard and liking for what they speak of with reverence as "the morning prayer," even of the ordinary public worship. But on the Communion morning there is a specially solemn hush and stillness that leaves no doubt but that many hearts are busied with tender and serious memories and deep and solemn thoughts. We are this morning, with more than common solemnity, presenting ourselves in the House of God as individuals, as families, as a congregation. We wish in this morning prayer to tell of all our failings, and all our fears, and all our thanks, and all our gladness and hope, and all our wants in our own home tongue, and in our own home fashion—for we of the clachan cling very strongly to the freedom of our worship. Perhaps if we knew the Book

of Common Prayer as English folk know it we would love it as they do. Perhaps even the words of the Book of Common Order might become in time as familiar to our ears as they are to those of many town congregations. But we were scared by the queer name of Euchologion under which the latter book first showed its face, and we have been shy of it ever since. Wherefore we of the clachan dwell amongst our own people like the good Lady of Shunem and like our own home tongue best. Words which good people used in prayer long ago have no doubt their own value as antiquities, and people cannot but have a love and regard for words they have used in prayer all their days. We don't quarrel with other people, but we do think that the words are best for us which most readily express the thoughts and feelings of our hearts at the time.

Our Lessons.

We don't call them lessons, though "a lesson" is a well-known phrase by which our old country people describe a quiet, steady, solitary, serious study of a portion of Holy Scripture. We don't cry out "Here beginneth" or "Here endeth" the lesson, for the folk have some sense, and they know when the minister begins to read, for they read, silently, along with him, and they know (unless they are very deaf) when he stops. It seems to us much more decorous, and reverent, and sensible in the House of God that the minister should say to the folk "Let us read together a portion of the word of God," and then the passage about to be read is named. On the Sacrament Sabbath morning it is with us hardly needful at all to indicate

the "lessons." No authority ties us down to them. But we have long loved—so did our fathers before us—to read, first in ancient prophecy how the lamb was to be led to the slaughter, and then in later gospel story, how at Calvary "they crucified Jesus."

There is little difficulty in finding amongst our modern Scripture paraphrases or in our more recent collection of hymns fitting words of praise to sing.

Worthy the Lamb let us reply,
For He was slain for us.

That chimes in admirably. Some of us would rather have a good old Psalm of David at such a time. Yet I must say so sincerely simple to my heart sound the words of that sweet little Communion Hymn.

According to thy gracious word,
In deep humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember Thee.

I am not sure, but I should rather hear that sung than anything else.

Our fathers did not care so much as we do to have the Lord's Prayer in public worship. The current that came down to them from their fathers and forefathers ran against set forms—all set forms. But that is forgotten now, and high time. For two generations at least we have daily used, and we all love dearly the sacred—the more than inspired—words. If we missed it any day from its set place, we should wonder.

The "Action" ¹ Sermon.

Can anybody explain the old name which was assigned to the sermon of this day? Probably I ought to

[¹ "Actio gratiarum," *i.e.* giving of thanks.—EDITOR.]

be ashamed to say I have never been able to discover this. But there must be those of wider reading and more in touch with the phrases of old days who can tell. I have often thought our old fathers may have meant by the phrase a sermon by means of which a wise and experienced shepherd tries to wear in his flock to the sheltering rest, and the comforting nourishment, which the holy ordinance provided for them. And, indeed, the task is one that needs to be wisely, gently, tenderly, and yet firmly and solemnly gone about. What minister does not know the state of delicate tension in which on a day like this he finds the hearts and minds, the memories, the feelings, the thoughts of his hearers. The strings of the harp he has to touch are to-day so very quickly responsive, that the quieter and more simple the touch the better. It is no time for doctrinal discussion or critical hairsplitting, or innumerable subdivisions, or dashing, startling illustrations. Speaking as from a humble pew, I should be inclined to say, if I might venture to address my minister in homely tongue, I should be inclined to say, "Oh, minister, dinna be ower langsome, and dinna be ower lairnet the day. Jist a quate, solemn, hearty word or twa, to lead us in aboot to the table, thinkin' in oor hearts of oor Saviour's love, an' that bit word 'll bide wi' us a' through the day." And if the minister speaks his few words from his own heart, there will be close and attentive listening, on till he closes with a prayer that God would bless the preaching of His word.

III

And now for the more specially solemn part of this day's service. Many good people would, no doubt, like that there were some fitting form of words appointed, in which the minister might call upon the congregation to approach the observance of the holy rite. And, no doubt, were there such a form, it would come ere long to be much loved and very dearly cherished. But on the other hand such a form might not be the most suitable for every congregation, nor specially suitable for a particular congregation at every time. And we of the Clachan, who love of all things what is homely and simple, like it better that the minister should, just in a few words of his own, perhaps arising out of, and carrying on the train of thought which the action sermon has suggested, or perhaps alluding to our own congregational circumstances at the time, invite us to come with fitting thoughts and feelings to remember our Redeemer's love. And these words lead naturally on to the reading of

The Warrant.

That is an old phrase of our forefathers. They liked to make sure that, for everything connected with their creed and with their worship, they had Scripture ground to go on. And so we read together in our Bibles the words—either those of one of the three evangelists, or those of the apostle to whom it was specially revealed—which direct us all in what manner to “do this in remembrance” of our Saviour. And the customary words with which we close our Bibles, asking that God would bless to us the reading of His Holy Word, seem to

breathe at the same time a prayer for His blessing upon us while seeking to obey our Saviour's latest earthly bidding.

'Twas on that night, when doomed to know
The eager rage of every foe—
That night in which He was betrayed,
The Saviour of the world took bread.
And after thanks and glory given
To Him who rules in earth and heaven,
That symbol of His flesh He broke,
And thus to all His followers spoke.

Yes! there are no doubt finer Communion hymns than this—many much older and much more beautiful. These words date but from the days of our great grandfathers, and in the days of our great grandfathers many good Christian people would not on any account sing them. But we of these later generations have come to love the words “for the fathers’ sakes.” And then the words are words of Scripture. They form part of the solemn service in keeping with the Scripture “warrant.” And, if any one is inclined to long for something in the way of finer hymn poetry, I would beseech such a critic, before voting to banish the 35th Paraphrase, just to come to a country kirk on a summer sacrament Sabbath, and hear those words sung—hear the singing and watch the faces, while slowly and reverently the elders are bearing into the church the sacred vessels and laying them in order on the table. Now that their rhythm has become dear and sacred to us all, no other words could take their place. No words could be nearly so fitting, for they are essentially the words of inspired Scripture in reference to the ordinance. I think we cannot doubt that it will long remain a part of our unwritten and tacitly understood “common order” in the Kirk of

Scotland, for the minister to say, "Let us worship God by singing the 35th Scripture Paraphrase, and, whilst we are singing, the elders will place the sacred elements on the table."

The Consecration Prayer.

That is an old name, and like other old phrases, is coming into more frequent use in later days ; but for a good many generations our fathers of the Scotch Kirk were shy of it, and I hardly think it is much known or ever used by us of the Clachan. On the contrary, we proceed, keeping strictly and steadily to solid Scripture ground and Scripture phraseology. What was done that night in the Upper Chamber at Jerusalem—that is our "order." And so, with no allusion to consecration, we simply follow the example of Him who, when He broke bread, "gave thanks." And well we may tender humble and hearty thanks to God for these symbols that are before us, and for all they mean for us. And for *this* consecration of the bread and wine, assuredly we do pray that God by His grace would enable us to partake of them to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

The Table Addresses.

They have gone. They were useful in their time, but their work is done now, and they are better away. Even in the days of other years, I feel sure that there was many a devout, tender-hearted communicant seated at the holy table and hearkening to the inevitable address, who was silently saying, "Oh, if they would but let me just sit quiet, and not preach to me at this time, but just let me think about my Saviour's love, and all He bore

for me." And I am quite sure that the deeply solemn hush in which the rite is now observed amongst us, is something that speaks far more powerfully to hearts than almost any words could.

Giving and Receiving Bread and Wine.

It is as our old friend the Shorter Catechism describes the act. And it is to be noticed that throughout we cleave firmly to the following of what was done in the Upper Chamber. The minister, for the moment speaking in the Saviour's very words, and, like Him, breaking the bread, takes it himself as a disciple and then gives it to the elders as disciples, and they to other disciples. The perfectly manifest idea is that we are all around one table—all partaking—"giving and receiving," bound together in Christian brotherhood and sisterhood by the very act. How sweetly, tenderly impressive is the silence reigning while these silver vessels are making their quiet undulating progress here and there throughout the church. How many varied lines of thought and feeling are being pursued in the many varied, silent hearts. Old days of childhood come back—faces of fathers, of mothers gone to their rest appear with the old looks of love. The friends who were beside us here in other years are thought of. The happy home where our loved are dwelling: that is thought of. The home troubles, the home mercies are remembered. The failings, the neglects, the sins, the unworthiness—they are brought in humble penitence once more and laid trustfully on Him who died. And that love of His comes in full tide, thrilling through the thankful heart, and there is the longing wish to be nearer to Him, now and henceforth,

than ever—to do His work better, and oh! speed the cause that is so dear to His heart. His kingdom come, in our hearts, in our homes, aye, but in all the world as well.

And now, still on the lines of the Upper Chamber, let us sing our hymn—

Oh thou my soul, bless God the Lord.

How well that chimes in with all the varied thoughts and feelings. What a meaning the dear old words carry at a time like that! Our solemnity is near its close. But the minister can hardly let us go without a parting word. And if ministerial work may be likened to the work of the smithy, it may be said that hearts, at such a moment, are in the state in which iron is ready for the hammer strokes. Who can tell how good may be the impression left by, were it but one or two wise, good, gentle touches of the hammer—one or two quiet, loving, earnest, homely words. Oh, not book read! not book read! but by common word of mouth, if they are to tell.

Our Parting Hymn.

For many a long year, one little hymn has always, summer and winter, closed our sacramental service. How very easily a custom comes to be originated. Many years ago we met around the Communion table with hearts that missed and mourned one recently taken away from us. The little hymn was a great favourite with her, and she sang it very sweetly, in her home and in the church. With tears in many eyes, we closed our service that day, and we have stuck to it. The hymn is a well-known one. In those long ago days we sang it to

•

the tune of "Harts," and so we do still, though it is now wedded to another tune.

Part in peace, Christ's life was peace ;
Let us live our life in Him.
Part in peace, Christ's death was peace ;
Let us die our death in Him.
Part in peace, Christ promise gave
Of a life beyond the grave,
Where all mortal partings cease ;
Brethren, sisters, part in peace.

And now, once more in this old House of God, the words of solemn blessing are pronounced, and, after a moment or two of silent prayer, we move slowly out from the opened doors, deliciously breathing the fresh summer air, and carrying, let us trust, some portion of the blessing with us to our homes.

RAIN ON THE MOWN GRASS

PSALM lxxii. 6.

THE Bible pictures are *true*—drawn from Nature and from life—and that makes them so beautiful and so striking and so telling. We have all been wishing and wearying for a spring shower. We have all been saying how it would refresh the earth and “bring things on.” In God’s good time we shall have the shower! He has never forgotten us, never failed us. We have often trusted God when we could not trace Him. Let us do it still!

But some of us may remember times when we have been much more anxious about the *rain* than we are now. We may remember when we have had a long, long time of trying drought, and when after we had reaped a sadly scanty hay crop, and the ground was hard and dry and parched, that there came at last the longed-for, prayed-for, blessed rain. And how delicious, how gladdening was the sound of it, as it came gently lighting on the mown and cleared hayfields, sinking down so quietly in among the clover roots, refreshing, reviving, quickening, giving hope and promise of a rich and abundant second growth.

That is the particular image in the Bible picture

before us now—the quiet, gentle, *blessing* touch with which the drops of God's kind rain-shower light upon the parched land, and do their work there. The Psalm is prophesying that even so would Christianity alight on earth, and dwell there, and do its blessed work.

And did not Christianity so come to earth? Look how the Saviour Himself came! It might have been that a host of warrior angels were sent forth with flaming swords to scatter the enemies of God on earth, and to cleave a path through the nations for His conquering chariot. It was very different. The angels did come. They were all astir with joy at the thought of the wondrous, priceless blessing earth was about to get. And down they came, but no flaming swords, no angry thunders! They alighted—as these same raindrops alight—quietly, gently, on the Bethlehem hillside. And they told their news to the shepherds, not in their own heavenly tongue, but in the plain homely country phrase of the Bethlehem land. And, even as they floated up in air again—*home*, to the golden gates—their song of holy joy was in the homely shepherd language still.

The Great, the Almighty Redeemer of the world had come. And oh, dear children, who may be hearing me, would not you have liked to go with the shepherds to the little village, and stand with them and gaze on that infant lying in a poorer cradle than ever held the baby of our poorest cottage home? You have often loved to look upon an infant's face. But never infant face smiled on you so lovely and so pure as that face in the poor manger cradle.

And then the child-life. Was the Saviour Child

not carried away into some holy seclusion, and tended and guarded by the angels of His Father's house till His Saviour work should begin? No! children; it was a common village country life like yours. A home as plain as your own. His playmates were the Nazareth children, and with them He learned to know the wild flowers of the little valley, and to love the songs of the birds and the music of the burn. He grew in stature. And He grew—so by His grace may *you* grow!—in favour with God and man.

Working men! He was one of *you*. He knew the long day's toil at the joiner's bench. And He murmured not. Christians! did not your Saviour come to earth, quietly, gently, as the rain comes on the mown grass?

Then there came harder work. And still it was like the rain—softly, lovingly—blessing earth. His whole life-work was *blessing*. There were works of Almighty power and wonder; but they were for merciful healing. He spoke words of deepest truth and wisdom—words of most solemn warning. But those were never spoken save lovingly and tenderly. Sorely tried by bitter enemies, He was forgiving always—ay! to the very last, when, amidst the agony of His death-hour on the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”! went up from His breaking heart and His parched lips in prayer to God. Surely He who uttered that prayer in such an hour was no mere man!

Then went the first Apostles forth through all the world, in obedience to their Lord's last command ere He ascended to His throne. And they went to their work as the raindrops go to theirs, gently, quietly, peacefully.

Ah! but so went not to the work they who have since followed these first messengers of the Gospel. For many and many a long dark century the Church forgot the fashion of the raindrops' work! There was pride and tyranny and jealousy and strife. There was persecution and imprisonment and the stake. And no wonder so much of the blessed work in the world remains yet undone. It is only within the century now closing over us that Christians have begun to work after the fashion of the rain-showers on the mown grass. Only of late years have they gone to work as the Lord bade His first workers go. Only of late have we seen, as we see now thousands and thousands of cultured Christian men and women—ay! thank God, women—going down among the debased and the ignorant and winning them to the Saviour's Cross by gentleness and love.

It comes with a bad grace from the sceptic to ask why is so much of the work left undone? and has Christianity lost its power and failed? The sceptic may be answered in homely fashion. He is himself a little bit of the world which the Gospel has not yet Christianised. And why not? The Gospel has never undertaken to make men Christians whether they will or not. It comes with the full free offer of its blessings to the man. It lays, as it were, at his very feet priceless treasures for here and hereafter. It goes farther; it offers again and yet again. It warns, it remonstrates, it beseeches, it pleads warningly. It knocks again and again at the door. But it does not force. The man is still free and so responsible.

But it comes ill from the man who rejects the Gospel,

who wont look at its blessings, wont *try* it, to complain that it has no blessings to give. And it comes as ill from him to complain that the Gospel has not Christianised the world, when not one atom of his individual influence has ever gone toward that work. To that extent, at least, surely the blame rests not with the Gospel but with himself.

Thank God for these prophecies of this old 72nd Psalm! For it seems to tell us not to doubt the power of the Gospel, not to grow faint-hearted and despair. Some time in the world's future, better times are yet to be. Not perhaps in our time, though even now Christianity is winning in the world, as the soldiers say, "all along the line"; but it may be not so very long after our work is done there will be Christians in the world, working in better times than ours, under better conditions, freed from our sectarian jealousy and strifes, working together, and as the sailors say, "with a will," and, above all, working in the quiet, gentle, peaceful fashion of the raindrops. And these Christians of that later day may be loving often to turn to the 72nd Psalm and saying, "Ah! yes; we knew this word of prophecy would come true at last! Here it is indeed! the blessed rain-shower is coming down upon our long parched land with reviving power. The world has waited long and wearily for this! and it has come at last."

Will not the hearts of Christians be glad on that day! Will they *not*? Hear how the Psalm prophetically pictures their gladness! It is one of the Bible's own homely true, striking, *telling* pictures this! Our old English translation scarcely brings it fully out. It is

literally, "Ye shall go out and gambol (or frolic) like calves of the stall." Fancy young cattle, beasts who have spent this long dreary winter, tied up in the close, dark "stall," and their delight when they have the first breath of the fresh spring air, the first taste of freedom, and the first mad, joyous scamper over the green field. Who is there—loving to think of the intense holy joy filling the hearts of the redeemed who see their Saviour's cause prospering wondrously in all the world—I say who is there that will object to this Bible picture because it is plain and homely and taken from the common farmyard life? Don't you pity the man or woman born who thinks it "vulgar."

Let me close, my Christian friends, with one little lesson from the raindrops of the text. There is no rivalry with them, no question who is to go first, no haste, no impatience. Each goes on its own path, guided by the hand that guides the sun in the heavens. Each does its own work silently, faithfully, and no fuss about it, no wish for its being published abroad and praised. It is when Christian work shall be done like that in the world that Christ's cause shall flourish, and the hearts of all that love Him shall rejoice. Humbly but most earnestly do I recommend to all who work for Christ, of all the Churches, all the sects, be they ministers, elders, bishops, deacons, sisters of mercy, deaconesses, women workers, Sunday school teachers, sick nurses, or wearing any other designation whatever—most earnestly do I recommend (by no means forgetting myself) *the lesson of the raindrops*. And I think the little children may like to hear sometimes how the raindrops do.

THE WATER OF LIFE

“Ho ! every one that thirsteth ! come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”—ISAIAH lv. 1.

THIS part of Isaiah has so evidently for its theme “the Saviour and His Kingdom,” it speaks so plainly a gospel message that one is, at times, apt to forget, for the moment, but that these chapters stand in the New Testament rather than the Old Testament. The same truths are told in the New Testament, told over and over again in many different forms, and in different kinds of language. But it would seem as if, not waiting till “the fulness of the time” had come, and the Saviour had appeared on earth, God was pleased to give His old Church many a hint and sign—many a clear foreshadowing—many a plain promise—many a bright and glorious picture-prophecy—as to the redeeming of the world ! Like the every now-and-again reappearing sun-glints of a morning that heralds a bright sunny summer day as coming, there are, throughout all the “Book of God,” from its earliest pages onward, glints breaking through the mist and haze of that morning sky. And, as the child said of the stars, that “they were the gimlet-holes” to let the glory shine through, these glints from the Old Testament pages did let through to earth, in these early days, for the benefit

of the old world's people, something of God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ to all the race. There are no sun-glints of this kind in all the older Book of God so bright and cheering as those in the later pages of Isaiah ; and there is something in the bright, prophetic picturing that charms the fancy of us all, old and young. We all like to look on the familiar truths and facts and lessons of the Gospel, in their quaint, bright Old Testament dress. I am sure the story of the Saviour's sufferings, as we have read it together on a Communion morning, first, in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and then in the narrative of the Evangelist, touches the heart no less in the prophetic picture than in the recorded history. Take three instances of this—

(1) God wished it to be well known in His earlier Church that the Redeemer was to come, and was to suffer and to die—a sacrifice, an atonement, a ransom for many : and so it was written in the Old Testament how He should be “led as a lamb to the slaughter.”

(2) God wished His earlier Church to know that the coming Redeemer would teach His redeemed ones, loving Him, to love holiness and do good. And so the picture was sketched by prophetic hands and held up for the old world to see—of the fair landscape, weeded of all its useless and unsightly growth, and clothed in the rich beauties of garden land and forest.

(3) God wished His “old” Church to know that the Salvation provided for sinners (by the coming death of the Redeemer) would be, in the fullest sense of the words, a “free Salvation”—freely offered, freely given—and so that verse was written by the God-guided hand of the Prophet—“Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come

ye to the waters!"—and there it stands, in the charming brightness of its picture-poetry that catches the heart of childhood, in all the simplicity of its words that makes it plain to the poorest wandering beggar on the face of earth. Good work it did (who can doubt?) in the old days of Israel—for was not there mercy with God for every humble believing soul—was there not salvation for sinners, in the Saviour, when as yet He was but the "promised Saviour"? And, God knows, the little verse has done good work in the later days—now that the promised Saviour has come, and died, and is the living, the ever-present Saviour. Perhaps the plainest, freest words of invitation in all the Book of God, they have many a time spoken His mercy message by the lonely sick-bed, when earth and time were passing swiftly, and eternity was near at hand. They have led many a poor thoughtless soldier, many a rough, reckless sailor lad, lying in the silence of the hospital, to drink of the living water and to live. And if the words stand (as who can doubt they do, in God's Book) for the very purpose of telling every sinner that Salvation by Jesus Christ is free for the very taking, could there be words that more plainly tell it—could there be a picture that more plainly shows it?

Here, surely, is a text that needs no commentator to explain it. Why, it is almost as if the little homely text were taking you and me by the hand and leading us away west to our old village fountain, whose blessed stream runs gushing from beneath the living rock. Many a weary one has rested by the well, many a thirst have its waters slaked. It has carried life to the homes of many a passing generation. And there it flows,

glistening blithely to the morning sun, and shining white beneath the silver moonlight—unchecked, unchanged amidst the winter snow, unstinted in the summer's drought. Was there ever question as to who might come? Was ever the poorest pitcher denied its share? Thousands have drunk of it, and, come thousands more, it is flowing free to all. Race after race have been gathered to their fathers: the bairns that played around it are men and women now: but there never lived the man or woman yet who could say "The water of the old well was not free to me!"

When it is to man we have to go and ask for what we need, when we have to ask support from the hand of man, there are searching questions to be answered, inquiries about former ways and habits and means and character, and so on. But it was never asked, on the part of the old freely flowing well, what the past life had been, or what the present character might be—no more than it ever mattered if it was highest rank or lowest beggary that stood there—or if the cup were silver chased or poorest earthenware that was held to catch the water. And so I say that the old fountain may help us a little to think of the "living waters" of the text. But the waters of the text are freer yet! I can imagine some hot harvest day in the village long ago, when all the young and strong were out at busy work, and some poor old, frail, bedridden one lay lonely, helpless in the empty, silent house, longing, longing through the weary hours (as David once did) for a draught from *his* old village well. But oh! my friend, if it is the "living water," and if God's word is saying "Come," the word is nigh thee, in thine

heart—the “water” is there by your very sick bedside. You are close to the living fountain. The word is nigh thee, in thine heart. You have but to hold out, as a pitcher, simple faith—simple faith in God who offers; and even the pitcher is God’s free gift. Ask Him for faith, and He will give it.

“Where the Amazon pours its waters, by many mouths, into the ocean, the fresh water naturally floats above the salt. Ignorant of this, a ship’s crew, who thought that—their barrels being empty—they were perishing of thirst, signalled to a passing ship, ‘Water! Water! We are perishing of thirst!’ The answer was signalled back—‘*Dip your casks overboard!*’”

The old text of Isaiah, in order to impress the minds of all who read the Bible with the perfect freeness with which Salvation in Jesus Christ is offered, has set before us the earthly picture of the freely flowing fountain. But it has done more. It has conjoined with that an idea borrowed from an Eastern bazaar, or mart, where those who have goods to sell call out eagerly to attract the notice of the passers-by, and anxiously invite them to “Come, and buy!” Fashions change; but the modern merchants, instead of crying out *vocally* in praise of their goods, manage to do so more effectually by means of *print*. We can all understand the well-spring waters being free. But in this second picture, lo! here are all the richest treasures of the Eastern world proclaimed as freely offered “without money and without price.” Oh! my friends, you who have really accepted the Gospel terms, you know that this is true, you have within your heart to-day blessings, feelings that make you glad—peace, and joy, and hope—those

blessings which are but poorly pictured by the treasures of any land on earth. And you know to-day (it was not always so plain to you) that you have these priceless blessings on the very terms on which the poor tramp slakes his thirst at the way-side well—"without money and without price." And if it be such a good and happy thing, the life that these waters give to every one that tastes them, if to close with the free offer of pardon in Jesus Christ will make you happy now, and happy as you go on serving the best, the kindest Master in all the universe—who will lead and guide you, in this life, from day to day, and who will make you willing to go happily home to Him for ever when He calls you—why not "engage with Him" even now? When the sick-bed comes, there may not be time: you may not be the same man (or woman) you are now. But it is not only that: Come now! Come to-day, and be happy! Come and know what a good and happy thing it is to trust and serve the Saviour! AMEN. And may God bless His Word!

CHARACTER SKETCHES

THE TINKERS

I

Tribe of the wandering foot and weary breast !

I WONDER *where*, in all Scotland,—north and south, east and west,—“the Tinkers” are not known ! Ministers of all persuasions know them. Whatever be their faults and failings, they are free from *our* universal sectarianism. From Auld Kirk, Free, U.P., Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Scotch Episcopal, they have got, at times, some word and act of kindness, some help in sickness, and often the christening of their “bairns.” They live in an atmosphere of their own, that is not troubled with the matters of dispute which unhappily divide our churches from one another.

The Tinkers have been friends of mine for well-nigh half a century. We know each other ; and have a good many memories in common. So, when last week word came to me that “Grannie” was ill and wished to see me, I took plaid and staff and made for where experience told me the “tent” would probably be pitched. I don’t know that the Tinkers look out very carefully for the picturesque. But I do know I have seldom found them encamped but in some spot whose natural features would much please the taste of any one of my artist friends.

The scene in question was like this. We had been having curling weather for a few days before. The hills were white with winter. A night of bitter frost had gone, and the forenoon sun was shining in a comfortably winter fashion. On a dry rocky knoll, sheltered from the "angry airt" by a clump of old ash trees, and getting the full benefit of the sunshine, the queer-looking nondescript family-tent was stretched. The two men were lounging about on the sunny brae that sloped down to the burn-side, as idle a pair of gentlemen as could be seen in front of any aristocratic mansion, cigar in mouth, taking a leisurely morning stroll on the patrimonial lawn-tennis green. My friends—pipes in mouth and hands in pouches—seemed to be doing nothing whatever but admiring the play of the sunshine, and the distant view of the fertile and well-cultivated strath, and, it may be, listening in poetic mood to the music of a very pretty little cascade, one of the pleasantly picturesque features of the temporary family residence. On the opposite side of the burn stood—one of the family—an old friend of mine. I have known him for many years by the name of "Sandy." He is a quadruped, but whether a "pownie," or a mule, or a donkey, or something else, I have never discovered. He is like no other beast I ever saw. A rough shaggy coat of an entirely neutral tint, inclining to pale yellow, mercifully hides his protruding bones; but I am sure they stick out prominently. A born tinker, "Sandy" had passed the night in a close comfortable bit of copse, among the rabbits and the pheasants. And now, like the other gentlemen, he was having his forenoon lounge in the sunshine. Standing in the lee of a huge boulder, he was nicely sheltered

from the north wind, and was quietly basking in the sun, munching a bit of anything in shape of grass that was at hand, and twitching his long ears as if saying to himself that the winter sunbeams minded him of sunny summer days—and in short (as other people were saying), that “this was a fine day !”

Within the tent, in a cosy nook where the heat of the fire comforted her, and yet where it sent the reek circling harmlessly above her old gray head and out at the door, sat—or *hunkered*—“Grannie.” In various corners of the smoky chamber were the usual indefinite number of “childers,” of any age, it might be, and, so far as raiment might indicate, of any sex—with the same family face and the same family voice—clothed in who could describe *what* ! all pervaded with the same aromatic flavour, suggestive of their having been bedraggled with snow and mud the day before, and steamed and reeked all night round the stick fire. O ye anxious-minded mammas, who tremble lest the nursery chimney having smoked, may affect darling little Chrissy’s susceptible bronchial organs, do you ever think how *other* bairns get through ? These little ones of the tent had scrambled through the frosty night, and thus far into the winter day ; and let us hope there was *some* breakfast for them in the early hours ! But I *doubt* it was a light meal ! A “pickle brose,” with mayhap (but I don’t know) a “sowp” of milk. Perhaps only a dry crust and a taste of Grannie’s strong tea. The older children were off on the day’s begging tramp. On the other side of the fire sat Grannie’s “good-daughter,” their mother. I had seen her carried, years ago, a wailing infant on the maternal back, rolled up in some remnant of an old plaid.

And here she was, a stout strong matron ! And her forenoon work was as light and easy as that of any lady in the land whose morning hours are devoted to any light fancy work. The tinker matron sat and leisurely broke the dried brushwood (gathered no doubt by young hands that morning), and so kept the fire alive. Hers was no "fancy work" indeed ! but most seriously necessary for the comfort—ay, the *life*—of that canvas "morning-room," that winter day—even though the sun *was* glinting on the waterfall and gilding the fir trees, and though "Sandy" was basking in its rays. For the thermometer (at the kitchen gardens beside the vinery) was telling of degrees of frost. I must say that as I took my seat in this chamber to talk to the ladies and the children, I was comforted by the presence of that stick fire. It would have been cheerless without it. The gentlemen lounged up, with their natural easy nonchalance, and, standing outside, joined occasionally in a free and friendly fashion in the conversation. I said I took my *seat*—but I confess I didn't *quite* do that—for, not being trained to the easy oriental mode of seating themselves which the ladies of the tent practised, and being squeamishly afraid of honestly sitting down on some damp straw which had probably been the bedding of one or two of the juveniles the night before, I ignominiously compromised the matter, and knelt on my good old plaid and supported myself with my "cromach." "Grannie" and I had a good long crack—chiefly bearing on family history—and we touched on the death of her poor old mother, who was the "Grannie" of the tribe in *her* day, and who lived to be nearly a hundred years of age, and died in the Perth Infirmary from the effects of an accident.

Grannie *junior* was nearly ninety: and no old lady of my acquaintance of anything like that age retains, as “Grannie” does, either looks or powers of mind and memory. She reminded me of an incident of some thirty years ago, when their tent family was rescued from perishing one night in a wood where the wind and snow had put out their poor fire; and they were gathered in an old ruined house around a blazing hearth. There they lived for some days; and, acting as their family chaplain *pro tempore*, I was trying to tell them, in words of my own, the story of the prodigal son. I would have been wiser to be content with those of scripture! Old Grannie, poor body! made a very pardonable mistake in chronology; and, fancying the incident had occurred recently and in the neighbourhood, she kept up a running comment of her own. Quite audibly, she alluded, between the whiffs of her pipe, to the prodigal as “puir stupid craitur! och! hoch me!” etc., and to his generous father by saying “Ay! ay! he had *aye* the kind heart! God bless his honour!”—and so on.

We had, this day, what some of my younger brethren would designate a “service”; but it was of a very homespun character. “Our Father” and “The Lord’s my Shepherd” wear a *kent* face all the world—at least all Scotland—over. And the Tinkers *do* pick up something of the Bible’s good news as they wander about among the homes of a Christian land. Shame to many of us that they have not picked up *more*! I shall never forget how the good face of old “*Sheriff Barclay*” *glowed* when he found that a poor Tinker under sentence of death in the Perth Prison (but whose sentence was commuted) did know one bit of a Christian hymn! The poor lad

sang it at the Sheriff's request. He had got it, he said, one Sabbath day, from an old packman, beside whom he had sat all afternoon on the braes of Glenquaich. It may have been "*Peter*" himself! the well-known Celtic packman missionary. It was a queer, quaint, simple song—perhaps some old remnant of the Romish Kirk—telling simply the story of the Saviour's life and death.

Christ was born in Bethlehem,
And in a manger laid—

was one verse of it.

I wish to say something *more* about the Tinkers, to tell of several attempts which kind friends in this neighbourhood have made in other years to *detach* the young Tinkers—to educate them, and to start them in a different and better line of life. I have to tell, I am sorry to say, much more of failure than of anything like success. The wandering tent-life seems to have charms of its own that are inborn and irresistible; and the captured young "Tinker"—in *almost* all my cases at least—has got back to the patrimonial tent and the roving beggar life. Alas! blame, no doubt, rests on us the attempting rescuers! We should, we might, have made the "life-line" more firmly fast! We should, we might, have got a more *Christian, spiritual*, and therefore *firmer* hold! But courage! and let us try again! And I would fain take counsel with fellow-Christians as to the possibility of trying some much more extensive, and united, and *systematic* plan of taking off the young vagabonds; and then we may leave the old "grannies" and the idle grandfathers to end the weary wandering pilgrimage in peace. This I hope to be permitted to do ere long.

II

“What *is* to be done with these wretched Tinkers?” A day or two before my readers were good enough, last month, to visit Grannie’s tent with me, that question was discussed in the correspondence column of the *Scotsman*. I know these letters were not only wisely but kindly written. Yet, as an old friend of the family, I felt glad to think that the *Scotsman* is not handed in every morning at the tent-door; and that, therefore, the Tent Family are wandering on, happily “illiterate,” and so not knowing that it is proposed to—*take away their children*. Oh, if they did know! what a Ramah wail would rise from the tents in all the land! It helps me to think how very bitter that wail would be when I remember what I saw one day some years ago. A heavily-drifted snow-storm was on the ground, and the Tinkers were knowingly pitched in the heart of a dense, black, fir-wood, on the outskirts of which was a farm-steading, where, long experience had told them, the hearts were kind. Here lay that day a poor lassie whom I had known from childhood. She had been taken from the tent-life when quite young; and, by certain good friends, trained for service. She began service; and a good smart servant she was. But the love of the free life was in her heart. The wandering home—all the more because it *was* wandering—was still dear. And Katie, spite of all remonstrances, pleadings, coaxings, warnings, and what not, went back to her “ain folk”; and here she was—a wandering tinker *wife*. In giving birth to her first child the day before her life had been in grave peril. Our good old doctor—blessings on his memory! for many a kind thing

doctors often do, and *he* did many—had struggled through the drifts to her assistance. When I saw her, Katie lay, no doubt with surroundings that would have frightened a ladies'-nurse a little, but still wonderfully comfortable. She had a tent to herself. Her "folk" were at hand. There was a cheery fire, and plenty brushwood. Poor "*Sandy*" had got as near the fire as he might, and was disconsolately tugging at the little spruce branches, and finding them by no means satisfactory food. Katie lay, packed in with straw and garments and "cloots" of all kinds, looking—pleased and proud—down upon a wee bit of a living red face, which she could see by keeking down into a nondescript bundle of wraps. Perhaps it was unkind of me to say it to poor Katie. It was certainly too soon to say it. But, in the midst of a quiet and cannie crack, I said surely she wouldn't like this wee lassie to be brought up to this kind of life. What a burst of tender feeling came over poor Katie's heart! How she grat and sobbed! and what kisses she sent down through the hole in the bundle of wraps to the wee red face. "Na, na! they're *no* to tak' awa' my wee lassie frae me." I was frightened to see the poor thing's emotion. The good doctor would have rebuked me, and I was glad to drop the subject.

The wee lassie of the fir-wood is growing up to be a wandering woman now, and that is what should not be in a Christian land. So, despite the sore hearts, like Katie's, that will have to be, and the Ramah wail that will be sure to rise, I fear the inevitable *something* must be done. Must it be done by the stern hand of the *Law*? If Scotland were as Scotland might be, if her

many churches were one — compact, well organised, watching, fostering, caring for the *nation* in all its corners like a mother, what a slight thing it would be for *that* Church of Scotland to gather up into her motherly breast these two or three hundred wandering “bairns” of hers from the half-heathen tent-life ! She would think no more of it than one of our great wealthy congregations think of some little effort to provide for an orphan family. Unfortunately, Scotland is *not* quite as she might be. If a respectable Christian family comes to settle in our midst, it is alleged there takes place, sometimes between two ministers of different kirks, a tug of war for the possession of the family as seat-holders. It is a different tug of war as to the Tinkers, as may be shown from another of my memories of other days. The roads were slippery, and old Kirsty fell. Her leg was broken ; and she thereby became entitled to a great many good things —such as medical attendance, lodging, food, and all other parochial relief—from the parish *in which the casualty had occurred*. Kirsty fell just exactly at a place where an imaginary line divides the parish of A from the parish of B. Her head was in A and her feet in B, or it may have been *vice versâ*. The inspectors of A and B, respectively, did not display the unseemly eagerness common among the clergy to gain bodily possession of a new parishioner. On the contrary, with commendable politeness, they—as to the *honour*—insisted each on preferring the other. A endeavoured to prove, by tape measurement, that she was a parishioner of B, and B offered parole evidence that, though she did land in B, she really “miss’t her fut” in A. Kirsty might have been allowed to lie, as an object lesson, till the parochial

difficulty was settled ; but the good old Free Church minister—like himself—was the good Samaritan, and poor Kirsty drew her last breath, not, as probably *she* would have preferred, in some quiet, heathery corrie of Glenquaich, with her ain folk round her, and the sough of the winter wind for her lullaby, but within the lofty walls, and amongst the strange beds, and stranger faces and voices, and still stranger surgical appliances, of the Perth Infirmary.

It did not use to be so in the free and happy days of long ago. But now the Tinkers are being drawn into the network of our modern parochial machinery. A worthy dominie of the old days would as soon have thought of registering the birth of a calf at a farm-steading or a squirrel in a plantation as that of a Tinker baby at a burn-side. Nowadays the big registration paper is produced from some very mysterious recess among the bedding. I hardly know in what light the document is regarded. It is looked at with awe and reverence. It is treasured as precious. It is ready to present if the inquisitive and obnoxious “Buff” should demand it. And the Tinker baby’s mother shows it with a soft and pretty expression of pride, as if telling you baby had cut the first tooth, or fallen heir to a fortune ! Poor baby ! alas for the fortune ! But the paper doubtless makes the baby a unit in the population of whose increase we are wont to be proud—makes it one of those “Britons” who are never to be slaves, and whom Britain is bound surely to rescue from a degraded life. Notwithstanding, however, the zeal, energy, and accuracy of our registrars, it can scarcely but be that an infant Tinker does, now and then, come into this world—and even into this great

and good country of ours, very modestly and quietly, under cloud of night—in some remote sheltered ravine amongst the hills, the unpronounceable Gaelic name of which the registrar never heard. And so, when the baby of the remote ravine has grown into a full-sized vagabond, and, coming to grief, needs to be supported by the parish of his birth, there is a pretty scramble amongst two or three parochial inspectors—the question being not which is to relieve, but which is to be relieved of, the ravine pauper. And, not seldom, as much money is expended in searching for evidence and corresponding about it, and perhaps trying a point at law, as would make a wandering tent happy for a month.

Poor Tinkers! And by the way, the really common, at least older, Scottish form of the word is *Tinklers*. *Tinkers* is the English word, and we are mightily given to think it highly genteel to adopt an English pronunciation or an English word, reason or none, simply because it is English, and therefore genteel. Any one who remembers Elihu Burritt's description of falling in with a gipsy party, having been attracted by the "*tink tink*" sound of his old nail-making trade, can understand how the name of *Tinkers* came to be used. But when *our* gipsy folk do any work—and truth to tell, they don't do much—it is mostly in the way of making horn spoons, and tin flagons or pitchers, which the women carry about for sale. The indication of the approach of the wanderers, on the road or on the moor, is the loose drapery fluttering in the wind and the noisy *tinkle* of the tin pitchers swinging in their hand and glancing in the sun-rays. Our country folk—I fancy in allusion to the tinkle of the tin pitchers—always speak, not of *Tinkers* but of *Tinklers*.

I was about to say, Poor Tinkers ! or Tinklers ! Like "us others," they have their faults ; and one hears a good deal about these. I think they have also one or two little bits of good, as to which one does *not* often hear much. As Andrew Fairservice said when he "spoke his mind freely" about "thae Campbells," we may say of the Tinkers—"there's baith guid an' ill aboot them."

"Aren't they vagabonds ?" demands a somewhat stern old lady. Now "vagabond" is a term we are of late chary of using in Perthshire, for an unfortunate M.P. applied the phrase to our frequently-shifting ploughmen, and so raised a storm, not yet subsided. And I evade the stern old lady's charge by saying that, in the strictly grammatical sense (in which the M.P. employed the adjective) the Tinkers *are* "vagabonds." But they are so, I add, in the respectable society not only of ploughmen, but of active peripatetic M.D.'s in good practice, of zealous and energetic ministers and missionaries of all kinds. And even (to quote from *higher* circles) the term may be applied to Mars, Venus, and the other planetary bodies. The stern lady maintains that the "bodies" to whom I have alluded, both heavenly and earthly, know where they are going. "So do the Tinkers, madam !" I venture to reply.

How they manage to stick to their orbit *I* cannot tell, and nobody, outside of tent-life, can explain it. But *they* know where they are going, and could tell, if they chose, when their tent will be within hearing of the breakers on the Banffshire coast, or on the quiet shores of an Argyleshire loch, or on the moor of Rannoch, or "abune Aberfeldy." The stern old lady *must* have the last word, and insists that while the bodies before alluded

to go *where they ought*, the Tinkers go where they ought *not*. In Perthshire any allusion to *game* or *trespass* is apt to bring a conversation abruptly to a close, so I am silent. I take firmer ground and say, The *honesty* of the Tinkers stands unchallenged. They were never known to touch hen-house or eggs or hanging clothes, or to break into potato-pit or turnip-heap. That virtue they have by tradition from their ancestors. And I cannot help adding that it would be well if every young man in commercial life in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dundee had been as well trained from childhood as the young Tinkers are in the observance of the eighth commandment.

But (asks another lady inquisitor) don't they live by *begging*? Yes, but it is *gentle* begging! It is with a quiet, light step that the picturesque figure in the fluttering drapery, with the baby-bundle ingeniously made fast to the back of her shoulders, comes slowly up to the steps of your door—or to your window, it may be—and with a not unmusical voice she tells you, in the way of friendly talk, all about the tent—where it has been, and where it is now, and about “the bairn that’s just deein’, ma leddy!” And lest you should be afraid of measles or whooping-cough, you are assured it is *only* “the hunger an’ the cauld.” Then, to be sure, there does come a politely vague allusion to a “dust o’ tea and a pickle sugar”; and something is said about “a pair o’ socks, mem,” or “ony auld petticoat.” But all that is in the way of agreeable conversation, just as in the course of a morning call a clever lady can edge in the thing she wants to say, without very *definitely* saying it, about some sale of work or charitable subscription. *Begging!* No. If you wish a specimen of begging,

take that tall, muscular tramp who marches up to you, wheels about facing you, with his hand at the salute, and when you walk on without "sparin' a copper," sends after you a volley of bitterly sarcastic chaff mingled with growls and *other* things. Or go to Naples, and see what begging is ! Or go to the East, and hear about "Backsheesh." But don't let the child of the tent be mixed in your mind with the common beggar.

One more *good* thing of Tinker life let me at least hint at, and then I shall own to the "*ill*." The good thing is this—I believe it may be safely asserted, generally speaking, that the children of the tent grow to manhood and womanhood innocent, ignorant of what is impure. Those have told me who know better than I do.

But the tent-life has its shadows ! It is an *idle* life. The men are the idlest and laziest of loafers. They are poor, weak, "thowless" creatures. All the energy and handiness and strength have gone into the female frames. And even the women do nothing but what they must do to keep themselves and their children in life. It is a useless, useless life, that nourishes very little that is good, and much that is selfish and cunning and degrading.

And the saddest, most miserable of the life is seen when a band of the wandering tribe meet together in a town like Crieff. When the drink is in, all that you can look on with any pleasure in the Tinker life is gone ; only the brutal and the swinish remains. The babies are unheeded *now*, and the frightened misery of the older bairns is waesome to look on. Look at them then, and you will say, " Yes, something must be done ! "

I have seen many efforts made by kind hands to take



KATE M'CALLUM

a young life away out from its surroundings, and bring it up to a better than the tent-life. There have been failures, but *all* these have not failed. I could tell of more than one whom I know—once a child of the tent—now making headway in the world, and getting on. And I would say more of these, but *Life and Work* finds its way *everywhere*, and I don't like to mention particulars. If it were but possible to capture a live baby, or at most a toddling year-old!

Where do they bury? I could point to graves in many of our northern kirkyards; but often, I believe, they bury in some quiet bit they know of themselves. They never *speak* of these things. But one can fancy the old pilgrim of the tent-life liking to be laid to rest where the wind in the old ash-trees and the wimple of the burn were sounds often heard there in many a winter night, when the fire blazed cheerily, and in many a long bonnie simmer's day, when tent-life was "fine."

III

I am kindly permitted to say a few closing words about our wandering friends, and I shall take the opportunity of answering one or two friends of the Tinkers who have favoured me with correspondence. It is amazing how many friends and admirers the Tinkers have! "I'd like to go a tramp with the Tinkers," writes a lady—one who has written some of our most charming works of fiction. And I wish that lady would carry out her purpose, for I am sure the "tramp" would end in the gallant rescue of a band of Tinker girls who would leave tent-life for something better! A gentle-

man, who writes strongly in the terms of natural science, would like to know whether there does not exist a necessary and inevitable law of gravitation by which a half-reclaimed Tinker is sure to go back to the tent. Without tackling such a serious subject as a law of gravitation, I fancy most of us know that there is some such tendency in Tinkers and in other people. It finds expression in the homely adage that "hame's aye hame," even though it should be a wandering tent, if one's "ain folk" be there. But another writer suggests the creation of an opposing "law" in the shape of an Act of Parliament. Whether that will suffice to counteract the inevitable and necessary gravitation law remains to be seen. A kind good lady would like a great gathering of Tinkers from all quarters on her lawn, to have, what she thinks will be a great treat to them, "tea with bread and jam." It is very good indeed to think of this. It reminds me, however, of what I, one day long ago, witnessed in a school at Corstorphine. It was the fresh-caught Tinker lassie's first sight of such a scene; and her black eyes were going wildly round the room, and suspiciously taking note of the rows of girls in their white-apron uniform. The kind Lady Patroness said very graciously to the newcomer, "Now, my dear, you will see the cooking lesson; the girls are to make a pancake to-day. I dare say you never in all your life saw a pancake." Quoth the child of the tent, standing up, like a true daughter, for the honour of her father's house—"Ay have I! mony o' them, an' *etten* them *too*!" If the cooking lesson had concerned stewed rabbit with rice and potatoes, the gipsy lass might have given the class a wrinkle about that dish too. But the "tea and

jam" is not such an impracticable idea as that of a good woman who is bent on having "all the reclaimed Tinkers" that hands can be laid upon, assembled in "our congregational hall." They might be ticketed, she thinks, with their names, ages, place of birth, where educated, and present employment. "Perhaps" (the writer imagines) "some of them would tell something about their past history"; the good lady wisely concludes that "it would be very interesting to us all."

No doubt it would, but it cannot be done. I am thankful these closing words give me a chance of saying something that may correct misunderstanding such as is indicated in the above proposal. In all the different parts of Scotland where the Tinker-tent is wont to be pitched, kind hearts and hands have been for long endeavouring, in quiet and homely ways, to get the young Tinker separated from tent-life, schooled, trained, and pushed out into the world to win an honest living. In this particular part of the country many such attempts have been made, and are still being made. I know many friends of the wandering tribe hereabout who are constantly on the watch for a chance of saving Tinker life, and they spare not time, nor patience, nor money, in the work. I cannot myself claim to be more than a mere onlooking "loafer," much interested certainly, and willing, in any way, to lend a hand—still, only an onlooker. But, as happening to know something of what has been attempted, that which has failed, and that which has succeeded, both hereabout and elsewhere, I venture to say *this*, that I, for one, believe that there are now getting on in the world, and doing well, more young men and women than any of us think, who were once

wailing babies in the tent, and "bairns hingin'," as Meg Merrilies said, "on their mothers' weary backs." God speed this work, even in the quiet homely irregular way in which it is now being done! By and by there may be something set on foot more systematic and more successful.

But, in a *quiet* way, it *must* be done. Let me tell a story that shows this. It refers to another part of the country than this, and I may tell it without risk of hurting feelings. She stood in the farm kitchen—a smartly-dressed, good-looking, active servant-lass—when there befell a milk-jug, which she held in her hand, one of those mysteriously incomprehensible accidents that have befallen many a jug in many a kitchen. The handle remained in her hand, and the body of the jug, impromptu, untouched, of its own accord, detached itself and went smash to the floor. The mistress, whose manners had not the *Vere de Vere* repose, broke forth in forcibly eloquent scolding; and, in presence of the other servants and members of the family, said many things that were hard enough to bear. And at last, waxing hotter as she went on in her wrath, she slung at the poor lassie a coarsely bitter taunt as to her "*Tinker birth*." It was base, for the secret had been committed to her in a moment of trustful faith by the girl. The word was hard to bide. The loud skirls of heartless laughter which followed it from the others made it worse. Stung to the quick, with gipsy head erect, and gipsy eyes blazing, and without a word, she left the house. Poor thing, she might have found her way back to the tent to fling herself on her mother's breast, and be once more a wandering Tinker. It might have been

worse. She might have never seen her mother more. Fortunately, kind hands got hold of her, and she is once more in service, and where the *Tinker-born* secret is unknown.

Ah! that bitter taunt! how many a young heart it has crushed! how many a half-reclaimed life it has blasted! sending it back to the tent, or to *worse*. This ought not to be. Won't *Guildsmen* come to the rescue? and, standing shoulder to shoulder, "right the wrong"! Surely, their creed is that a man, wheresoever he was born, should have fair play and freedom to work in peace for honest bread! Our practice in this matter by no means accords with what we often hear eloquently spouted, that "one man is as good as another" (and some add, and a great deal better), and that we are "a' John Tamson's bairns," and that "a man's a man for a' that." It is *inconsistent*, for while the Tinkers are in their tent or begging at our doors, we are all kind to them, and give them pity, and pence, and pieces, and old clothes. Why, when a poor Tinker lad, or lass, has left the tent years ago, and has been on quarantine in a training school, and is trying like us to win bread by honest work, why, *then*, should we, as it were, all of a sudden "take a scunner" at them, and fling at them the taunt which we know right well they cannot stand? It is not *like us* when a gallant young swimmer is struggling for life, and has gained a hold, to kick or shove him off into deep water again; and, to sum up, as a sensible old wife said, looking up as she put her specks in her Bible at the Book of Genesis, "Dearie me! an' wasna Jacob but a plain man, bidin' in a tent, an' *verra respectable!*"

I have said enough to show that the reclaiming of the

poor Tinkers must be gone about and carried on very quietly. There can be no trumpet-blowing, no paragraphs in the local prints, as about the ploughing match or the Primrose meeting. After the training school is left, the two or three first efforts of the young swimmer are hard and difficult. He (ay, still more *she*) is easily discouraged, and there is need for the young struggler of all the help and sympathy the kind and good can lend. *On a bit* in the world it is easier. Friendships and connections are formed; perhaps a GUILD opens its arms. The fatal "Tent" is forgotten. Perhaps the day will yet come when some immensely wealthy merchant, or some eminent statesman, or some medal-blazoned general, making a grand speech on a great occasion, "the proudest moment of his life," may bring forth thunders of applause by announcing that he drew his first breath of life in a Tinker tent on the moor of Rannoch or in the wilds of Badenoch, and is not ashamed to own it.

My readers may now guess that I am much more at home and much more free of hand in telling about failures than about successes; for the poor "Tink," out in the world and getting on, we must keep *quiet*, only wishing him well, and that by word, not of print, but of mouth. Like the beast of the forest we used to read of at school, the poor Tinker has to advance, brushing out with his tail as he goes all his footsteps that mark his way from "the tent."

So let me close "The Tinkers" by telling of one "failure." "BILLY." I wish my readers could see him! A wee, timid, gentle bit of a creature! The tent gave him birth, but very little of anything else,—no height, no strength, no energy, no intellect to speak of, fine soft

eyes that were always wondering, and far away, and a fond clinging kind of nature. He had a perfectly romantic fondness for a particular donkey that I know. He was put into a training school, but he was only the sort of pet or doll of the other boys. He did no harm, but he learned nothing, could do nothing. It was a bright idea to put him on board *THE MARS*. Billy's letters from *The Mars* were quite wonderful and charming. But alas! it turned out that a big boy wrote them for him (and got a good share of anything sent in reply). Billy came at holiday time in an imposing sea-going costume, and he embraced the "cuddie," and spent his holidays sitting on the grass beside it. Billy, like many of us, had a horror of the sea. The time came when, if Billy would not go to sea, he must leave *THE MARS*. On a kindly farm they were willing to find something or other that Billy could do for his bed and board. So I went to the *Mars*, and brought off the little man. All on board, men and boys, were sad to see their little plaything go away. It was as if I was carrying off the beloved baby of the house. Billy was to spend two days here before going to the farm. The first he spent in paradise beside the donkey. The second morning Billy was left at home. He was to assist an older boy to rake the gravel. Leaning on his rake, and gazing over the strath, I can fancy Billy's eyes caught the distant swirl of reek near a certain "wud," that brought to his little heart the *TENT*, and his "mither," and the baby, and all the rest. "A'm awa" were his last words, as he flung down the rake, and sped like Asahel across the plain.

I saw Billy again one day in Crieff. The scene was changed. Sailor suit gone—soap and water unknown—

hair toosie—the Tinker-slouch—eyes downcast. He was on the point of coming to me at my call, but his father said one word in Gaelic, and Billy crouched like a collie to his heel. But we may get him yet. And if any one would like a charming little page-boy, I undertake to present him in Edinburgh or elsewhere next month—“The tent” to be kept a dead secret.

My last word about the Tinkers is *this*. Any workable Act of Parliament will be welcome when it comes. But, in the meantime, more has been done than many of us know, and more *can* be done than many of us think, by quite kind homely efforts, to make the poor wanderers feel they are “folk like ourselves”—to make them know they have a Father in Heaven, and a Saviour who wishes them well. Many a reader of this page may have a chance to lend a hand to help a child of the Tent to struggle into a better line of life. It *is* a hard struggle—to part from the dear old wandering tent—and then to face the scathe and scorn that attach to “Tinker birth”! And I believe a form of prayer, familiar in the wandering tent, often comes to the heart of the young “reclaimed” Tinker, among the “perplexing paths” through which he or she has to pass—

O spread thy cov'ring wings around,
Till all our wand'rings cease,
And at our Father's lov'd abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

‘WULLY’

So sounded his name, as generally pronounced. Let me try to describe the wee man as I saw him standing in the snow in the kirkyard that winter day, when we were burying his poor father. There were only about a dozen of us, and there were wraps, “*rauchans*,” “greatcoats,” “leggings,” and all the signs of winter weather. It was near the end of a long-lying and sore storm, and we had trudged through snow-wreaths behind a “dooble” cart which held the black coffin, resting on a “pickle” straw. Wee “Wully” sat among the straw, with a heart that, I should fancy, shook now and then as the “thocht” came over it what was *in* that black box! I seem to hear a voice within that little breast asking, amidst the joltings of the cart, “Is’t—is’t *ma faither*? Wad I see him if I lookit in?” In the kirkyard the little man did not stand amongst us. There was a big brother and there was an uncle there; but no one held him by the hand. He didn’t seem to think of that, or wish it. Standing back a bit by himself, the snow nearly up to his knees, in jacket and “breeks” which evidently belonged to “anither (and a bigger) laddie,” his attitude was actually an unconscious attempt at a sort of nonchalance. The handies were

down in the "pooches" of the borrowed "breeks," and—perhaps it was the snow that separated the one little leg from the other—but there was the air of a sturdy, manly stride as he stood. But oh! the face of the little mourner! I call him that because of where he stood; only don't imagine that tears rolled down his cheeks, any more than that they were wiped away with a pretty little cambric handkerchief. His face—the wee, white, thin, unhappy, unchildlike face! with its eyes bold, wild, restless, like those of some little "beastie" in the woods—his face was almost *fearsome* to look at. He glower'd round upon us all. He looked as if he were about to lift up a loud shriek to heaven, denouncing us for this that we were doing. But the wee man kept his lips shut. Whatever he felt, he did not utter it—held it locked up in his breast beside his fast-beating heart. Only he watched all we were doing, wondered what we meant, how we could think of (for thus it was he afterwards described what he saw that day) "puttin' ma faither in a black hole amang the snaw." And this was little Wully's first glimpse of death.

The "snaw" had gone, and come again, and gone. The gowans had twice bloomed on the green sod where we had "putten his faither," and "Wully" was an inmate of one of those institutions where kind Christian hearts and hands care for neglected bairns like him. But poor Wully came too late for shelter and clothing and food and care to make a man of him. He came, a shilpit, feckless, tender, touchy bit creature; and, alas! he had soon to creep into the homely little

"hospital room" of the institution. There he lay for many a weary week, with his white, thin, transparent face, and those wonderful eyes, listening to the loud school bell and the tramp of scurrying feet and the merry yells of the playground.

The home from which "Wully" had been taken had killed his father, and it had done much to plant the seeds of mischief in his tiny frame. And yet that home, to look at on a summer day, was as bonnie a cottage-home as ever artist sketched. I am glad to say it is away now—to kill no more inmates! But it stood so picturesquely at the foot of a romantic little glen, that decks itself in the very earliest of spring fashions—sloe, hawthorn, and primrose. A burn dances down in a hundred lively and varied cascade-steps, and only begins to moderate its pace and hush its voice when, emerging from the mouth of the glen, it glides soberly past the doorway of the cottage. Mud and mess, egg-shells and scattered cinders, and broken dishes, and a capsized kail-pot, and an axe thrown away in reckless despair from the attempt to hack an obstinate and much-battered log—these are not "the sweetest things that ever grew beside a cottage door." And a cottage for whose repair nothing has been done for half a century, and in which a succession of miserable tenants have managed to tear down and burn for firewood every available bit of timber, begins to wear a very gruesome aspect inside. Suppose, further, there is no furniture worth speaking of, not very much to eat, and a long-lying winter storm, a sick man, a somewhat thowless wife, poor body! thin, pale, hungry children, and then the picturesque site, the wimpling burn, the

cascades, the hawthorn and the primroses, and all the summer beauties—don't count for much. And, to sum up all, if the ground rises so high at the back that the drifted snow lies level with the eaves and *sipes* through a wall, which, having had very little lime in its original composition, and none at all now, is simply a stone dyke (and not a *dry* one), the conditions are such that poor little Wully, when he left it, could not be expected to carry with him much of physical stamina.

And so we find the wee man in the "hospital room," and—to make the long story short—wearing near, near to the end of his brief and cheerless life. Blessings on the memory of that honest, stout, comely, motherly woman, with her Scotch heart and Scotch tongue, her plain strong faith in her living Saviour, her kindly ways and homely talk with the fatherless laddie! How she led him on—gently, clearly, cheeringly led him on to face what was coming! It was at the very beginning of this gentle teaching, when the first hints about the coming end were being softly dropped, that "Wully" had tremblingly wondered "if they wad put *him* in a black hole!" Poor laddie! the kirkyard and the "snaaw" were in his memory!

But the blessed teaching went—slowly but steadily—on to brighter views than *that*. Wully began to know, and think of, and *speak to*, a "friend for little children," who "took them up in His arms and blessed them," and to know about, and think of, a "home for little children." No home on earth was like it. Poor Wully! *yours* was not! And yet, maybe, the little fellow did think—and it helped him—of the bonnie

glen, and the burn, and the primroses, and the hawthorn, and the song of mavis and lintie. Had he often been wishing he could some fine morning get up and be off, just to see his old friend the burn again? But ah! that couldna be! He was so weak now, he could not move without being lifted. And that other home she told him of, it was farther away still! how could he ever reach it? But kind, homely, motherly teaching took that difficulty out of the little pilgrim's way, and the matter was nicely, pleasingly settled. I venture to say it was quite scripturally settled. He who took the other little children in His arms would come *for* him, and take him away to the happy home. Wully thought of this; and he managed to realise it. “An’ wull He just put *Hee's* airms aneth me, an’ lift me rale aisy, like what *you* div?” I think I see the look on that kind Scotchwoman's face! I hear the tender, homely solemnity with which she said, “Ay, Wully! *far* better, far gentler than ever I could!”

Wully lay long quietly—no doubt thinking and thinking about this journey that was before him (and which of us is it not before?). And at length—it was so like the idea of a child like him! and you can fancy the timidly hesitating, and yet pleading, longing look in the eager eyes, and the coaxing tones in the childish voice, as he said, “An’ wull *you* no come wi’ me yersel’? oh yes! come!” You may trust that woman to tell the little man—gently, kindly—that, “Yes, she would come and see him *there*—it would maybe no’ be long—but she must bide her time.” You can see the shade of disappointment sweep over the sweet facie, like a cloud shadow on the hill-side, and

you hear the wee bit gentle sigh. But, ere long, the gallant little pilgrim (may his simple, trustful faith be ours!) made up his mind to go—as all must—alone on that journey; he would be safe—he would go safe in the arms of Jesus—home.

IN A BOX-BED

A SKETCH

As the herd laddie said, "The nearest road's ower the hill ; but when the Laird's in a hurry he aye gangs roond aboot." I was no laird, and in no hurry ; and, having always a weakness for drove-roads and short-cuts, I took the hill path. It landed me, as I knew it would, at the site of what, long years ago, I had known as a blithe and contented, because God-fearing and God-trusting, home. It was a grand site for a dwelling, cosily sheltered from the north winds by a hill thickly clothed with forest pines, and looking down the sunny slope on a richly-cultured and wooded strath. Woe's me ! was this all that was left of it ? More than "ten years had gane sin' I gazed on it last,"—and then some bits of the old walls remained, and the old west gable stood on his post like a veteran that would not desert it. But now even he had vanished—gone like the old walls, I fancy, to build fauld-dykes and march-fences. Only the great big boulders of the "foond" still marked the shape of the departed biggin', like a child's sketch of a house upon the slate. And where the bright clean "hearthstane" had been, and the dresser, and the kist of drawers, and the eight-day clock, and the spinning-wheel, and the fire-

side arm-chair, and the shelf with the bits of plates and "jougs"—nothing now but the tall, rank grass and the luxuriant nettles, and the stately "humlecks" and the "dockens." The old ashen tree still stood. How it must moan and sigh in the winter night blasts over the memory of "them that are gane." And the old well! No well was like it in the country-side! It minds one of some faithful old retainer, left alone, and missing sorely the folk it loved to serve, but still doing what work it can. All is fresh and green and living round about it, and the surplus streams are slipping and glancing away down the brae, doubtless helping on the tender young grass for the "yowes" and the lambs down yonder.

Sitting that day on the sunny braeside, the ruins of the old home brought back to me many memories of "lang syne." The family history of many years back was very vividly in my mind. But I like best to bring back again the later days of the history when "Christian," the mother of that family, was left dwelling here "her lane" for many a long year. She was not literally "her lane" altogether, for she was well and faithfully waited on by a nice smart, clever young slip of girlhood—a granddaughter. When Christian was still "on her feet" and active, she had trained—and most thoroughly trained—Maggie to all departments of woman's household work. Christian was herself a most competent teacher, having herself seen "good service"; and Maggie was an apt scholar. Well did Christian's training of Maggie repay her in the long years during which she lay helpless in her box-bed, and when Maggie was everything to her—clever housemaid, skilful cook, and most gentle and handy sick-

nurse. And what a strong cord of love bound the two—the old woman and the girl—closer and closer as the years of the long box-bed life went on !

It is of these years I should like to tell. I would fain try to sketch Christian in her box-bed. It stood in that corner, over there, at the end of the house over which the old ash tree bends. For many a long year that box-bed was Christian's world—her home—she lived in it. You see, here, there was a west window, and from her bed the old lady could look out on certain "hielant hills"—blue peaks far away, dear to her heart since childhood. Then there was a south window, *there*, and from the box-bed could be welcomed, on its western shutter, the first joyful ray of the dawn. Christian knew often what it is to "wait for the morning"; and in this very limited home of Christian's—it might well be called her bed-chamber—everything was orderly and in its place. Her old Bible had its place, which never changed. Letters, which she was constantly getting from relatives on the other side of the globe—they had *their* place in a certain old-fashioned workbox. I don't think they were actually docqueted, but she could always lay her hand on the one she wanted ; and the geography of that far-away land Christian seemed to pick up as cleverly as ever she learned a map at school. She was as familiar with long-named rivers and creeks and mountains as she was with the lochs and burns and farm towns of her own strath. Christian was an omnivorous reader. The stock of books, pamphlets, tracts, and papers in the box-bed shifted like the scenes in a panorama. Yet everything had its own place. There were certain steady old friends that always held their ground, like the

standards when a copse is cut. There were M'Cheyne, Boston's *Crook*, an old big-print book of the Prose Psalms (with the good old-fashioned binding and much-faded family arms on the cover), and there was a worn and tattered little copy of the very first attempt at a collection of hymns by the Kirk of Scotland. Then there were periodicals of various persuasions and tones, for Christian was catholic in her sympathies; there might be a *British Messenger* or a *Gospel Trumpet*. And there was lighter literature. Christian's box-bed was broader than many box-beds are. I have often seen there *Tales of the Borders*, a stray volume of Sir Walter, and, indeed, works of fiction of lesser note and of more modern date. As some humoursome neebor remarked, "Kirsty had a crap for a' corn." The truth is, she had been well grounded in a good old parish school, where the dominie, a man of University training, had his work in his own hand, and had time to really *educate* his scholars.

But now we have seen Christian's surroundings in the interior of her box, let us have a look at the dear old lady herself! Hers was a *bonnie* face. It had that beauty which dwells on an old face when you can read of many a care and trouble, and much suffering and weakness, gone by; and of trustful faith that has grown, slowly, very firm and steady—and the peace of God abiding always—and a calm solemn hope of a home to come. There was patience in the very lie of the smooth silver hair, and in the gentle folding of the worn, wrinkled—but very shapely, very ladylike—hands. There was so much of meaning and feeling—often humour—that spoke from those quiet but keen eyes. And there was now and

then the emphatic little *set* of the head, and the compression of the thin lips, as the old lady, lying back pillow-propped and busily knitting, took her part in a talk. Hers was a face it was good to look at. It was like looking at a Madonna picture. In the face, framed in that box-bed, was everything that was bright and brave and true and tender.

Christian—for, like a wise and sensible woman, she stuck to her real name, given her in baptism, and written by her father's hand on the fly-leaf of the Bible that was hers in childhood (though, by the way, he wrote it "Chirsten"). But she stuck to "Christian," and I think hardly liked when neighbours called her "Kirsty." Christian, I say, was a sufferer—to use her own version of it—"whiles a gey sair sufferer." But Christian's aches and pains, her "trummlins at the heart," and so on, were never the text of plaintive whinings from the box-bed, never! She always gave it from the sunny side. "Hoot ay! What ither could an auld craitur like me look for! There maun be a something, ye ken! Auld age disna come its lane. It'll maybe no be lang, but I'm wullint to bide Hee's time—eh ay!"

A sore *crook* in Christian's lot was "the weary wauk-rife nichts." It was with perfect reverence she used to say of "the Psalms of David," that to *croon* over one or two of her favourites "put the time by, and enterteen'd her." And with one of her own meaning nods of her head, she confessed that "whiles, afore she was through wi' the psaum, she *fell ow'r*." One hardly likes to advertise the poetry of the sweet singer as an infallible remedy for insomnia, but it is perhaps better and safer than some other popular recipes.

We have all known box-beds into which all the gossip and much of the scandal of the country-side manages to find its way, making the atmosphere of the limited chamber anything but pleasant or wholesome. Let me say this for my old lady. I am not sketching a conventional "saint," as some people like to have the character drawn. I am trying to describe a good woman as I found her, and knew her. She had a shrewd knowledge of the world and human nature, and a great deal of natural humour. And it was undoubtedly a great pleasure to Christian to hear all about what was going on outside her box-bed, in the wider world of the strath. But I say this for the box-bed, that the whole *crack* of the market and the kirk-yard combined might have gone through it—interesting and amusing the good lady for the time, but not leaving the slightest taint of ill-nature there. There was a blessed antiseptic always dwelling in the old heart that lived in the old box-bed which made all gossip harmless. Would that disinfectant were more in use in many hearts!—in homes where are no box-beds!

Long ago Christian had gone, a young inexperienced lassie, into service in "the big house." That house gave to her youthful days the sacred influences of a kind Christian home. Good women of that house helped the young steps along the morning life-path. And through all the after years everything was dear to her that was linked with those who were of that "Big House."

The family faces, the family voices, they had ever power to waken, within the old heart, its best and sweetest and most sacred memories. And if there be

some in this democratic age who are disposed to smile in gentle scorn at this as a little weakness in old Christian's character—as a touch of old toryism—clinging to a remnant of extinct feudalism, and so on—I can only say, Well, if *this* be “toryism,” TORY may I be always! I loved the old woman for it, in her life; and I love for it, all the more, her memory now. Let me only add this, that when he who wore that honoured old family name stood, an old man, beside her bed, when Christian was wearing near—near—her end—the few words that passed between them were plain and homely as words could be; but they were touched with the light and meaning that belong to words between two Christian pilgrims well-nigh through with journeying, and hoping to meet ere long for ever.

But here is something at which no one will smile in scorn. Sabbath after Sabbath passing, and no kirk-going! no worship with “the lave”! *That* has tried sorely many a heart! It tried old Christen's. But she met it sensibly. “Eh ay! didna my auld heart gie a bit loup, this mornin', when the sough o' the bell cam' up the brae! An' wadna I fain buskit mysel', an' awa' doon yonder! But eh! wae's me! *that'll never* be! An' I *was* kind o' dowie aboot it! an' 'deed some like to hae a greet! But 'troth I gied mysel' a bit flyte, an', says I, 'Kirsten, wumman! are ye gaun to be a silly bairn that way, an' greet for what ye canna get? Is't no the Lord that's biddin' ye bide whaur ye are? Does HE no ken best? Can HE no feed ye wi' bread frae His ain hand, whaur ye are in your ain bed there, as He *has* dune, mony a day? Hoot! fie for shame!’

“Au, weel!” (she continued more cheerfully) “Maggie

an' me, we had a bit kirk o' oor ain, *here!* First, she sang a bonnie bit psalm to me. She's a fine singer. It was the grand auld aighty-fowrt—

Hoo lovely is thy dwelling-place,
O Lord of hosts to me—

an' syne I mindit o' a fine prayer my faither was wont to say on a Sabbath in the time o' a storm. Every turn o't cam' back to me! I juist aye thocht I could hear *him* speakin'! An' I gar'd Maggie read a sermon o' Doctor Chalmers on the aight o' the Romans—a fine sermon. An'she said The Lord's Prayer, an' sang a bonnie bit hymn she's lairnt." And the old lady gave me one of her quaint nods, and a smile, and added, "So, maybe, minister, we had near as guid a sermon as the folk in the Kirk got! Na but—" she added, "we endit wi' a *collection* nae less! for I gar'd Maggie tak' oot a penny an' a bawbee, for me an' her, an' they're lyin' on the mantel-brace, there, ready for the first puir craitur that come's to the door." And then Christian said,—as I think very touchingly—"Ay! ay! HE kens I wad like, if it was but aince mair, to be in the Kirk. But, if He says to bide here, oh! I'm wullint! I'm wullint!"

I don't think what I am about to tell next is at all a dark shade in the picture I am trying to draw. The picture would not seem to me the real "Kirsty" at all if I did not bring in *the fiddle*. Kirsty shall tell all about it herself. In a kind of half-serious, half-bantering tone, that was peculiar to her, she made me her PRIEST, and went into the confessional. Of course the confessional was a mere touch of humour to both priest and penitent. Kirsty knew as well as I did that she did

nothing wrong when her old friend and neighbour, Duncan Stewart, our worthy elder, came up the brae at an orra time, and delighted her heart with many a hielant tune she had loved since she was a bonnie young lassie. And the merrily mocking confession was in this guise—"Ye've need to come the day, Minister! Ye sud aye look parteeklar after your black sheep, ye ken! An' what think ye o' an auld wife that never darkens a kirk door? An' gin ye had come near the hoose yestreen ye would heard the fiddle gaun as if it was a change-hoose or a dancin' ball—flingin' aff a' the rants and reels that ever was skirlt i' the hielants!"

That was *her* sketch of the evening's entertainment, but I knew better. I knew that Duncan, when he climbed the brae to cheer her old heart, with his old fiddle in its case under his oxter, was bent on good, hearty, kind, honest work. His own good heart thrilled in this act of kindness like his very fiddle-strings. I would have given much to have seen the lights and shades on Kirsty's old face as she hearken'd to "a spring my faither aye likit"—or "an auld hielant reel the Laird uset aye to cry for"—or some tender lilt about "Chairlie,"—for Kirsty's "folk" had a' worn the white cockade. But most of all would I have liked to look at the old face in the box-bed when Duncan's fiddle seemed actually to be speaking of the "wearin' awa"—and the "land o' the leal."

And that fittingly leads me to the close of my little sketch. It was a long-lying winter storm; and Kirsty was quite *sure* that she was "wearin' awa." Needless to say, "*she* was wullint—she was wullint, an Hee's time had come—eh, ay!" Her doctor—he and she were

great friends and well matched as to exchanging merry banter—he could take in Kirsty’s tones, and her looks, and read all she was feeling and thinking, as easily as he took her pulse or her temperature. “Ye’se no be lang fash’d wi’ auld Kirsty noo’, doctor.” The doctor disagreed—as he often did—with Kirsty’s opinion, and said she would “set her foot on the May gowan yet.” She laughed him to scorn. But the doctor was right. She did not set her *feet* on the gowans, it is true. But gowans were among the treasures of spring that friendly hands brought to the box-bed. She saw the spring.

Some may, if they like, call it another *weakness* of old Kirsty’s. I don’t. She wished “to lie aside her ain folk,” and that was far away in the “hielants.” When she thought the winter snowstorm would make that impossible, with a very gentle sigh she gave up the thought, and calmly bespoke from me “some quate bit neuk in the kirkyaird here.”

But the glens were no longer white with winter, but tenderly green, when we made the long journey away up among the “hielant hills.” We left the hearse, and bore the slender coffin away up the grassy braeside; and in a most picturesque, old, solitary, half-ruinous little enclosure—like a sheep-fold on the hill—its ancient tombstones lying half-buried, but the lettering legible because standing out in green moss—and its old iron gate nearly worn to a skeleton with the rust of centuries—there, beneath an old ashen tree, we laid the remains of our old friend—in a bed narrower still than that which had been for many a year her home. All was peace around. The soft bleating of the lambs, the gentle song of the blue burn yonder, and the sough of the summer breeze in the old

ash tree all spoke peace. There we left her, with the comforting thought that all that made her dear to us in the days of the old box-bed was dwelling *now* in a happy home, where she would never weary more, and from which she would never, never "wear awa."

OUR OLD DOMINIE

THE dear old man! It is forty years and more since we laid him in our quiet kirkyard. I knew him only in the days of his latest decade, but to his very last he was teaching with vigour and success—"aye the langer the better," as we say in our country phrase. "Deserted is the highland glen and the old clachan in which his homely thatch-roofed little school stood! The bonnie blue river still winds down from among the *hielant* hills, dashing in snowy foam over its noisy linns and sleeping in its deep black pools. And the woods where the schoolboys plucked the primrose gay, they still hear the voice of spring and flourish green again. But the old clachan in the glen! with its honest men and bonnie lasses, its old wives with their soopach mutches and their spinning wheels, and the perfume of its old peat-reek—all these are, like *the auld hoose* of Gask,—'awa'.' And the good old dominie, he too is 'awa'!' "

Come, gentle reader, and let me try to introduce you to the Dominie in his school! I am ready to answer any question which *you* may wish to put. But I am not sure that I should find it easy to describe my old dominie and his poor old school in the exact terms required by one of those officially formal documents which, issuing from what we mention with bated breath

as "The Department," demand to be informed as to this, that, and every other particular concerning the teacher and the school. My dominie did not belong to that noble army to which Scotland owes so much. Nor was his little thatched school one of those "Parish Schools" of which Scotland is no doubt proud—only poor Scotland does not often say that *now*, because she cannot say it without being reminded of the unhappy fit of sectarian frenzy in which she was mad enough to give them away. The dominie's school was—let me call it a *nondescript* school! I mean by that word to imply that if called upon by any "Department" that ever existed, to explain officially—in formal language—how the school existed, who built it, how it was supported, etc., I should find myself totally unable to do so. But nevertheless I think I can whisper all about it into the gentle reader's ear. The School stood near the march where two lairds' lands met. The river rolled between. The two lairds, without making any fuss about it, kept the "bit schoolie" weather-tight under thack and rape. One of them gave the dominie a little patch of land, the rent being *nominal* in that happy sense of the term which implies that the word *rent* was never *named* between them. Furthermore, there was a small "mortification," which was by no means such to the dominie in the modern mischievous and unpleasant sense of the word, but yielded him a *very* small sum of money half-yearly. The fees, in those days of primeval honesty, were faithfully brought to school in little handfuls. And when "auld handsel Monday" came round, these same little hands brought, and laid timidly on the desk, a little token of goodwill for the dominie from those at home,

and each pair of little hands received an orange from the gracious dominie. To conclude the account of the dominie's ways and means, let me add that Providence had given him a wise, kind, thrifty wife, who looked well to the ways of her household and ate not the bread of idleness, and that they reared a family of sons and daughters who in after life did credit to their upbringing. Furthermore, the dominie's fishing-rod stood in his porch; and he could read the "ply" of the river at any time as easily as he could have read a page of the spelling-book. And still furthermore, rabbits were not then the sacred treasures of the landowner. They were "vermin" to be lawfully destroyed. They were good food bestowed by a kind Providence on the people of the land. And so the good dominie and his little household lived and thrived.

I may mention here that the mode in which the little school was heated in winter was one, different from any of those complicated and expensive systems which clever engineers of the present day recommend to School-boards, and for which our local rates are taxed pretty handsomely. Once a week—on Saturday morning (the day specially devoted to Bible and Catechism)—each child brought from home a peat. How the statement of such a "source of income" mentioned in a "return" to the "Department" would cause "my lords" to stare!

"The education in such a school as you are describing would, of course, be of the poorest, the very simplest, the most elementary kind!" So says some one who probably did not know the world when it was at that time of life. *Was* it so? *was* it "poor,"—the education given in that school? Let me tell! Yes; there *was*

simple and elementary teaching! Look at this little creature with the short tartan frock and bare legs, the wee brown dumpy finger stotting along the tatter'd page of the "first spell book" at "A B, ab," and the fat rat who sat on a mat. And well that scholar merited the reward of a shoogar bool from the dominie's waistcoat pocket! But let us go onward in the teaching! I one day listened to a drilling in Scottish history. One of the lassies was hazy, slightly, as to something connected with "Jenny Geddes"; and the old gentleman eyed her with comic severity as he took a pinch from his old box, and said, "Hoots, lassie! d'ye no mind the carline that buckit the creepie at the Dean's heid in Saunt Giles!" One likes to hear "history" taught so graphically! Then, as to arithmetic, why, vulgar fractions and such like were mere child's play! And the bigger lads went on to measuring land, and taking levels, and calculating the unseen contents of imaginary potato-pits of certain dimensions, and cutting scientific capers of all kinds! Nay, at times might be heard the mystic sounds of "*penna pennæ*, a pen," and "*amo*, I love," though I don't think the Latin boys ever got beyond *amo*! I think I did once hear a tall boy and a clever little girl hammering away about a French cock who, scraping on a dunghill, found by hazard something or other. Finally, as to "religious instruction," I don't wish to say anything uncivil, but I should like very much to get hold of my critical friend who surmised that the teaching in such a school must have been something very easy and simple, and I should request him to give us the "hunder an' nineteent'" psalm, the metrical version, from end to end, without a pause or a mistake. *Then*, he should be requested to repeat

—question and answer—the “singles,” *i.e.* the Shorter Catechism. And, if he passed his exam. so far, we should finish him with “the proofs.”

The wonder in the country-side as to the dominie was no doubt the old one—how one small head could carry all he knew. I never wondered at that. But I do wonder, to this day, how one man could teach all these bairns at once. Yet he did it. He superintended *everything*, from “A B, ab,” to the *pons asinorum*, and *amo amavi* and the book-keeping by double entry. Dictating to a dozen secretaries at once was easier. A country lass described the organ introduced into the Kirk by saying of it, with admiration, “She goes like a threshin’ mill!” And, standing outside the school, you heard the increasing whirr and buzz and bumming in your ears of a most busily working educational MILL! No, no! it was not a *threshing* mill. The taws were always in their sacred drawer in the desk, and not often out. But when out, the boy who made their acquaintance once took good care to keep clear of them again. And they never touched a girl.

A talk with the dominie, when school was out, and he had time for a crack, was a great treat. Folk-lore, and old place-names, and traditions of lang syne were a rich store in his mind. And he took a hearty kindly interest, not only in his Clachan neighbours but in all the homes of the widespread parish. For of that parish he was an elder—a right good one—of the old stamp. The winter day was wild that left his well-known seat in the kirk vacant!

Amidst all the modern advancement in school equipment, one looks back with amazement to an old school

like that ! Look at a new-built school in one of our cities ! and think of that little crowded bee-hive in which the bairns of that day worked ! the earthen floor, and the *shoogly* benches, the short-legged “forrums” often broken and roughly mended, sometimes sixty scholars in the wee room. I don’t like to think of the “cubic space !” But where is the modern School-board that can boast of a playground like that to which these bairns scampered out ! Where were its bounds ? I am sure I know not ! The Grampian hills bounded it on the north ; and east, west and south was open and free before them. The “wuds” had no tickets for trespassers then. And there was a “swimming bath,” down in the river, 15 feet deep, in which the youngsters all learned to “soom,” holding each other up by the chin. It would be said nowadays that a swimming bath is “attached” to the school. So it was then.

I should like to tell of the *Clachan* ; but it must bide its time.

THE OLD CLACHAN

I

THEY tell of an eccentric artist who, having finished a picture entitled "The destruction of Pharaoh's host," invited his friends to come and see it. They came, and beheld six feet square of canvas, entirely filled with blue water and rolling waves! "But where," they asked, "is Pharaoh's host?" "Oh," replied the painter, "they are gone!—drowned, you know!"

I sometimes feel as if I were something like that artist when undertaking to show friends "the old clachan." For when we reach the spot and see nothing but a lonely grassy glen and a hill burn winding through it, and two or three old ash trees and a few indistinct traces here and there of an old stone dyke, they are apt to rub their eyes and look about, and say, "Yes! but where is the clachan?"

Ah! these modern visitors cannot see the little glen as I can see it! When some quiet bonnie summer day, sitting on the braeside, I fancy that each old thatch-roofed biggin' resumes its place, each old lum reeks again, and all the ancient hand-looms and all the busy spinning-wheels are *birring* away once more, and there is life and stir in the old clachan as when first I knew it! And the



Photo by Valentine

BUCHANTY LINN, GLEN ALMOND

burn, and its old music! Do not be so very proud of your various new-fangled *phonetic* inventions! That burn, with its sharps and trebles as it rattles over the little *croys*, and sinks into the silence of the little pools! it reproduces, to the very life, the old tones of the sturdy cailleachs with their mutches and their "flannen cots," and the north-country accents of the shrewd old carles, and the skirl of the weans at their play. The burn! it can bring back to me as I listen on a simmer's day the very drone of old Donald's crazy old pipes, the very wowff-wowff of the collies, the concert music of the cocks and hens! And oh! most faithfully reproduced is the plaintive wail we used to hear on Sabbath nights of Coleshill and Martyrdom, and many an old psalm-tune whose name I know not. On the bonnie simmer's day this is pleasing, and yet sad!

But oh! it is an *eerie* thing to come past the site of the old clachan in a winter gloamin', the ground under snow, the wind moaning and whistling through the ash trees, and the burn in spate roaring restlessly and angrily as if missing sorely something that should be here. Ah! dear old burn!—

Till the oak that fell last winter
Shall uprear its shattered stem,—

you may moan and murmur, but all in vain for "them that's awa'." How painfully like the gestures of old women wailing a coronach is the mournful bending and swaying of these storm-toss't ashen trees! There is part of an old gable—it was old KIRSTY'S—still standing alone, erect, black amid the snow. I am only stating a plain physical fact when I mention that the outline of

that ruined gable has in certain lights (or rather in certain shades of darkness) a striking resemblance to that of old Kirsty's person, as we used to see it. To increase the resemblance there grows at the back of Kirsty's gable a queer weird-like saugh tree, the long top branches of which appear over the black gable swaying and nodding and shaking in a manner which brings startlingly to mind a certain huge bunch of artificial flowers—"gum flooers," she called them—which used to decorate Kirsty's Sabbath-day *bannet*, and for which, by the way, a severe elder of her own Kirk reproved her for "feshin'," as he said, "a perfect flooer gairden on her heid to the Kirk!"

But now, let us have a look at the old clachan in broad daylight and summer sunshine—in its livelier and cheerier days! Let me try to describe it! By the time I speak of, its grander days were gone. It was but the ghost of its old self now. A place of some note formerly, with a school and a public-house and a shop, and a joiner and a smiddy, and such-like tokens of civilisation, and a drove road, or old military road running through it, there still lingered in it some legends of "the '45," and queer stories of smuggling adventure. That glory had departed, leaving but some fifteen bits of houses, most of them tenanted by aged folk, sturdy and cosy, picturesque and antique like the huts in which they dwelt. As the land steward used to say when told that a gable or a *lum* was "like to fa'," "Hoo!" said he, "nae fear! there's a hantle o' *grainin'* (groaning) in auld hooses an' auld wives!" The houses stood, here and there, up and down, east and west, in the little glen, as though flung down like a pack of cards at random. They stood at all possible angles. No one seemed to have the

slightest concern with the position of its neighbours. A sprinkling of cowsheds and "soo cruvies" and henhouses seemed to have been scattered amongst them, and each had its own queer-shaped bit of "yaird." Catch them not to know each their own marches! There was the rowan tree, or the hollin bus', or the remnants of a *haidge* or a muckle stane, half buried, separating the *yairds*, and

Fearless there the lowly slept
As the birds beneath their eaves.

In the summer days they rose with the sun and went to bed with him, for they would have laughed old Christopher North to scorn, when he said that he and that luminary moved in totally different spheres, and had nothing to do with each other's going to bed or rising. In the winter nights the *cruisie* lamp was lighted, and hung from the "swee" in the cheek of the chimney. If any reader is a stranger to the *cruisie*, its facsimile may be seen in the marble hand of a Roman lady, or amongst curios which have come from Herculaneum. The bright little *cruisie* lighted many a long *forenicht* in winter, and shone on the old Bible print, when, after the wheel was silent, the *lesson* was devoutly taken. "Cannles were cannles" in those days. A good-hearted laird, God bless him! allowed the old village to die a natural and peaceful death. The old bodies abode like noble lords, noble ladies under their old ash trees, and their saughs and their ruins—rent free—and the laird was paid in hearty benisons, "Weel micht we a' wuss *him* an' *his*!" was often solemnly said beneath the reek-japanned *cabers* of the clachan! It would scarcely have been seeming to ask the laird for *repairs*, and indeed, the clachan managed

pretty well to keep itself weather-tight under "thack and rape," with "its ain hand-shifty." Most of the clachan folk had belonged, as to their forebears, to the neighbouring Highlands. And we all know how those brought up in the Highlands—the men especially—are remarkably handy. Such men seem to have had their wits about them constantly from childhood, and to understand all about how this, and that, and the other thing is to be done. They are clever and ready-handed, and can manage to do something with the tools of *any* trade. Thatch ! every man could thatch in the clachan ! I don't know but some of the old virgins could, in an emergency, have lent a hand. Many a bit of good joiner-work, mason-work, even smith-work was done. Every one of them could mend his own shoes, and patch his own clothes. The loom-work, alas ! had left them, so they had a good deal of spare time on hand. But they could switch a hedge, build a dyke, cut their peats, or dig a drain, or what not !

And now let us go amongst them and see a little more of what kind of folk they were in their quiet home life !

II

And now for the "folk" of the old clachan ! They who were old when I first knew it have long since passed away. The tough old frames wore done at last and are resting in the mools of various quiet kirkyards near and far away, to which each in turn was solemnly borne by "freends and neebors." The younger section have drifted out into the world and are for the most part doing well and thriving in many different parts of

Scotland. Some are in other lands. I should not wonder but to all of these the clachan often reappears, in dreams by night, or in the day-dream of an idle hour. With their waking eyes they could not see it even though they stood once more beside the ashen trees and the saughs. The clachan is "awa'."

KIRSTY has already been slightly introduced to the reader. Let our first visit be paid to her. She, an old maid, and Donald her brother, an old bachelor, abode under the same roof and in the same house. But by no means did they abide *together*. Kirsty had the *but* and Donald had the *ben*, and these were as completely two separate and distinct dwellings as though they had been miles apart. The two fireplaces led into one lum, and the two reeks went away up into the blue sky, mingling lovingly. But the two firesides were separate. Donald's *ben* was *his* house; Kirsty's *but* was *hers*. Not but that they liked each other as brother and sister well enough in their own way. They never "cast oot." They never meddled with each other. Only they never mingled like the reeks. Perhaps it was best so, for they had their own ways. The two houses told *that*. Kirsty as to her personal habits and her household ways was *hish-hash* in the extreme, and that good Scotch word saves half a page of description. Donald was a most *pernikkety* old boy. The mess in that *but* end was generally as though it had been "steered about with a stick, like brose." Donald in his *ben* had "a place for everything and everything in its place." What woman's hand could keep in brighter and better order these one or two old-fashioned bits of crockery-ware on the shelf above the queer little home-made dresser! His very tobacco-pipe

had its place. There hung his big silver watch by its copper chain from its nail. Yonder lay his Bible and Prayer Book, for Donald, like his sire and his grandsire, was episcopal as to worship. The old cromach and the old well-worn plaid, and sensible old Luath, his faithful "collie-dowg," told what Donald had been in other days. And the clean, snod, tidy little dwelling told what he was now. The *hallan* divided these two very diverse dwellings. But how were matters managed as to what are called "the doors"? Admirably! "East" from the entrance door, fronting *her* end of the house, was Kirsty's. She might make what she liked of that—and she did make a mess of it, Donald never interfering. "West" of the door was Donald's, and with his old (prize) curling-broom he was constantly keeping it tidy. Old JENNY, of the adjacent house, was often severely scolded by Donald for allowing bits of her burdens of brushwood to lie about on his sacred preserve. A quick-tempered sharp-tongued old lady was Jenny! And, one day, after sitting, pipe in mouth, while Donald soopet and flyted, she quietly remarked—"Aweel, Donald! I wad shuner be your Bible nor your besom ony day." The taunt was not deserved; but Jenny had a notion that "thae Piscopians didna read the Bible ava'."

JENNY, of whose sharp tongue I have been speaking, was a staunch Free Kirk woman; and her quiet, sensible, strong-minded sister, Annie, who lived with her, was also of the Free Kirk persuasion. There was between the sisters some little difference of a doctrinal kind, the exact nature of which I never was able to discover. But I know that it led the two women to part every Sunday morning at their own door. Jenny, with white mutch,

red shawl, blue umbrella and napkin-folded Bible, set off on a five-miles tramp to *her* particular Free Kirk in the east ; while Annie, similarly arrayed and accoutred, faced westward, and after a seven-miles march, worshipped in *her* particular Free Kirk. When they met again in the gloamin' they gave to each other a résumé of the respective eastern and western texts, heads, and practical applications, and expressed warm admiration each of her own minister and of his handling of the "subjik." The little world of the clachan, after the manner of the big world, was wont to hint that each came home bringing a pouchful of the eastern and western country clash, and that it did much to sweeten and flavour the evening cups of tea. But I for one believe that such remarks came mainly from folk who, not having gone (*they* said not having "*gotten*") to any kirk themselves, were a little jealous of the steady kirk-going pair.

The clachan was far from any kirk, and though there were folk of a good many different persuasions in it, an evening preaching or "meetin'" in the wee schoolhouse was always at any time welcomed, and sure to be well attended. A worthy mother at the head of a large household used to say, "I dinna often win to the kirk *myself*", but, my certie ! I aye drums oot a' the lave." But no drummin' was needed at the clachan. The news of a preachin' or a meetin' "gae'd through the toon like a handbill." They said, "It's no ilka day *we* get a preachin' ! We hinna a kirk at *oor* door !" In older days, when the clachan could turn out a good congregation, the Haldane Brothers more than once held grand preachin's among the clachan folk. And the open-air gatherings continued to be spoken of long years after.

These meetin's or preachin's were delightful things. There is nothing like them nowadays. Looking back on them now, it often seems to me that the old clachan had solved the difficult question of union in its own quiet way. Very likely that was because the arrangements were entirely in *lay* hands. Ministers or elders had nothing to do with it, otherwise, perhaps, it would not have been settled yet. It was done in this way, to give an instance. Old *Sammle*, who travelled east and west periodically through the country with his pownie-cart, buying hens and feathers and what not, would bring a message to the "merchant" of the clachan that Mr. So-and-So would come "to gie them a preachin' in the school on Sabbath come eight days." So *that* was at once pleasantly settled. Whether Mr. So-and-So was Auld Licht, or Sandemanian, or Methodist, or Baptist, or Independent, or Auld Kirk mattered not a whit. The merchant was only too glad to get what he called a *bode*. And as to whether So-and-So was *a' soūn'*, why, that the clachan would pronounce upon when they had heard him. "We've a crap for *a' corn here*," the merchant would add, "an' if so be the lad's no soun' we'se shune ken." But, to do the auld clachan justice, they did always lend a hearty listening to the plain Gospel; and, to do equal justice to their many varied preachers who addressed them, they were seldom or never troubled with outside questions. As for anything ritualistic, the dominie's desk and the wee schoolroom, and the old bodies in their old, old Sabbath-day claes, were charmingly innocent. Had some keen-scented hunter after Romish mummeries of our own time been present he might have been a little suspicious of certain

tallow-candles fixed into the stone wall by means of cleft sticks, and especially of the occasional rising of a worshipper, who made a mysterious motion of the thumb and forefinger over the candle-wick. But there was nothing else giving token of any Romish tendency. The music was a grand feature in the clachan church. The merchant and the "old gairdner" took turns as to precenting. Two modern leaders of sacred music might have had little tiffs as to how the duty was to be divided, and how it should be conducted. These two never had a word about it ; and yet they differed both musically and ecclesiastically as widely as the poles ! The merchant was Highland. He gloried in that. "Yes ! I'm *Hielant*—ass Hielant's heather ! ass Hielant's a peat !" And oh ! he gave us the beautiful, old, wailing Highland psalm tunes, so tenderly, so solemnly—aye, and with all the old-fashioned "twirlie-wirlies." The old gardener was of a totally different fashion in every way. He was in the service of a good, kind-hearted old laird, whose trim little place lay a mile or two off. "Jeames," as the clachan called the gardener, was a Wesleyan Methodist, hailing from the North of England. He was a rare specimen of a Christian. Loving the Saviour with the simple heart of a little child, as he seemed to have done all his days (and he was now stricken in years), he was unceasingly cheery and happy and at peace. He was kind to everybody round him. And, though always willing to speak of his Saviour's love, and of the happy home he was looking forward to, he never wared a thought or a word on kirks, or "bodies," or Church government, or modes of worship. And the clachan "meetin's" were just the

kind of thing that cheered his heart. I fancy I see him yet, standing in the old, wee bit school, leading the singing—his quaint old-fashioned Sabbath-day suit, his heavy brass-rimmed spectacles, his scanty gray locks, and such a look of intensely reverent gladness on his honest childlike face! He “read the line,” or, rather, he read two lines, at a time, and then sang them ; and the old man could put such a sweet, solemn pathos into the words of our paraphrases that we quite forgot and forgave his English accent, so different from our own northern tongue.

We seem to have had but a *keek* into the clachan, and now we must leave it. As we do so, the tones of the old gardener still linger in our ears, singing the lines—

And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

THE LAST OF THE OLD CLACHAN

I

I HAD, some little time ago, the pleasure of trying to tell, in these pages, what the old clachan was like when it *was* a clachan. One of its old trees still stands, and the burn still runs and sings between its heather braes. But the auld *hooses* are *awa'*. I did my best to let my reader peep into one or two of the old interiors and take a look at one or two of the old "folk." And, as I was doing so, I was seeing in memory many a wise, kind, old face, and hearing the tone of many a well-remembered voice, silent now for ever! But I think it will be best to bid *farewell* to the old clachan by just touching one—the last—of its dear old, wizened, vanished hands, and telling the life-story of her who was the very *hinmost* of its "folk."

So my story shall be that of "JENNY." Of course, she had also her "married name," for she was "a weedow-wumman" when her history here begins. But in the days of the clachan we always stuck to the simple maiden name. And that was "Jenny." I have no doubt the good old minister who christened her called her—and quite devoutly—"JENNY," in the good old Scotch fashion.

To catch up Jenny's story at a convenient point, I think I must—with all due apologies—take my readers into the old Edinburgh "workhouse" (for so the poor-house of those days was named). In that same workhouse, on a day in the long, long ago, a middle-aged woman with an honest, sonsie, weather-worn, highland face is having a long *crack* with a kind-hearted old Edinburgh minister. I cannot help indicating the minister, for though only *older* Edinburgh can remember *him*, *all* Edinburgh knew and freshly remembers his distinguished son, the late Lord Rutherford Clark. Dr. Clark in his day was well known and much liked and respected as the minister, first of "the Old Kirk" in St. Giles, and later Collegiate Minister of St. Andrew's Church. To return to the workhouse. No wonder the crack was hearty, for the good doctor soon discovered that Jenny came from "the clachan," and the clachan was on neighbourly terms with his dear old northern parish. He and Jenny found many common acquaintances and many topics of common interest. Jenny's own story must have touched the doctor's heart, for it was a kind one. Her "man," leaving the clachan along with her, had come to Edinburgh, had started a small business on his bits of savings, had failed, losing everything and "being roupit to the door," and died of a not *very* uncommon complaint—a broken heart, leaving Jenny penniless and helpless. Their only son, sorely against the will of his parents, had set off "to try his luck." He himself knew not where he was to look for his luck—and *they never* knew. The luck did not come to him, and foolish pride would not let him write to *tell* them he was luckless. So, here was Jenny

in the big, bare, dreary Edinburgh workhouse! I wonder if in such pages as these I may dare to say that possibly, long ago, there may have been “whiles” in that same old, rough, and rattling workhouse somewhat more of free-and-easy hearty *cosieness* and comfort than is always to be met with amongst the clockwork accuracy and faultlessly systematic regulations of the *modern* institutions of the kind.

But, let us stick to Jenny’s history! If Jenny had ever seen a pantomime—and I am quite sure she never did—she might have imagined, soon after her interview with her good Edinburgh minister, that that reverend man was performing the part of Harlequin, and with a sword of magic effecting one of those amazing and bewildering transformations which are only to be witnessed on the stage. For only think what the suddenly transformed old lady beheld! The workhouse, and its walls, and floors, and rows of beds vanished in a day! “The scene was changed,” as in the case of Queen Mary. Jenny was whirled miles and miles away from Auld Reekie, and lo! she was back among her old hieland hills in her own old clachan. How her heart did warm to the heather! How she breathed in the fresh hill air, after being “fair chokit in the toon!”

She was in the clachan once more! not indeed in her own old house, which she had quitted. *That* had its two rooms and its two *lums*, and its bit *yaird*, but it was occupied now, and Jenny, though free, was still “*on the board*,” and she had therefore to take what she could get, and thankful she was to take possession of the “but-end” of a wee old tumble-down biggin. The *ben* end had already tumbled and had become a rickle,—

a picturesque, rubbishy ruin ornamented with dockens, and nettles, and hemlocks—such a thing as an artist would love—not to sleep in, but to sketch. Any artist was welcome to occupy the *ben* end. The *but* end was still upright, and in it dwelt Jenny, a proud and happy woman.

The magic wand was still at work, and it touched up the *but* end of the clachan housie marvellously. From somewhere came bedding and blankets for the box-bed, an old dresser with shelves and drawers, tolerably furnished with “a wheen pigs” (not grumphies). And, from an old laird’s house there came such a neat, little old-fashioned brass-mounted grate, and such a funny old-fashioned *awmrie*, which Jenny always rather revered than merely admired. There was a funny, old, red-leather easy-chair, in which the lairds of other days had sat. It was a good deal the worse for the wear, but Jenny sank into it with a bewildered smile of intense astonishment and delight—and the old chair held her till the day came when “she took to the bed.” Then there were bits of antique carpet, and countless odds and ends, which made one imagine that not only a harlequin but a whole band of gift-giving fairies were at work. Last of all, some fairie queen placed, one day, on Jenny’s floor Jenny’s own old spinning-wheel. Oh, but Jenny was a “prood wummun” *that* day! Aye! but Jenny was at the same time a devoutly thankful woman. I think I see her yet! seated in the leathern chair, with her “soopach” and its narrow black ribbon—token of widowhood—and her wee tartan shawl, and her “checkit” apron, and the wheel beside her! “Eh, weel, weel!” she said, “I was thinkin’ I was like Naomi

comin' back till her auld hame! I gae'd awa' full like her. But, my troth! I canna say this day that I'm comin' back *empty*, like Naomi! eh! na!" "There's nae doot," the good old woman continued, "there's nae doot *folk's* been kind! *awfu'* kind! *a'boddy*! But oh! mind ye! it's a' frae HEE's haund!"

II

And now, I come to tell of a wonderful change that came over the fortunes of Jenny. One day, by the kind hand of Providence, Jenny was, to use a modern phrase, "hitched on" to a happy cord of communication which stretched from a home in far Australia to the old highland clachan. She was brought into touch with her long-lost son! Mothers who have long mourned the absence of one whom they have supposed to be an idle, roving ne'er-do-weel vagabond may yet live to find him—as Jenny found her son—to be nothing of the kind after all, but a good thriving man and a loving son. The roving laddie, after a good many ramblings and ups and downs, had settled into a sensible, careful, hard-working man. The cannie Scot knew well about sheep and cattle and country work of all sorts, and having gained the confidence of a Scotch gentleman who had an extensive cattle range in Australia, became his trusted and well-salaried manager. He had, besides, fallen in with that great treasure, a good wife, well educated and thrifty, and his large family were growing up in a comfortable and happy home. He had written *many* a letter to his "folk" in Scotland, which, however,

being no doubt but vaguely addressed, had never brought him an answer. His master, at length, having occasion to revisit Scotland, undertook to make an effort to find *some* trace of the "folk." Let alone a Scotsman for persevering and succeeding in such a hunt! Jenny was traced from the Edinburgh workhouse to the old clachan. We had no telegraph and no telephone in those innocent days, and so it was only after a long delay that the parish minister—the natural go-between in affairs of all kinds—was entrusted with an *Australian letter*, for *Jenny at the clachan*. I think I shall never forget its first reading. It had many and many a subsequent perusal.

I must explain that by this time poor Jenny had become almost totally deaf. The doctor had done his best, and a good kind "leddy," of whom Jenny was a great pet, had presented her with an ear-trumpet. She did not like to *say* it was useless, so she wore it always by way of a chatelaine at her waist, and occasionally made a show of holding it to her *lug*. But Jenny remained "deef as Ailsa Craig" to the last. Thanks, however, to the old dominie who schooled her in her *lassie* days, she was a capital reader. And not only that "R," but the other two "R's" (which Jenny knew as "writin' an' coontin'") had been put into her so thoroughly that they never got out of her. To return to the letter. After the first dumfounderment—followed by a dead silence—with which the announcement of the news was received, and when the beginning of the letter and its very touching and solemn close had been read to her, how the tears rolled down the old cheeks! how the "withered hands were clasped and

rung!" and oh! the fervent ejaculations in which "the Almichty" was blest for what had come to her "frae *Hee's* haund! frae *Hee's* haund," as the good old body always repeated. Oh! to have been able to roar into the old woman's ears some words and tones of glad and thankful sympathy! It was hard work the *sklate*! but there was nothing else for it, and thanks once more to the old dominie—long gone to his rest!—his old scholar, with her good horn-rimmed "glesses" on her old nose, managed to read the *sklate*, making many audible comments.

That was the beginning! For years and years that correspondence went on and on, amid winter snows and summer sunshine. Jenny became quite learned about the out-going and home-coming of the Australian mails. Her face beamed when the expected letter came. And to do him justice, the far-away son seldom, if ever, missed a mail, and he wrote *capital* letters. Jenny was devoutly thankful that "her laddie" had been found! devoutly thankful that he was doing well, and in a happy home with loved ones round him. But, above all (and I am sure of this), she was most glad and thankful that every letter he wrote showed her assuredly that he and she were loving and trusting the same Saviour and humbly hoping for the same everlasting home. And this was evident from these letters, not by cant phrases here and there. There was none of *that*! but simply because the letters were unmistakably the natural outpourings of an honest, earnest, sensible, God-fearing and Christ-loving man.

I have said the correspondence went on for many years. And the Australian home gradually opened

itself out to the old clachan mother, as its organic growth went on. Photos came, and Jenny's mantelpiece, and dresser, and shelf had the children in groups at all the various ages. And Jenny was as familiar with Jenny (her own name-child), and Mary, and Lizbeth, and Kate, and wee Willie, etc., as if they dwelt in her wee house and got jeely pieces from her hand. In the course of years, and naturally, these little maidens grew to womanhood, and then special photos came in which the happy man appeared with his comely young bride beside him.

I must not forget *one* fact which was notified and arranged in one of the earliest of the Australian letters. The son settled on his old mother a modest half-yearly sum, which made her comfortable all her remaining days. Regularly twice a year came the remittance. And wasn't Jenny a prood wumman when her name was lifted from the books of the parochial board, and when, as she described it, she was, thanks to her laddie! "sittin' like a leddy, on her own coat tails!" Thanks once more to the old dominie and his coontin'-drill in her *lassie* days, Jenny managed her little income most systematically. And many a little charity came from her hand when she heard of some old "neebor, needin'." And Jenny always gave her mite to "the missions."

The clachan had left Jenny its last inmate, and the infirmities of age were coming on rapidly, so that she could not wisely be allowed to bide there "her lane." So Jenny—with perhaps a sore heart—left the clachan! But a good home with kind neighbours was found for her not far off. After a while Jenny ended her days

in Christian peace, and went to a home which—unlike the old clachan—will be a home for ever.

Does not the old woman seem to hold out to you and me a homely picture of what *faith* can do. How that son of hers, whom she had not seen since his boyhood, came out from the mists and shadows of old memories! and, by means of these letters, seemed actually to dwell with her in the clachan in living presence for years, cheering her and comforting her! And that family of his, whom she had never once looked on with her bodily eyes—how she seemed to live among them in their far-away home! sharing all their joys and sorrows. May *our* faith be ever so, binding our hearts to an unseen One whom it is well for us to love, and to a home not yet seen, but in which we may hope yet to dwell for ever!

CONTRIBUTIONS
TO 'CITY SPARROWS'

GRACIE

OR, THE CUP OF COLD WATER

GRACIE sat alone and thoughtful at the head of the now deserted breakfast table. The big house was in a west-end crescent in Glasgow. It was early May, and town folk were all sighing—some happy ones packing—for the country. GRACIE! let me sketch her. She was to be seen at her best and brightest when up at her loved Craigmohr, in Lochaber. There Miss Gracie could scamper about on her pet pony, or row a boat, or fish a burn, or climb a heather hill, or do whatever it came into her lively head to do. In town Gracie's spirit was under considerable restraint. She could not do many things she would fain have done, and at times there was not a little rebellion in her young heart. She was but sixteen, remember—a bonnie, blythe, honest-hearted lassie; lithe and supple and slender, and with truth and tenderness (and at times a little mirth and mischief) glancing from her bright blue eyes.

She was alone in the breakfast-room. The "boys," as she called her brothers, had gone off to their college classes. The *Pater* (as, in imitation of her brothers' college slang, she called her worthy father) had skimmed

the columns of the *Herald*, bundled up his letters, and bolted for his counting-house. Her mother, a bit of a chronic invalid, had been, as to her breakfast-tray in her own room, well attended to by Gracie. So Gracie sat *alone* and thoughtful. Thinking of *what*?

To explain that I must go back to the family worship, which preceded breakfast. I know it is thought more genteel to talk of "morning prayers," but family "worship" is a dear old word, and should never go out of fashion in Scottish homes; and the worship in Gracie's home was a very pleasant and impressive thing. The Pater (if we may give him Gracie's name) read the Bible really well. Nobody could but listen and follow. And there was a tender solemnity in the way in which he read from a book of "Family Prayers," written by his dear old minister, gone to his rest. The sentences of his good old sainted friend were graven on the memory of the reader, and they often brought back to him the very tones he had so often listened to.

Well, the family worship was over, and that chapter had been, with the usual clear impressiveness, read, which tells of our Saviour sending the disciples away on their "trial mission." One word specially had this morning taken hold of Gracie's mind. I have described my young lady as lithe and blythe and mirthful—even slightly "mischievous," I think; as riding, rowing, fishing, and what not. But it is quite possible surely for a girl to be and do all I have described, and at the same time to be a true-hearted, serious, thoughtful, prayerful, conscientious Christian girl. Such was Gracie. And she is still sitting, as when I began this yarn, in the big empty room, at the head of the long table, with

the tea-urn and the teapot in front of her, her hands quietly folded in her lap, and her thoughts—*where?* She is away in thought amongst the hills and glens of Galilee, along its lake-side, down by the rushing Jordan, among its vineyard cottages and little villages and fishing towns, and she is thinking she sees Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple plodding wearily along on a sultry day, travel-worn and dusty. Perhaps, thought Gracie, they have had a trying day of it, meeting, it might be, with sullen indifference at yonder distant cottage; and, it might even be, driven with mob-violence from yon village on the hillside! And then Gracie, in a day-dream, fancied she was a girl in Palestine long ago, and that she was standing in the porch of her father's wayside cottage; and she fancied she was so glad to see those weary travellers, and that she was bidding them *welcome*, for she knew *who* sent them, and what a happy message they brought! And then (in her bright day-dream) she ran back to the little fountain in the grove behind the cottage, and filled her pitcher, and brought it to the disciples, and bade them rest awhile in the shade, and tell her all about their good, kind LORD. Then Gracie woke up from her sweet little dream, and shook herself together, and began to think like a serious and sensible practical Christian girl of this present day. She said to herself something like this:—"And the Saviour promised His blessing to any one who should in those days do a little thing like *that*! But, dear me, what *is* there that the like of *me* can do in that way nowadays? Cold water isn't a scarce commodity in Glasgow, though I remember the awful dry summer when all our springs failed in Lochaber, and they had

to carry water all the way from the Ghillie's well. Dear me, I might wait *here* long enough before two weary 'missionaries' or disciples came along our crescent. But stay: 'a cup of cold water to one of these little ones.' Ah! He was thinking of *more* than the disciples! And then father's prayer said, 'Put it into our hearts, for Thy sake, to do *any* kindness we can to *any* one.' Now, what *is* there *I* can do? It is not confined to *cold water*!"

And Gracie's eyes rested on the teapot for a moment; and then she sprang to her feet, straightened herself, and, with a bright cheery gleam on her face, she went to work. She had a fashion of talking to herself when she had no other listener to address. And as her deft, nimble fingers prepared a tempting little breakfast-tray, she said, "Yes, poor thing! she needs a good stiff 'brew'; it will do her good. And a bit of oatcake makes her think of her mother's Highland cottage! And a bit of fresh butter, and a fresh egg from Lochaber; that she'll relish! Poor creature! Stitch, stitch, stitch—up there, all the day long!"

"*Up there*" we shall go, taking precedence of Miss Gracie, who, bearing her tray, must moderate her pace, and "ca' cannie" as she climbs the long stairs. Her natural pace was a very rapid one. "*Up there*" meant at the very top of the big, high Glasgow house, in a big attic room, from whose windows might be seen a wide stretch of extending city; many a tall, smoky chimney far and near; a glimpse of blue water and shipping, and the suggestion of something like hills far away. Mary Stuart, a nice, quiet, modest Highland lassie, sat busy in this lofty chamber, the floor of which was strewed

with all the paraphernalia of dressmaking. Mary Stuart was the magician in the house who was known as "coming in to sew." Much confidence was placed in Mary's taste and judgment and in Mary's clever fingers, and many wonders did the magician execute. Always gentle and contented, always busy, always to be depended on, and always wonderfully cheerful was Mary. I say *wonderfully*, for sorely did Mary miss the breath of the *caller air* of her own Lochaber. Ah! there used to be more colour on her cheek and more flesh on her bones when her foot was on the heather! How often have we all heard the homely diagnosis of a case having none but these very commonplace symptoms—"the air of Glasgow did not agree with her." If the poor girl could have got more of the air of Glasgow than she did, it might have been found to be not so very far behind Lochaber air; and many a blythe jump poor Mary Stuart's heart gave when she fell in with anything that had to do with "Lochaber."

Enter Gracie with her tray. After the sketch of that young lady which was given downstairs, I should not be believed, even by the most innocently simple reader I may have, if I described her as entering the room in a stately, frigid fashion, and saying in a tone of dignified condescension, "I have brought you a cup of tea, thinking it might refresh you." No, Gracie's mode was slightly different from that. Mary Stuart and she were in different ranks of life; but they were bound together in what every one who knows the Highlands knows as *Highland* friendship. Mary's face brightened and her eyes glistened as Gracie entered. Miss Gracie was quite dictatorial and dominant. Mary's work-table was

ruthlessly cleared of what Gracie was pleased to call rubbish to make room for the tray. And "Now, Mary!" was the opening of an address in a tone of merry banter and mock solemnity, in which Mary was assured that till she began to tender due homage to the Highland cheer on that tray, not one word should she hear of the news of the glen. And a capital hand was Gracie at telling the news! She sketched merrily the School Board election, described the repairing of the old kirk, told of the gay wedding at the home farm, gave the last queer adventure of the old boatman, and the catching of the big salmon at the pool below the bridge, and of this girl and that going away to service here and there; and so on, and so on. In a word, she carried her delighted listener away north, in fancy, to her own dear country-side. It was like giving her a breath of the hill air. The good cup of tea and the oatcakes, flavoured with the home news of the glen, and with Gracie's honest, hearty, kindly tones, were tenfold more nourishing and refreshing than they would have been without that seasoning. The *heart* of the poor seamstress was refreshed. And then Gracie left one parting gleam of special sunshine for Mary's heart that made her needle fly merrily all the day after, and that went home with her to bless her dreams at night. She told her it was designed that she should go with them for the summer to dear Craigmohr, to do a spell of needlework in the cosy turret workroom, from whose window she could see the clachan in which her "ain folk" lived.

And off went Gracie with a happy heart to her own day's work! I think I hear some one exclaim, "But what had Gracie done after all?—carried a cup of tea

upstairs, and had a gossip with the sewing girl—*that* wasn't much!" Well! I don't think poor Gracie ever dreamed herself that she *had* done anything "*much*." And I hear it said also, "And she *enjoyed* the gossip; it was quite a *pleasure* to her!" I don't deny it. But I submit that Gracie did really carry out the true lesson of the cup of cold water. Because the Saviour in His Word bade her, she for His sake, in His service, went and bestowed kindness on a human heart—a little bit of simple kindness, like the cup of water. That is *always* easily done, and *always* pleasant to do. The text seems to me to bid us all do little kindnesses to others, *of all kinds*, when we can. But, says one critic, the text speaks of "*disciples*." Yes, *disciples*—that means *Christians*; and we Christians are to be kind to one another. Would we were all kinder to one another than we are! The cup of cold water, remember, is to be handed over the walls that divide Church from Church. "But," says another critic, "the text speaks of the Saviour's little ones." Ah! the Saviour's "little ones" are many! You can't go wrong about that. You are not to hold back your kindness from the little ragged, starving waif till you have examined him (or her) in Shorter Catechism, and Bible, and Church attendance! If *they* don't know the Saviour, HE knows and loves *them*.

And now I shall be glad if Gracie has helped at all to remind any of us that by even a very little homely act of kindness easily done we may give a good deal of happiness—more than we often think!

‘ KNOCK ! ’

A STORY-SERMON FOR CHILDREN

CHILDREN, when they say to you at home, “What was the text?” you like to be able to tell. I think you will manage to tell *this* text.

Let me tell you how Wee Johnnie told his grannie this very text. The minister said, “Now, children, listen to the text! Wheesh’t! listen, and you’ll hear it! Listen!” And the minister gave a loud knock with his knuckles on the desk, as if he was rapping at a door.

Wee Johnnie had a quiet little laugh all to himself, for a funny little plan came into his wee curly pow, and he said to himself, “Stop or I get hame, an’ I’ll gar grannie hear the text.” So he did, for when he got up the long stair to his grannie’s door, Johnnie doubled his bit fist, and made a sounding rattle on the door. “Wha’s that?” cried grannie. Another rattle of Johnnie’s fist was the answer. “Come in!” cried grannie; “come in, and no stand rattlin’ there!” Johnnie entered, looking very wise and serious. “What garr’d ye rap at the door that way?” “I was tellin’ ye the *text*, grannie!” “The *text*, laddie! What kind of a text’s *that*, rattlin’ on the door?” “Ha, ha! but that

was the text, grannie ! The minister says ye’ll find it in the Bible.” “ Weel, come ye and sit doon, and tell me what the minister said.” And Johnnie got his little chair, and sat down at grannie’s feet, and in his own very queer words told her the story which I am now going to tell you. And grannie, who knew her Bible well, found the text.

Now for the story. The story is the sermon. It is a true story, and it is an Edinburgh story. It is an old story—about fifty years old. Dr. GUTHRIE told it himself in the great big Music Hall in George Street, which was crowded to the door.

But who was Dr. Guthrie ? I wish you had seen him. I wish you had heard him ! When you looked at him, you saw a real Scotchman—tall, and strong, and manly, with a kindly, clever Scotch face ; and he had as warm and kind a heart as was ever in a Scotchman’s breast. He didn’t speak fine English, but plain, homely, hearty Scotch.

The great work of Dr. Guthrie’s life was to take care of poor boys who were homeless and friendless ; and when once a poor laddie got into what Dr. Guthrie called his “ Ragged School,” that boy was never cold, or hungry, or friendless any more. He was sheltered, and fed, and taken care of, and taught to read and write and to count—especially taught to read the Bible, and to know about the Saviour. And he was taught some trade ; and many of our soldiers and sailors, and joiners and smiths, and other tradesmen who have got on well in the world, have looked back to their happy days in Dr. Guthrie’s school.

Dr. Guthrie preached wonderful sermons. Everybody liked to hear him. The passages in his church were

filled with people standing to listen. He told stories of sailors and ships, and soldiers and battles, and so on. But every story he told was sure to lead on to something about the Saviour and the Gospel.

And when Dr. Guthrie made a speech, people who heard him would be shedding tears when he was telling of poor children and sad homes; and then they would be laughing heartily at some of his funny Scotch stories.

Children, I think you all know the Cowgate. That was where Dr. Guthrie was often to be seen. His home was in Lauriston. And in going home from the Cowgate to Lauriston he passed through what is now called Forrest Road. It was a queer old-fashioned bit then. There was one old, old house which some kind people had repaired, and it was a shelter or "House of Refuge" for any poor persons who had no home to go to. The house had a big, old-fashioned, strong door, made of stout oak and studded with large iron nails, and half-way up the door was a huge, black, iron knocker. Poor folk knocked with the knocker and got shelter for the night.

Now, children, you understand what kind of man Dr. Guthrie was; and you know something about the big oaken door—the old House of Refuge, with its big knocker. And this is what Dr. Guthrie told in the crowded Music Hall. He had been sent for to see a poor dying man in the Cowgate, and late at night he was returning to his home in Lauriston. It was a bitterly cold winter night—a night of driving wind and sleet, and the streets were covered with half-melted snow. At the gate of the old Refuge Dr. Guthrie thought he saw some little black creature moving, and he also thought he heard the sound of a sob, as if of somebody

"greetin'." That sound always went to his heart, so the tall man stopped and bent down to see what was there. By the light of an old oil lamp that was stuck above the doorway, he saw a poor, thin, ragged laddie of some six years old. His wee face was waesome and "begrutten." The poor, red "*feeties*" were naked in the slush, and he was trying, poor little man! to rap with his little bit of a fist on the big oak door with the iron nails. He had been trying to stand on tip-toe, and, with a little paw stretched out from the tattered jacket-sleeve, to reach the big black knocker. But that had failed, and the poor wee heart was like to fail, for the little fist made but a poor knocker; and no wonder the six-year-old mannie had taken to the "greetin'." Kindly the big minister bent down, and, like a shepherd folding in his plaid neuk a stray lamb, he sheltered the poor thing from the sleet with his stout umbrella till he had got from amongst the sobs and greetin's the waesome story. His mother was in the "jile," his "faither" was "in the drink," and "the door was lockit," and "he had nae gait to gang till," and "he came here," "but it was ower heegh for him; he couldna gar them hear."

In the Music Hall there had been tears shed—a good many—as Dr. Guthrie told the wee laddie's story. But there was much merry laughter when the Doctor added, in his own humorous tones, "So I took that knocker in hand, and I'se warrant ye I gar'd them hear."

Our wee laddie is safe for that night—"dry claes," a grand hot porridge-and-milk supper, the front of a bleezin' fire, into a cosy well-blanketed bed (the like never known before). What were his dreams? I don't know. I think he "sleepit that soun' that he had no

dreams at all." He was sheltered for that night, ay, and for many a night and day to come. You may be sure our wee laddie got into the Ragged School.

I know *this*, that after hearing Dr. Guthrie's story, I used to look at the "boys" as they marched along merrily with their white blouses and belts, and I used to wonder which was he—was it the little man blowing the fife? or was the drummer the little man who "couldna' gar them hear"?

Children, there is a door at which every day you and I should knock. There is no big knocker, no iron nails, no locks or bars, no difficulty. The door opens at once. Did you ever see at a door, instead of the old knocker, or the common bell-handle which has to be pulled out with a strong pull—did you ever see an *electric bell*? You press gently with your finger a little white button, and the bell rings loudly within the house. Your wee baby-sister two years old—she could make the bell ring as loud as a strong man. It is as easy as *that* to knock at the DOOR OF PRAYER. Knock! even with some poor little words. Knock, and the door of that house is opened—a HOUSE OF REFUGE, where, like Dr. Guthrie's wee man, we can have shelter, safety, food, guidance—everything we need—for the asking.

And now I have told my little story to the little children. It is an old story of a truly noble institution, which has done grand work in its day, and has been indeed an ornament and a blessing to Edinburgh and to Scotland. I have been speaking of it in the days of its infancy. It has grown vastly since then, and is still continuing to do greater and nobler work than ever. And I should like to say to older readers, Go out some

day to Liberton, and take a look at what is still, and will long be known as Dr. Guthrie’s Ragged School. A sight of the merry, active, well-fed and well-trained boys busy learning their trades, and destined with God’s blessing for good and useful lives in their manhood, will be sure to stir your hearts, and prompt you to lend a helping hand to every enterprise of a similar kind ; and yet it is but fair to add that, though Dr. Guthrie’s School first led the way, and still leads the way as an *Industrial* School, it was not really the first Ragged School in Edinburgh. That honour belongs to the school in the Vennel, near the Grassmarket, which began its life a few years before Dr. Guthrie’s, under the care and by the unwearied exertions of the good and gifted Dr. William Robertson of New Greyfriars. That school is to this day carrying on its blessed work, feeding and educating its children, and it is well supported by many true friends.

Ah, Christian men and women, is not it worth while trying to save a young life from rags and starvation and neglect, and all the bad that follows these, and to make it, by God’s help, a life good and happy hereafter ?

To the rescue ! under one or another of the many banners that are flying bearing some such motto, aye, even though it be a very tiny, modest bit of a banner.

A PEEP INTO THE CHILDREN'S SHELTER

NOT long ago I chanced to have a spare afternoon in Auld Reekie, and right pleasantly I spent it—in THE SHELTER. I am ashamed to say that I had never yet seen the place of which I had heard so much. Away down the High Street I wandered in search of it. I could not but wonder *where*, amidst all the racket, and rattle, and clatter of the High Street, they could possibly have managed to find a calm and cosy SHELTER for the bairns! But I know there are—or, at least, were—calm and cosy homes in this same High Street.

Above one door, not far from the Shelter, is a CLAM SHELL, neatly carved in stone, once brightly gilded, but now faded and worn. The whole tenement—the whole *land*—was once proudly titled “THE CLAM SHELL.” And the Clam Shell awoke old boyish memories in my mind. On its first floor there dwelt, long ago, an old lady—a “decayed gentlewoman,” who, in a highly genteel way, sold pounds and quarter-pounds of excellent tea. She did not live quite alone, for a cat (whose name I forget), and a parrot in a cage, that I well remember, kept her company. Greatly pleased were we children to be sent to purchase “a pound of ‘Miss Millar of the

Clam Shell's' four-and-fourpence tea." Tea was *tea* then! and the purchase of the tea involved a formal visit of some length—also a cookie. And "Poley," as Miss Millar called him, joined in the conversation freely, and informed us that "Poley's gotten the cold." But the Clam Shell has long since lost good old Miss Millar, and Poley has ceased to have "gotten the cold."

Since those days, the Children's Shelter found for a time its first home in the old Clam Shell. It has found a bigger and better home now!

I passed on; and, after resisting a strong desire to wander down the "COVENANT CLOSE," and explore it, I reached the happy number, viz. 142, the number by which, in the Directory, the SHELTER is known. A blessed number it has been to many a poor neglected waif, now grown up and going on well!

Does the reader recollect Adam Woodcock and Roland Avenel riding down the High Street towards Holyrood (I think I hear some puzzled reader saying in perplexity—"What's this man *hauvering* about next, with his Clam Shells, and his pounds of tea, and his parrots? He is always going off the rail!")—I was referring my reader to Sir Walter's charming story of *The Abbot*, in which he tells us how gallant young Roland caught sight of Catharine Seyton, and chased her through an arched passage and across a court, to the door of the mansion of Lord Seyton, her father. I don't say positively that the Shelter was once the residence of the noble Seytons, but I do say that the *Shelter* might very well stand for that which Sir Walter describes.

You pass through a covered passage, or "pend," as the Edinburgh folk call it, and enter a square court.

And, fronting you, stands what has no doubt at one time been a very handsome family mansion-house. Its more ancient history I do not know; but in the early years of the century it was the Commercial Bank, and in that covered archway, passage, or "pend," a tragedy occurred which rang through all Scotland. The bank porter, carrying a large sum of money, was stabbed in that archway; and the murderer escaped to Leith, and left the country, and was never caught. In course of time the Bank fancied a more fashionable site, and the building became a Free Church. In course of time the Free Church also followed the fashion; and the old mansion-house passed into the hands of an incorporated society, the Good Templars, and became its "Hall."

Now, I think the old building has come to its *best*. It reminds one of our old Pantomime days. The clever and benevolent fairy has come in at the end, and by one touch of her magic wand made everything beautiful and everybody happy! The *Shelter* has been well and wisely chosen. Not many yards away from the High Street, and yet the children are as completely screened from its sights and sounds, its rattle and clatter, as though they had the Firth of Forth between Edinburgh and them! And the little creatures occupy a house, whose large, airy, well-lighted and high-roofed rooms many an Edinburgh family would be glad to have.

I am not attempting to give anything like a systematically detailed description of what I saw in the *Shelter*. I am only trying to tell one or two things which struck me. I *know* that if I were put through an examination by a committee of intelligent and experienced females, I

should lamentably break down and fail. Such questions as—"How many children did you see? What were their ages? How were they dressed? How many boys? and how many girls? Where did they come from?" Questions like these would puzzle me. I have not female eyes, and I am neither intelligent nor experienced. I can only say I was *amazed* and *delighted*. The children were all so well cared for, so comfortable, and so happy. And *yet* it all seemed to be so very easily done, with no trouble in the world to anybody! *But is that so?* Often have I been told that "to take care of a young bairn, nicht an' day, is *ae wumman's full wark*." But lo! here were some score and a half of bairns—some at the very troublesome and *steering* ages of three, four, five, six, and seven—wee lassies, and wee laddies; and here were the *more* troublesome "year-olds" and *two*-year-olds, in their restlessness and their helplessness. And here were utterly helpless *babies*—*days* old! *weeks* old! *months* old!—hitherto misguided and maltreated, and consequently still wailing, and yammering, and peevish—"no' able to tell what was wrang wi' them," and needing *unceasing* attention! And yet, how easily and quietly and simply it seemed all done! How easily a thing is done by one who knows *how to do it*! Oh! Lady Visitors! you have often seen a young mother at her very wits' end, *fechtin'* with a wailing, yammering baby, and I *know* you are gentle and patient with her, for she has not *yet* learned the *art of it*.

My visit began with a pleasant crack in the SECRETARY'S ROOM. There she sat, quietly, busy with no end of accounts and letters and reports and official volumes—an enthusiast on the rescue of children, and

her whole heart in it. The lady, sitting so quietly there, and yet guiding the whole business of the institution—to say nothing of editing the *Sparrows* Magazine—made me think of what I often look at when at Perth Railway Station. On the platform there is hurry-scurry, and rushing, and jostling—luggage-barrows flying about, passengers making for all different trains, bells ringing, guards whistling, engines shrieking, trains about to start, north, east, south, and west—*everybody* in a hurry and a fry. *One man*—and I often look at *him*—is up in a high glass house, yonder, standing coolly and quietly amongst all sorts of unknown machinery-levers, cranks, clocks, and what not. HE is never hurried, never speaks, minds what he is about, attends only to his levers and his signals. Yet that man manages the whole concern—pulls a lever, and off goes the Highland train to Inverness; pulls another, and brings in the Aberdeen. The Secretary, sitting quietly at her busy writing-table, and in close touch always with a wise body of directors, manages all the movements of the Shelter business.

Then I went among the *babies* and the *bairns*. Yes!—comfortable, well-fed, clean and tidy, and happy—but, oh! there are tokens many on the little human frames of early mal-management! A pair of *medical* eyes would see a vast deal more than any of us could. Poor bairns! like “sodgers,” they bear *scars*, telling of what they have come through! But it struck me that those Lady Visitors, and other ladies who take an active interest in Shelter work, must see a great deal more clearly than a mere visitor like me could possibly do, the *wonder* and the *beauty* of inside the Shelter. For they have often had occasion to see these poor creatures in the dens of

misery from which they have been rescued; and the contrast between what *was* and what *is now* must strike them *very* forcibly. The delight must be very, very great with which these ladies look on the rescued and sheltered bairns, having seen and known the dens from which they were rescued; and greater *still* must their pleasure be in knowing that they themselves bear a helping hand, both in the rescue and in the Shelter. Yes! one needs, in order rightly to appreciate the Shelter, to know something of the antecedent condition of the little waifs. We used all to read an advertisement as to "Handwriting taught in Six Lessons," and we remember the difference between "This was my writing before," etc., and "This—after six lessons from Mr. Readypen." But, indeed, the capital *photos* which brighten the pages of the *Sparrows* Magazine give us vivid peeps into the antecedent conditions, and these do much to aid the work which the Magazine seeks to accomplish.

A sight which I think I shall never forget was that of an infant a few weeks old, rescued a day or two before from one of those illicit "*farms*." It had been all but starved to death—rescued just in time. Nothing but the care of the Shelter could have pulled it through. How I wished I could have had beside me some of the tender-hearted, couthie, motherly women whom I know here in my own country-side. I can think I hear their greetin', and their ejaculations, and their "blessings on the Shelter," and their affectionate embraces of the good Matron, if they had seen, as I did, "the wee darlin' bairn," lying in the neatest, nattiest little crib, and *sookin'* away at its bottle, as if for dear life.

The Matron—as warm-hearted and motherly woman

as ever lived—won my heart at once by pointing to a photo-likeness of my late sister ROBINA, and by telling me much about the “wee Davie” and his death, of whom my sister wrote a little book. What a delight that woman seemed to take in the rescued baby! She seemed to me like the woman who found her lost bit of silver.

Those of the children who had reached the years of discretion as to their *legs*—that is, who could *toddle* along—marched into the schoolroom, guided (and assisted, some of them—for there were some very short legs, and some by no means “soople on the feet”) by their young teacher, who was very gentle with them. There they sang some nice nursery hymns. One hymn took my fancy very much, being sung to some very common *Hielant* song-tune. I am not going to tell *what* it was. It puzzled me, at the time, to “put a name on it,” and it was not till next day, on my way home to the Hielants, that I hit upon it. They sang with great goodwill, and they looked quite as intelligent, on the whole, as the children of any school I know. What the Educational *Code* calls “O. and D.”—*i.e. order and discipline*—were of course excellent.

Then the playroom! I have a great weakness for children's toys—always had;—and the playroom enchanted me. I suppose benevolent fairies and wealthy godfathers flit about the institution unseen, and always add something to the playroom furnishings. A large, handsome, old-fashioned doll-house, with gables, and towers, and verandahs and windows, stood in one corner. It was like a Chinese pagoda, and might have held two or three of the *live* dolls inside. A hobby-horse stood quietly in a window recess, saddled and bridled, and

bearing marks of usage—not on its *knees*, but on stirrups and saddle and *tail*. Who knows but the first owner of it may now be some one of Edinburgh's greatest citizens,—a Lord of Session, or a victorious General, or a great medical professor! A much more humble horse, lower in stature, and bearing *more* marks of usage on main and tail, stood on its wooden wheels—not in galloping attitude, but stock-still. HE brought to memory vividly my own old wooden “BALDY,” of long, long ago—long since gone to *sticks*! To conclude the hobby-horse show, I was much taken with a *baby rocking-horse*, or rather a *pair* of horses. Two rocking-horses, each cut out of inch-thick deal board, were planted on a rocker about 12 or 14 inches apart, and between them was a perfectly safe *baby-chair*. The tiniest baby could be left sitting there rocking quietly for a good long while, and warranted not to cry or to tumble out.

The walls of nursery, playroom, and dormitory are all decked with charmingly bright, *taking* pictures. And the dormitory is a pleasant place to look into, with its neat little cots, snow-white sheets, and scarlet coverlets. Ah! poor bairnies! the beds that you might have still been sleeping in!

Now if any one imagines from anything I have said that these children are *petted*, and *coddled*, and made too much of with their playroom and dormitory, etc., I wish to say to such a reader, Please go and see for yourself. The whole house is carried on in the very *plainest* fashion. They have the commonest of food and clothing; they are well disciplined and drilled; and if kind friends send them old toys for their playroom, where is the harm? I guess they don't get hobby-horse *every day*. If boys

and girls are kept well and properly *in hand*, as these children are, a little play with a doll or a ride on a rocking-horse won't hurt them. Besides, let it be remembered, those in the Shelter are the mere *bairnies*—the *wee things*, the “little ones.” In due time they are drafted off to the upper form—the higher school, the harder work—in the institution at Corstorphine. I have a great longing to go to Corstorphine and see what is to be seen; and, if I have a chance of describing Corstorphine for the use of any of my readers who grudge the hobby-horses and the dolls, I shall take rigorous note of anything *there* savouring of luxuries, and I rather think I shall not need to make a “chapter on hobbies” at Corstorphine, finding, perhaps, that rocking-horses there are as scarce as snakes in Iceland. I am thankful to have seen the High Street Shelter. It is a sight *worth* seeing! The two sights I saw in Edinburgh were the Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy, *and* the SHELTER. Yes! I think I may say I enjoyed the one quite as much as the other. God speed the CHILDREN'S SHELTER!

THE JUBILEE

OUR SHELTER PUSSY CAT PAYS A VISIT TO THE QUEEN

PUSSY, PUSSY PARLINS !

Where have ye been ?

*"I've been in London
Seein' the Queen."*

PUSSY, PUSSY PARLINS !

What saw ye there ?

*"I saw a bonnie Leddy
In a muckle chair."*

PUSSY, PUSSY PARLINS !

What did She say ?

*"Pussy, Pussy ! bonnie cat !
Whaur div ye come frae ?"*

PUSSY, PUSSY PARLINS !

What said you ?

*"Frae the Shelter i' the High Street,
A hunder an' forty-two."*

AN' PUSSY, PUSSY PARLINS !

What said She mair ?

*"I love the SHELTER,
An' the wee bairnies there !"*

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What mair said the Queen ?

" Be gentle wi' the babies, noo !

An' dinna scart their e'en ! "

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Did She *speir* aucht at ye ?

" Gin we was to ha'e a Puddin'

On the day o' Jubilee ! "

An' Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What thocht the Queen o' *that* ?

" That there be't to be a sasserfu'

O' cream for the CAT ! "

Oh ! Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Are ye tellin' us a lee ?

" Na ! She said I be till drink her health

An' wuss Her jubilee. "

An' Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What mair did She say ?

" She's to come an' see THE SHELTER

Some bonnie simmer's day ! "

An' Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What did ye do, syne ?

" I loupit i' the QUEEN'S lap ;

An' she strokit me, sae fine ! "

Oh ! Pussy, Pussy Parlins,

It was impiddent that !

" Na ! the bonnie, gentle ledly !

She kens aboot a CAT ! "

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What mair said *She* to you ?

“ *We hinna craim in London,*

Oor milk's awfu' blue.”

Oh ! Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Is this true ava' ?

“ *But ye'se tak' a sowp o' London milk*

Afore ye gang awa'.”

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Can this be a' true ?

“ *Ay ! they fesh't a cheeny sasser,*

But the milk was awfu' blue !”

Oh ! Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Did ye *skail* upon Her gown !

“ *Hoot ay ! She leuch an' dichtit it,*

An' set me saft doon.”

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

Did ye see Her grand hoose ?

“ *Oū ! very grand ! but no' a cheep*

O' aither rat or moose !”

Pussy, Pussy Parlins !

What said *She*, *last o' a' ?*

“ *I thank ye for your veesit, sir !*

Ye better gang awa' !

An' mind me to MISS HEPBURN,

An' the couthie Nurse, an' a'—

To a'boddy i' THE SHELTER—

The bairnies, grit an' sma.”

She aye spak' o' "the babies "
 (An' I see'd her dicht her e'en),
" Be gentle wi' the babies, sir,
Or—mind ye ! I'M THE QUEEN !"

JOCK AND THE 'POWNIE'

LET me tell you about the *pownie* first, before we come to JOCK. That is but right, for we knew the pownie as a friend long before we knew Jock. The pownie's name was *Dumpling*—at least, that is the name our children gave him, *Dumpling*, because he was, as they said, round, and plump, and good, and nice. But what the pownie's name, or names, had been before he came to us—that is more than I can tell. He was oldish even then. Some said he had been wild in his younger days, but, indeed, they talked much nonsense about him. It was said he had been a smuggler. It was even said he had been "out" with Prince Charlie in 1745! That he ran away at Culloden I *don't* believe. He was a clever, active little horse, very neatly made, standing straight up on four smart, strong, slender legs, with a fashion of cocking his little head in the air, and looking round him, as if he were the Duke of Wellington. You are asking what height he was? Well, any boy or girl who is able to read this page of print could have quite easily scrambled on to his back. But it was not every boy *Dumpling* would allow to get on his back. To girls, he was always polite and always kind. *What was his colour?* Well, in his youth he had been dark, dark grey,

but now he was beginning to grow white, and he grew white very fast. He had for many years been the pet and fondling of two nice, gentle, kind old ladies who lived in a pretty cottage, in a quiet Highland glen. They fed him, and fondled him, and conversed with him, and he drew them up and down, and here and there, in a little trap which they called their "clothes-basket." They called him *Donald*, which I think was his true name. Latterly, the old ladies, growing older, could drive no more, and Donald became an idle pensioner, enjoying a cosy stable, and in summer weather grazing in a little paddock of his own, from which he walked up to the front window at certain hours which he well knew, and got biscuits, and knots of sugar, and kind words from the dear old ladies. By-and-by, Donald missed one of his kind friends, and one sad day came when there were *no* kind hands, no gentle words, and no biscuits or sugar knots, and Donald's heart was sore, though he made no noise about it.

Donald became the *Dumpling* of little girl-friends, in short frocks and straw hats, and though they too gave him pieces, and made of him, he missed the old window, and the old hands, and the old voices. His new mistresses often unintentionally bothered him a little. But, as they grew, they got more sense, and Dumpling came to like them, and to know his new name, and their merry voices seemed to please him, as he trotted in the little phaeton, along four miles of pretty road to the little town. There he waited for them very patiently from door to door, as they did their shopping, and then he was always at his best and briskest when his nose was toward his home stable.

So, there is the pownie ! And now for Jock ! Jock lived with his old grannie and his *gran'faither* in a funny little cottage, beside a bonnie "wud" (for so Jock called it), through which a merry burn went singing, and dancing, and glinting. And Jock was intimately acquainted with every bird that built its nest in that "wud." He knew the eggs of each nest (but grannie's standing orders forbade all *harrying*). He "guddled" for "troots" in the burn (if any *Sparrow* reader wants a description of that sport, I shall be glad to give it next month), and he feasted on brambles and blaeberries, and lay among the primroses, and heard the "cookoo" crying to him wonderfully, and he was a happy laddie.

It was before the days of School Boards, and codes, and standards, but I should like much to find boys and girls nowadays as well taught as Jock was. Grannie was the "female teacher" in that cottage-school. She was "uncertificated" to be sure, but Jock could tell you all King David's adventures and battles as if he had been there. He knew all the paraphrases, and could repeat all his grannie's favourite psalms (and they were many, including the 119th), and he knew *better* things than the *Old Testament*.

Gran'faither made him a "grand coonter." I wish you had seen Jock's little fist handling the *skeelie*, and knocking off a sum in practice on the *sklate*, or figuring, what he called in derision, a reel-o'-three coont ! I wonder how many modern English boys know as much of English History as Jock knew of the history of his own land ? I know schools where "Scotch" History is kept pretty much in the rear. It was not in the rear with Jock ! He knew its outs and ins, and its battle-

fields, from Bannockburn to Balaclava. He was *wae* for Flodden, but "prood" at the same time. He was "angry" at King Charles, and would have been a covy-nenter, and no mistake!

Finally, Jock had a tremendous fondness for all kinds of animals. Grannie's cat and he conversed in pussy-language. Squirrels, doos, rabbits, hay-rats, weasels, puddocks, bumbees, butterflees—he knew all about them all, and dearly loved each one of them. As for "dowgs," gran'faither had the remains of an old faithful collie—now cripple, stiff, and nearly blind. The collie was Jock's friend, with him all day long, and lying at the foot of his bed at night.

And, one day Jock got word that he was to come to us and *take care of the pownie!* His grannie told him; and he danced a hielant fling for joy. Sleep that night forsook Jock's pillow. Had he dreamed there would have been trotting past him all night long an endless procession of pownies, with flowing manes and long tails, and saddles and bridles. He would have seemed to himself to be flying through the air on Dumpling, like a witch on a broomstick. Oh how he wondered *when* "daylicht wad come in!" It came. Jock struggled into his new *claes*, and slipping out, waiting not for his "parritch," was found, when our household began to stir, sitting outside the stable door, wondering if the folk here sleepit a' day!

A neighbour of ours had kindly promised to "show the laddie what was what" as to grooming, and "hay-ing," and watering, and *suppering-up*, and bedding, and so forth. We chanced, on that first day of Jock's, to have other matters to think of, and Jock's services were

not wanted indoors. So he spent that day—that live-long day—in making friends with Dumpling, and I don't doubt that the pownie and he really became acquainted with each other. Dumpling was such an object of interest to Jock as a quite new and strange specimen is to a naturalist, as a new star to an astronomer. The pownie had long known kind touches and kind voices; and, though at first probably a little doubtful, he soon found that Jock was kind.

A hand was on my shoulder,
I *knew* its touch was kind.

Quickly would Jock learn the pownie-language, and I dare say the first attempt at grooming was accompanied by many little remarks. "Noo! ma mannies! I'm *no* gaun to hurt ye! No, no! Wo then! *That's* a man! Hiss-ss-ss!" (for Jock soon learned the ostler's sound). And then, when the two were on rather more familiar terms, it might be "Hoots, man! what ye gaun on about! Ye're no gaun to *bite* me, are ye?" and then the hiss-ss-ss would proceed comfortably.

It was with difficulty Jock could be got in for his dinner that day. It was, for all the world, like Dominie Sampson in *Guy Mannering*, when he bolted his food and went back to his beloved library.

Now, my story is long enough for the present. I could tell a great many amusing things that happened when Jock and Dumpling began to ride and drive about together. But I have only space left to say *this* to all boy and girl readers—Jock became a thoroughly good horseman, a capital driver, and a first-rate rider. Of course he learned much after he left Dumpling. But

Dumpling was his first lesson-book, and he got on as he did with Dumpling *because* he was fond of animals, and kind to them, understood them, and made them understand him. *That* is the lesson.

I saw Jock not very long ago. He was a good-looking, substantial, stout, middle-aged coachman, in a very handsome livery, and he was in charge of a pair of very handsome, spirited horses. He is now the trusted and valued servant of a family of rank, has a wife and family, a nice house and garden, and all kinds of pet animals about him. And he seems uncommonly happy. There are few men so successful as he is in breaking in young horses. It should not, indeed, be called *breaking*, for it is all gentleness, and wise, firm kindness.

He and I had a "crack" about old days and Dumpling. And he says when he sees horses tortured, and misguided, and destroyed by young lads who do it simply because they don't know what a horse is, he says to himself: "Ah! if they could only begin with a gentle beast like Dumpling, and be kind to it, there would be far better and happier horses in the country."

OUR BABY IN THE CRESCENT AND OUR BABIES IN THE SHELTER

THERE is a certain Nursery in a certain pretty Crescent in the very pretty City of Edinburgh. And in that Nursery the young inmates and I have frequently high jinks, much fun, and no end of chatter. KATE has just recently jumped the burn that is the indefinite “march” between the child and the girl. MARY is entirely on the *child* side of the burn, but bent on scrambling, as fast as she can, after her sister, to the other side. And TOM—oh! TOM has nothing now to do with the Nursery! Let me be explicit as to *that*! TOM is beginning to think of some day or other going in for Latin. Even now TOM goes in for cricket—so far as looking at the bigger fellows playing it.

I have a weakness for children, and these three are special pets of mine. I am an old friend of the house, and I very often, on a Saturday, ring the bell and carry off my three young friends for a ramble somewhere. It was a fine Saturday morning, and off we set, scampering and dancing and chatting merrily, bent on having a look at the Castle and old Mons Meg.

As we all know, children, like older folk, are apt to become periodically *daft* on some one particular subject

or other. And, at this particular time, these Crescent children were all considerably "daft," and the subject was OUR BABY. I have heard a great deal, for a good while past, of their wonderful Baby! There was no baby like it! There *couldn't* be, anywhere, in all the world, such a dear, darling, delightful, wonderful baby! To see her splashing in her bath! To see NURSE drying her so softly and gently, and warming her little toes, and tucking her up in her cosy crib! To examine her little finger-nails! oh! like beautiful little pearly shells! And our baby has quite a different *crow* for everybody in the house! She knows KATE from MARY and she knows TOM from both of us. And she has a little laughing kind of cry for Mama; and she even knows Papa—a little. And NURSE and she have long talks, and quite understand each other!

And so on—and so on. This chatter about the blessed BABY went on all the way as we threaded the stately streets, and crossed the Gardens, and climbed the Castle height. For a little while, to be sure, the BABY theme was dropt. BABY did seem to go out of our heads for a little, as we examined old Mons Meg, as we stood on the Esplanade and looked over the blue Firth to the hills of Fife, as we saw real live soldiers in red coats passing, and heard the tread of the stately sentinel, with his feathered bonnet, and kilt, and (no doubt, loaded) musket. As we stood under the arched gateway TOM gave us a bit from "MARMION at Tantallon," when the drawbridge rose and the portcullis fell. We saw an opening in the arched roof, from which the portcullis, if there was one, *might have* come down on us.

No sooner did we leave the Castle and begin to re-

enter Edinburgh than the blessed BABY jumped into our heads again, and became once more the theme of talk ! Then, a happy thought occurred to me. I said to myself : “ These baby-loving children are *exactly* in a position to learn the lesson of THE SHELTER ! They dearly love what they call ‘ our ’ baby. They must learn to love *all* babies, *as* babies ; and especially to pity all suffering babies.”

So I said : “ You have been telling me a great deal about *your* baby ; would you like to come and see *our* babies ? ” I have seldom seen three faces so expressive of utter amazement. “ *Your babies ! Oh, where !* ”

The readers of this magazine well know where I took my young friends. And they also know what certain kind, good people *there* helped me much to make the young visitors see, and hear about, and comprehend. But oh ! it was a hard task to make these children take into their young minds and gentle hearts the idea that anybody in all the world could *ever* be cruel to a baby—to a dear, sweet little creature like their darling at home in the Crescent. And yet, as we made our way down the High Street, I am inclined to think that the young eyes must have rested on one or two sights conveying the impression that there *were* babies in the world who were *not* surrounded with *quite* so much of care and kindness as their Crescent baby. They saw women standing at close-mouths, into whose hands they would not like to commit darling BABY. Oh no ! not for worlds !

For a little quiet talk we left the noisy street and sauntered under the piazzas of the Parliament House. And there I tried, as gently as I could, to explain that—

sometimes—a poor little baby, having no mother to care for it and be kind to it, fell into the hands of some cruel, hard-hearted, wicked woman, who—though paid for taking care of the baby—often left it cold and hungry and miserable ; “for,” I said (giving this little *lecture* on babies), “you know how well *your* BABY and *your* NURSE understand each other! NURSE knows the BABY’s language. She knows when BABY’s little cry means, ‘I’m hungry for my supper,’ or ‘I’m sleepy, sleepy! please hush me, Nurse!’ or ‘My toes are so cold, cold!’ And then NURSE is feeding her, or hushing her, or toasting her little toes, *immediately*. You have seen NURSE puzzled, for a while, to know *what* BABY’s crying meant? And after trying this, and trying that—walking about with her, sitting quiet with her, singing to her, *huzzhing* her, laying her flat on her knees, face downward—searching to see if it is some ‘runkle’ in her wee under-garments, and repeatedly demanding in tender tones of BABY, ‘What is’t that’s wrong, my darling lamb?’ Whatever it is, NURSE never leaves off till her darling comes right.

“But, oh, how different it is with the poor *no mother* infant in the hands of the rough, heartless, careless woman with whom it is ‘boarded’! BABY’s cries anger the woman—make her detest the poor thing. She *scolds* it for a *nasty*, yowlin’, ill-natur’d brat! Perhaps poor BABY gets a rough shake—it may be a little bit of a *slap*—and is put very roughly and hastily into a dirty, untidy, much *runkled* bed or crib, and left there to ‘cry away, till it’s tired’; and a baby so used—ill-fed, almost starved (for it is a *trouble* to the woman to make ‘baby-food’), suffering from inward pains and outward *sores*—has after a while not *strength* enough to cry like other babies, but

lies faintly wailing—a poor, piteous cry, as if it said, ‘Oh, will nobody in all the world help me?’” This was my baby lecture. And there were tears in the eyes of KATE and MARY, and TOM looked very much as if his pocket-handkerchief would be out soon. But he only looked serious and displeased. I told the children that we needed only to go a little way down one of these closes to see really such a baby, but that, instead of that, I was about to show them something much pleasanter to look at.

“And,” cried KATE, “does nobody go to help a poor, poor baby like that?”

“Oh, yes,” I said, “somebody does go. We are not *all* cruel, careless people in Edinburgh. Certain people—careful, sensible men, sometimes women—have *authority* to go in search of babies who are ill-used, and they take them out of the hands of the cruel women.”

“And where do they take them to? What do they do with them?” asked little MARY.

“They take them to our Nursery.”

“And where *is* the Nursery?”

“Come and see!”

We walked down the High Street. And all my readers know at what *number* we turned in. We went through the narrow passage or *pend*—leaving the noisy High Street—into the peaceful little Square in front of the dear old-fashioned House. Its windows seem always to glance kindly out, and its big broad door is readily open to *every* neglected bairn. I do wish some of our readers could have seen the impression made on the young hearts of these baby-loving children by what they saw! They appreciated at once the kind and wise and

gentle nursing care of the well-equipped Nursery—*that* goes without saying. But *also* their young eyes were quite quick enough to read the sad traces still remaining of the cruel hands from which our babies had been rescued.

There is a house in a certain Crescent in Edinburgh where now thoughts of PITY SUNDAY are closely linked with the darling BABY in the Nursery.

A TINKER BABY

THE readers of the Magazine may like to hear about this little baby, who came into the world a few days ago, a mile or so from where I am writing. It was a day of dull, dreary mist—*smoorach*, as they call it. Not being quite sure where, exactly, the tinker tent was, I was glad, as I climbed the hill, to spy a little chap of twelve or so, in the free and easy tinker drapery, seated comfortably on the top of a gate. He was doing nothing—as idle as the idlest gentleman in the land! Poor little fellow, he had never been taught any other life! And, for a gentleman, or for a tinker, or anybody else, *doing nothing* is a wearisome thing, and bad. Thinking to get the boy as a guide, I hailed him with a whistle. And my little gentleman put his fingers to his lips and hailed *me* with a whistle. But he sat still, quite composedly. When I got up to him, I ventured to ask why he didn't come to me, for I had wanted to speak to him. His reply was, "I didna ken what ye was wantin'." I know *one* thing I was wanting, viz. to see my young friend quartered in the Fechny School of Perth, or in Murrayfield, or some such school. However, he guided me to the tent.

They knew what they were about who had chosen

the site of that tent. Let me sketch it. Suppose you are standing where it stood, you look southward, from a commanding height, away over the fair and fertile strath through which winds the "bonnie Earn," away to the far-off sleepy Ochil Hills, with the "Fife Lomond" peaks peeping over from behind. On this particular day, however, that fine view was shrouded by the *smoorach*. Near at hand, at the foot of the brae, might be seen through the mist a cosy farm-steading and one or two cottages. And they who chose the site had an eye to these, in prospective connection with the commissariat, for the occupant of the farm-steading has the kindest heart in the strath. Suppose you turn your face northward now. You see what a grand belt of natural shelter protects the tent from what is often "the angry airt." A long stretch of thick, close plantation—spruce, ash, birch, and hazel—and an underclothing of thick, close, warm, cosy broom, three or four feet in height, a very warren for rabbits and hares. Such is the rear-guard of the encampment. I don't mean to say—at least in print—that thoughts of the commissariat were connected with the rabbit-warren. Beyond the strip of "planting" runs an old little-frequented road. Beyond it is moorland, and beyond that, far away, are the hielant hills where "Ian Maclaren" has found Drumtochty.

In front of this warm, cosy shelter screen, in a kind of bay indenting the strip of plantation, and so giving shelter also from east and west, stood the tent. Let me say the tents, for they were placed some five or six feet apart, their open ends looking towards each other. In the space between them the well-fed stick fire *bleezed* merrily. The tent-pitchers knew the way to manage a

chimney. The blue smoke went away up curling gracefully, seen prettily against the dark green of the spruces. There are few of our houses half so well ventilated as the tinker tent. And I know many houses where the inmates complain more of damp and of bad drainage. I never heard the tinkers murmur about these things. They pack up their house, and away they go and look out for another pleasant site with satisfactory surroundings. No rents and no taxes!

There were three women, one man, and some half-dozen children. The man was the baby's papa. One of the women was the baby's grannie. The other, I imagine, to have been the baby's grand-aunt, or some such relative. The other children were, no doubt, kind of cousins or uncles and aunts of baby. Their parents had left them in the tent while they took a day or two of honest work at *sharving neeps*. The tent was at present, as it were, a nursery in which it was quite natural to stow the extra children.

Now for baby and mother! She—for baby is a girl—had arrived two days ago. And the mother—ladies, she was in her seventeenth year!—poor lassie, was more amazed and bewildered than pleased or charmed with the wondrous gift that had come to her. She was less *dazed*, however, and more pleased, two days after, when she was able for a talk about baby and other things. I was led to remember that I had known baby's great-grandmother!

“But, dear me!” I hear female voices asking, “what *kind* of thing was this tent? Had she a bed? or was she lying on the ground? How did she live through it? How did the baby?” Oh! I wish some

of these kind, good, fair catechists had only been there to see the tent, instead of a poor, ignorant, half-blind, blundering *man*. They would have noted *everything*. They could have told about the old sacks, and bits of carpet, and ragged sheep's skins, and tattered bits of plaid and blanket, and all the indescribable things that formed an apology for a carpet on the floor, and they would have seen the nameless and innumerable odds and ends—old coats, old petticoats, old mantles, old shawls, etc., that made *something* like bedclothes. I can only say that the young mama appeared to me wonderfully better than could be expected. And I know that two days after, she paid us a visit on foot, here, accompanied by grannie, who acted as nurse and carried the "wee lassie."

Would that some good-hearted ladies had been there to have made a very determined effort to carry off the baby and commit her to the kind and trained hands which have saved so many babies' lives and blessed them in the Shelter! Only, when such an attempt was being made I should like to have been at a considerable distance! I think I hear the *yell* of the young tinker mother when it was proposed to take away her child. I'll not answer for what she would have done. I am quite convinced that if that deputation of ladies had laid down on the floor of that tent the accumulated gold from all their purses, and all their silver teapots and gold watches and rings and jewels into the bargain, they would not have got her baby from the tinker lassie.

I wonder how it might have been if that poor girl had been separated, a while before, from the associations

of the tent, and if her baby had come into the world when there were around her kind, wise, good lady-friends who in many a quiet talk could have made her see what was *really* for her darling's good in life. I wonder if these tender and earnest pleaders would have gained their case? I don't know. But, oh! it would be worth trying!

And now, I have to close the story with the confession of a sad failure on my own part. I was to christen the baby girl on the day they had fixed for shifting camp. I meant *then* to have pleaded for baby's future, not with the slightest hope of gaining the point then and there, but merely by way of paving the way for other and better pleaders. The day was one of wild snow-drift. I got so far on the way, but it was hard work, and slow! And the foolish lazy man said to himself, "They'll never flit their camp to-day; to-morrow will do!" But well done, the brave tinkers! They kept their word, took up their "carriages" (like St. Paul), and were off to—ah! who knows where! Through the drifts of that day, that frightened *me*, the mother and the baby marched. I wonder what kind of boots she had? But though her own *taes* might be "nipping," I *know* that poor baby's *feeties* were "keepit as warm as she could make them."

OOR WEE JOHNNIE

HIS mither dee'd when he was twa—
 (A nameless lassie wean gaed wi' her)—
When "Mammie" lay an' wadna speak,
 Wee Johnnie thocht it "awfu' queer" !

An' syne cam' days when Johnnie's "*Da*"
 Fell unco heavy on "the drink,"
An' curs't, an' strak his wee bit man !
 (The *deevil* gar'd him, ye may think !)

An' syne the reckless man gaed aff
 Some skelderin' gait, awa' frae hame,
An' left his bairn wi'—sic a jaud !!—
 A drucken, thievin', coorse, wild dame !

Faur up a gruesome "Coogate close"—
 The stair was foul, the *den* was grim—
Wee Johnnie ! he was banes an' rags
 When, God be thank't, we rescued him !

'Twas like a squirrel i' the wuds ;
 It glower't, an' cooert, an' creep't awa' ;
But that it aye for "Mammie" cried
 It wasna like a *wean* ava.

Eh, "Mammie," best ye never kent
 Your bairnie cried for ye sae sair !
 Nor saw his handie clutch the *piece*
 Left trample't on the common stair !

Na, darlin' lamb ! we'se hae ye up
 To "MOTHER SHELTER " in a crack ;
 She'll be your Mammie noo—an' aye,
 An' Mother's care ye'se never lack.

She'll wash ye in a warrum bath,
 An' row ye in a snaw-white goon,
 An' learn ye Mammie's nichtly prayer,
 An' huzzh ye or ye're sleepin' soun'.

HOW WE WENT UP THE GLEN— LONG AGO

I

DEAR CHILDREN—I *really* was present at a Sunday school trip up the Glen, something like this one, long ago. I say “something like it,” for it was *very* long ago, and I can’t remember *all* about it. Perhaps I have only *dreamt* a good deal of what I am telling you. But I fancy you will like it all the better for that. Well! It was a lovely morning in the month of August, in the year eighteen hundred and nobody-knows-what, and the children of the Sunday school of a little town—which you may call anything you please—were to have their “trip.” It was not *my* Sunday school, but the minister was my very dear friend, and I knew all the teachers and a great many of the children, and I begged to be allowed to go with them in one of the carts, and they kindly agreed to take me. So here I go, to tell you, children, all about it.

The sun got out of his bed that morning. His bed, as you know, is in the East; and he looked smilingly on the little town, as much as to say to the children, “Here we are again!” And the little town smiled back to him, with all its windows glancing merrily. The windows

of all the houses and all the villas of the little town glanced and glimmered. The shop windows were still sound asleep behind their shutters. The weather-vane on the top of the church spire glittered like gold. The Hydro, up on the hill, looked out from its hundred windows with a broad grin of delight, and the stems of the Scotch firs far away up above it, on the brow of the hill, shone red like the best cedar-wood penny pencils in the stationer's shop down in the Square. The boys and girls of the Sunday school had followed the example of the sun. They had, like him, got out of bed ; and, like him, had washed their faces. *His* wash-basin was the sea ; theirs were of smaller size, but their faces shone like the Hydro windows or the Scotch fir-stems. They had also brushed their hair—the girls making theirs as smooth and glossy as the coat of a well-bred hunting-horse. The boys, not quite so particular, were content with the sort of rough-and-ready *scrub* that a Highland sheltie gets now and then. But all were smartly, if hastily, dressed. The morning “parritch” had been expeditiously packed into its proper place. And when the nine o'clock bell rang, they all mustered—some 200 strong—as fine-looking and hearty as any body of guards or bluejackets or kilted Highlanders in all Her Majesty's service. There stood the officers, as we may call them ; the General himself in command, the worthy minister of the beautiful church. He had capital letters after his name, which I need not mention, for he had written books which made his name known *very* widely, and he was so gentle and frank and merry that all the young folks loved him, and they received him on parade with ringing, *skirly* cheers that

showed how glad they were to have him at their "trip." Then there were the officers—the teachers, ladies and gentlemen, and elders and deacons—who all wore faces as happy as the children's—and flowers in their button-holes. There were ranged along the broad, sunny roadway, in front of the church, I don't know how many carts! I only know the column stretched from the church gateway so far that the *tail* cart stood at the photographer's grand show-window. And, as a clever little girl (who wore a crimson sunshade) pleasantly observed, "There were plenty other *cartes* there, if we hadn't enough"! But indeed we had carts of all kinds. There were corn-carts, hay-carts, wood-carts, box-carts, "coup carts" (but, to be sure, any cart can *coup*!). And there were spring-carts, van-carts, and milk-carts (without their barrels). The town water-cart and the town scavenger-cart were on duty elsewhere, and we didn't want them. And the horses! The horses had dressed themselves more stylishly than the girls! The conceited creatures had decked themselves as if they were going to a ball. They had braided their tails and manes, and ornamented their harness with coloured ribbons and rosettes. We knew it was done in compliment to *us*, the children, and we were much delighted at it. And indeed we said so to the drivers, and asked them to tell their horses how much we were pleased. And they promised to deliver our message in horse-language—which they said was something like French, but more difficult, and could only be whispered, not spoken.

How the living passengers got packed into the carts I never knew. It was done as if by magic, in two

minutes ! “Andra” did it all ! He was the functionary of that kirk, and managed everything that concerned it. The children all liked him, but all stood in awe of Andra. That is to say, they stood in awe of him when he had his black *claes* on, and his white neckcloth, and his black Sunday *gown*, and his official staff in his hand. But to-day Andra was bent on pleasure, like Mrs. Gilpin and like ourselves, and he was in holiday costume. He wore a “hielant bannet” with a red nob on the crown, a short coat out of which the colours had long faded, a tartan waistcoat, knee-breeks, and rig-and-fur stockings, and the very cheeriest face ever worn by an ecclesiastical functionary. He had got, somewhere, an ancient touting-horn of battered brass, and throughout the happy day we had many a merry skirl of laughter at the skreighs and groans and squeaks and unearthly sounds which Andra blew out of that old brazen machine by way of issuing his general orders. We were all seated, and Andra put his bugle to his mouth, and an awful howl came out—and the first cart started. Cart after cart started—cheers went up in the summer air from 200 skirling voices as the carts rolled along. Andra’s blasts were fairly drowned by the skirls. But he blew, and groaned, and grunted on till the last cart reached him. It was the provision cart, and Andra scrambled in, and lay down breathless among the hampers—but clenching still his now silent bugle.

Now, dear children, I am, like Andra, out of breath, and I must stop. But if you would like to go up the Glen with “the trip,” and if I can, I shall take you all with us next month.

II

Off we set ! the cart-wheels rattling musically, and the conceited horses tossing their gaily decorated heads, and the children greeting with skirling cheers everybody they saw on the road and hailing every house they recognised in passing. Every cart bore a banner with a strange device, and most of them had some kind of musical instrument on board. At a particular bend of the road we bade good-bye for the day to old CRIEFF. "Fare ye weel, Crieff !" one little fatty roared out ; "we'll be back 'gin supper-time !" The grave seniors—the minister, elders, and deacons—in their roomy cart, unfolded their newspapers and read their letters. In the happy cart which carried me and a jolly crew of young Crieffites we had no literature to read, and didn't want any. We cared not a bodle whether the Tories or the Radicals were in—or out. We sang songs, and gave guesses, and made jokes, and chaffed the driver about his horse, and about his sweetheart ; and we rattled on the crown of his hat, telling him that was "the *knock* of Crieff." That was a smart saying of the pretty girl with the crimson sunshade. She was in our cart, and we called her "the *Punjob*." And then, leaving Crieff behind, we looked up at the pretty House of FERNTOWER, where once dwelt the brave Sir David Baird, the hero of Seringapatam. We spelled that word in what learned dominies call a *syllabic* fashion, and, with roars of laughter, we made it "See ! rin ! gape at Tam !" and we told the story of the good old lady, the mother of Sir David, who, when news came home that her son and his comrades had been taken prisoners and shut up all

night, chained together two and two, cried, "Eh, peety the man that was tied till oor Davie! *he* wadna get muckle sleep!" Then we halted for a few minutes at a little roadside village called Gilmerton. The grave and reverend seniors—elders and deacons—went to see where once stood "the first Free Kirk in Scotland." It was one hastily built of timber, and it had right good preaching in it, and a good congregation, till it was replaced by a very neat stone building. We, of *our* cart, and a good many from other carts, jumped out, not to look at invisible kirks, but to invest pennies in "conversation sweeties," which kept us highly delighted and amused for half an hour, as we slowly climbed a Highland brae two miles long.

"Was't yonder that they burnt the Wutch?"

"Aye! yon's 'the Wutch's Craig.'"

"Whatt forr did they burn her?"

"Oo! just because—she—she didna gang to the kirk." The oracle who gave these answers was Jock Tamson, our driver, and he ended his ecclesiastical instruction with a practical admonition, "See an' *you* dinna bide awa' frae the kirk, mind!" But Jock was cornered by a clever query from the back end of the cart. A little sharp-faced smout, with a turn-up nose and bristly red hair, demanded, "Was't the *Free* Kirk the Wutch didna gang till?" Jock parried cleverly by speaking emphatically to his horse, "Come on, ye lazy wutch! come up!" And as we climbed the brae, and cracked our sweeties—having first enjoyed their poetry and their jokes—we looked westward on a fairer landscape than ever hung on the walls of a gallery. Of course we all admired that matchless view, but we had

also great fun in turning the beautiful landscape into a twofold lesson—spelling and geography. MONZIE was a stiff cracker in the spelling way. OCHTERTYRE, MONZIEVAIRD! we got over these. But BEN-Y-CHONZIE (the hill of the cry of the deer—"the *dear* creatures!" cried she of the crimson sunshade) and BEN VOIRLICH puzzled almost everybody. And, finally, STOOK-Y-VRAUCHAN sent us all lying flat on our backs, roaring with laughter. "I'm *awfu'* hungry!" cried a nice little creature in a blue pinafore, whom they profanely called "MACFATTY." A good many others, if they had had the courage of their convictions, would have said with MACFATTY. And when I said—*ex cathedra*—boldly and distinctly and unmistakably—that I resembled MACFATTY, it proved to be as popular a speech as I ever made. Modesty, bashfulness, gentility were cast to the winds! Every voice in the cart echoed my sentiment. "And *so* am I! And *so* am I!" It was as when John Gilpin's family told him they were tired. Quoth Gilpin, "*So am I!*"

"Miss Punjob," said I, "what do *you* say?"

From beneath the sunshade came the cheering news that from former picnic experience Miss P. knew where we were to get our half-way snack. "You must wait till you see a very big mouth, and *then* all our mouths will be filled!"

"A *big* mooth!" cried MACFATTY, "mine's is *no* big!"

"Wull Jock Tamson's be muckle aneuch?" asked little Dunky Macfarlane.

"Oo, aye!" answered Jock, "muckle aneuch to haud a' that's in the baskets."

All were puzzled—and all were hungry. Little

Jeanie was like to *greet*, and “wantit hame to get a piece frae her mither.” Things were getting serious! This would wax epidemic soon! But lo! we wheeled round a sharp turn of the road, and the *Glen!* the bonnie Glen! the *Sma’* Glen! was actually gaping at us with its open *mouth!* *Punjob* giggled and tittered, and said, “*There’s* the big mouth! the mouth of the *Glen!* *Here* you get your snack! Three cheers for the *Glen!*” and every mouth, not only in ours, but in every cart besides, hailed the halt with a joyous *skirl*. Even the old boys in “the hinmost cairt,” as somebody profanely called them, attempted a kind of imitation *hurrah*, as they stotted about to soople their cramped limbs. These same seniors affected at first to laugh at the idea of taking food at such an early hour of the day. “Ha, ha!” they said, “the idea of *eating* at *this* hour!” and so on. Nevertheless, “at this hour,” in the course of ten minutes, those seniors were seated on the grass munching sandwiches with as keen a relish as any one of the youngsters. “It was the keen air of the hills,” they were anxious to explain. Oh! why couldn’t they (I put it to them) be like honest little MACFATTY, and say manfully, “I’m awfu’ hungry, an’ I want a piece!” Down we sat to our snack. The cart-horses had a *rug* at the roadside grass, and the drivers chow’d bannocks and drank of a fine wayside spring. Our luncheon parlour was a jolly one. It was made—for us—by the ancient Romans, when they were attempting to invade Caledonia. Their camp was at FENDOCH, at the mouth of the *Sma’* Glen. Let me explain that *sma’* means, not *little*, but *narrow*, or, rather, *slender*—as might be said of a girl’s waist or a fishing-rod. The “*narrow*

Glen" is some ten miles long, but so close to each other are its opposite hills that a celebrated giant of ancient days is said to have placed a foot on each hill, and, stooping down, to have taken a drink of the Almond River. When MACFATTY heard of this, he gaped, and stared, and cried, "Goavie dick!!!" Johnnie Broon (who is a *very* matter-of-fact boy) said it was just haivers. But, to return to our parlour where we sat at lunch, any one who visits the Glen may see *it*. You may not believe in the giants or the Romans, but you must in the parlour. It is a semicircular outpost, built of solid turf, commanding a grand view up the Glen. And Roman soldiers, no doubt, stood there, with spears and bows and arrows, for a while, but wisely turned tail when they saw the wild Highlanders coming down waving their flashing claymores, and (as little Dunky Macfarlane said) "Fleggin' the Roman Catholics wi' the soond o' their bagpipes!" Seated in that turf stronghold, with its enchanting view of the Glen and the river and the hills, we munched our cakes and cheese in great comfort, and the tinnyfuls of delicious spring water that went down the young throats might have quenched the thirst of a whole Roman legion. Remember this was only our forenoon *snack*, and we are now only at the *mouth* of the Glen. I have to tell of our journey up the Glen, and of the "Saddling Mare," and of the "Robber's Cave," and the "Giant's Grave," and to show "General Wade's Road," and I know not what all. And then we shall come to our grand dinner of that day, and our games and our wading and our climbing. And I have to tell about little MACFATTY rolling down the mountain side like a haggis. So here I *must* stop in the meantime,



THE SMA' GLEN



TINKERS' CAMP AT LOCHLANE

for I almost think I hear the head printer crying, "Oh! this'll *never* do! this *must* stop!" So, dear children, good-bye for a month!

III

Away we went! rattling up the Glen! the heathery hills on either side looking down upon the long line of carts—with admiration, no doubt. And we looked up at them, likewise admiringly. Little Macfatty, lying lazily on his back, told us, with reference to his recent *snack*, that he was "awfu' komfortible *noo*!" The first object of interest was THE GIANT'S GRAVE—a long heathery mound, like a gigantic "tatty pit" (as our driver said). The giant was so tall that he *strided* the Glen with a foot on either mountain, and, stooping down, drank from the Almond River out of his *loof*. A wee lassie, in a tartan frock and straw hat, who had a douce, grave, sensible bit facie, said solemnly, "Eh! sic' a big lee!"

We next came to "the saddlin' mear." The "mare" is a tall, druid-like boulder stone, shaped at the top like a sloping desk, and it needs a tall, long-armed man to lift from the foot of it a round stone like a cannon ball, and place this "saddle" on the mare's back. If the man himself is not tall, or his arms not long enough, the *saddle* topples down and makes him jump back, to save his toes. Some of the seniors—and some of the carters—made highly unsuccessful efforts, and were ironically cheered. So we left the *mear* bare-backed. "*Mere* nonsense to think of it!" came slyly from the sunshade.

The next remarkable thing in the Glen was a wayside well. The headmost cart of the column halted, and consequently every cart followed the example, in that *jolt, jolt, jolt* fashion in which a train of empty waggons comes to a stop when the leading waggon bumps on the solidly fixed terminal buffers. Every child in that first cart took a fancy to have a *tinnyful* of "Jacob's Well," and after some five minutes or so the first cart moved on. The second cart took its place, and each cart moved on one horse-and-cart length, and all the line halted till cart No. 2 had its drinking-bout. This was beginning to be serious. Those in the *hin'most* cart were likely to spend the whole afternoon at Jacob's Well, and to see no solid dinner at all—nothing but cold spring water. And in that *hin'most* cart they did grumble savagely! So our good friend with the big trumpet was sent along the line to say there were to be no more drinks at Jacob's Well, but all carts were to go straight on at a good pace, and very soon all the passengers would be sitting on the grass, beside the river, and then they were at perfect liberty to drink the Almond dry. Such was the trumpeter's proclamation at each cart—each proclamation being followed with three *touts* on the trumpet, and roars of laughter from the children. So on we went, up the beautiful Glen. We had a discussion in *our* cart as to how the Well came to have the name of "Jacob" attached to it. Our driver maintained that an old shepherd, commonly known as JACOB, lived in a cottage which once stood not far off, and that it got its name from him. But a very intelligent lassie took up *her* parable, and said, in a shy squeaky voice, that "her faither

tell'd her" that a gentleman who had come from a visit to the Holy Land said it reminded him very much of the Well of Sychar, with the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, on each side. And then we began to speculate as to which hill of the Almond Glen would be Ebal, and which Gerizim.

"Eh! yonder's the ROBBER'S CAVE!" cried DAVIE STEWART, whose gran'father was a shepherd, and "kent the Glen, and a' about it!" And the little historian told how "the Hielant thief bade in yon cave faur up the hill," and how he made nightly excursions into the low country, and carried off to his cave lambs and chickens and eggs, and "onything he could lay his hands on," and the historian told how "the folk never could tell where he stoppit or where he keepit his gear," till, on one unlucky night, he and a "neebor thief" were playing at *catch-the-ten* with a pack of cards, and they had a "lichtit caunle" in the cave, which betrayed them. "And it was not the *ten* card but the *two* thieves that were *caught*," was the sensible remark which issued from the crimson sunshade. The driver, who listened to the tale, cracked his whip thoughtfully, and said, with a shake of his head, "Fac'! thae cairds is no caunie."

"GENERAL WADE'S ROAD!" This was sung out by a laddie who had been standing up in the cart for the last half-mile, looking out for the "old Hielant road," which at this point was seen (at least by clever eyes) running alongside of ours, straight as an arrow betwixt us and the river. So there followed a comical "history exam." concerning the GENERAL and his exploits. And we criticised the deceased general's road,

and some of us thought we could make a better road than that. Says the driver, with a firm crack of the WHUP, "I defy ye to mak' a *straughter*, onyway!"

"What's yon great muckle square stane i' the mids o' the haugh on the waterside?" asked Jock Hunter, the matter-of-fact laddie with the turn-up neb.

"That's THE SODGER'S GRAVE!" answered our little historian.

"It's no a *grave*, man! it's a muckle *stane*!" said the bumptious little radical.

"But the grave's *beside* the stane—The Sodger's Grave!" said Historicus.

"But whatten sodger?" inquired the snub-nosed and defiant sceptic.

It was best to request silence at this point, and to deliver a little lecture about the *stane* and the *grave*, and, in the course of the discussion which followed, GENERAL WADE was freely criticised as surfaceman or roadmaker, and his "rideeklis nonsense! aye makin' his road straught even forrit! Could he no turn't aff to *ae* side a bit, an' no whummle't ower the big stane whaur Ossian's coffin was lyin'!—setting a' the Hielanters in a rage at him! When it was narrated that one of Wade's soldier roadmakers died, and was buried beside the stone, there was a little "interpellation" (as they say in France) from the back-end of the cart (I think, from the snub-nosed radical), "*Oo!* maybe the Hielanters stickit him for whummelin' the stane!"

"The Brig o' Newton! the Brig o' Newton!" was sung out cheerily by the standing-up laddie in the fore-end of the cart. It was like "Land ho!" from the mast-head on board ship. Already the land had been spied from the

carts ahead. "The Brig o' Newton" was a welcome word! Didn't we all know it was the Gaelic word, *of that* day, for dining-room, and dinner, and freedom to fly about, and race, and jump, and wade; and soom even if we liked! And so, again, and again, and again, cheers—skirly, screaming, yelling, joyful cheers—rang in the air, as the procession of carts wheeled into as spacious a dining-room as the heart of man could wish for. Let me describe the spacious dining-room of "Brig o' Newton." The floor, richly carpeted with soft green, is some hundreds of acres or so in extent—more if wished for. The walls are lofty heather hills with grassy glades and cosy glens, where lambs are straying, and hill burns come (in the summer season) trickling gently down. In winter these often come down stairs at an awful pace, making more noise than the very noisiest children ever did. The Almond River runs from one end of the carpet to the other, for washing hands and faces and dishes, for bairnies to paidle in—deeper pools for boys and girls to wade in, and the roof, the lofty roof, is charming blue and white. A circular knoll, wooded with birch, hazel, ash, and fir, stands as a general parasol for any weak-minded adults of either sex who may be anxious about their "complexions" on a *very* sunny day. Generally speaking, in our dining-room we don't fear "weather tan." For an occasional *skelp* of heavy Highland rain the round-about wood is not a bad *umbrella*! Horses often whisper to each other (in their stables) that the Brig o' Newton grass always tastes good, that sensible people always provide *two* feeds of oats for each horse, and that the Almond is almost pure spring water. And

now, having shown my readers the dining-room, I beg to intimate that the dinner-bell will be rung—that is, the old trumpet will be *touted*—on the first of next month, and till then may all my readers be as happy as I have, many a time, seen children when racing, jumping, scrambling, wading, climbing, singing pretty songs, and admiring pretty hills and burns and blue skies and soft summer winds at the “Brig o’ Newton.”

To be sure, wading and soft airs and blue skies may probably be out of fashion in NOVEMBER! But happiness does not *all* depend on season or on weather, and it is quite possible to be very happy in November when working hard at lessons, and very happy when lessons have been well learned. And so I wish you, my dear young readers, all that will be for your real happiness and good.

IV

We have taken so long to get up the Glen that here is Christmas near at hand, and we must manage to get down again before the year comes to an end! I make no apology to my young readers for asking them to imagine a hot midsummer day, and green hills, and blue sky, and soft breezes, and happy bairns at play and feasting. What although they read my story at a cosy winter fire, while, perhaps, snow is drifting outside the window! They won’t catch cold, though for a little while they forget the fireside and the snow, and come with me to the grassy haugh by the riverside, where the children, that happy day, enjoyed themselves. *What did they do?* Well, they all did whatever it came into their young

heads to do! They waded; I think one or two boys went up the waterside and had a quiet *doek*. Some kept scrambling up, and rolling down again, a steep grassy bank, like barrels. They raced, and chased, and danced, and tumbled. Some older and wiser girls went away, wandering in couples, talking quietly, no doubt, about history, and mathematics, and astronomy, and cookery, and so on. Perhaps they spoke about witches, and giants, and fairy tales. A party of big boys set off at full speed up the steepest mountain side, thinking they would be up in ten minutes at the sky-line. But they did not keep up the speed—there were “bellows to mend” among them. They took rests, and then jumped up and went at it again. One long-legged fellow did get away up pretty near the sky-line all by himself. But the Beadle’s cow-horn sounded by way of dinner-bell, and didn’t they all come down smart to their victuals!—and the sky-line hero won the race downwards, and flung himself down on the grass beside a huge hamper of sandwiches. But he could not manage a sandwich till he had recovered his breath.

Now let me tell you of another hero of the party, who made a grand mountain scramble away up the opposite hill. I must introduce *him* to you, my dear young readers. He had four legs and a tail, and his name was DONALD—our wise, cannie, old-fashioned Highland pony. Donald was a little excited that day, when he found himself one of twenty or thirty great big cart-horses. Each horse was tied to its cart-wheel, and stood munching his feed. Donald munched *his*, being fastened to the hind wheel of his own wee phaeton—fastened, for want of a rope, by the reins, and not very

well fastened, for JAKE, our little coachman, was as much excited as Donald. The feed of corn was gobbled up, and then Donald looked about for some amusement. He was Hielant born, and a longing came over him to have a sight of his native hills. Everybody was busy. Nobody saw Donald unfastening the reins cleverly with his old teeth. And, a long time afterwards, some of the children exclaimed, "Oh, look where Donald is!" There stood Donald, half a mile up the mountain-side, perched on a promontory, his outline distinct against the sky, his mane and tail waving in the breeze! When the cart-drivers had dined, they amused themselves by hunting Donald, enclosing him in a ring, as is done, they say, with red deer. The ring narrowed round poor Donald, till he was fairly nabbed; just when he was thinking of a gallop away westward to Ben Voirlich or some other of his old Hielant friends among the hills.

All this time, what has been doing down in the valley? Well, let me tell you how grace was—not said, but sung. I have heard sonorous Latin graces, in deep, grave tones. I have heard long, ponderous graces of many learned sentences. I have heard very brief and pithy graces. I have sometimes not heard, to any purpose, a grace which was only muttered half-way down the speaker's throat. And oh! I have too often seen folk "fall to like Waterloo," and despatch the victuals—graceless.

I liked *our* Glen grace amazingly. It was so prettily chanted by the young treble, tender voices, and the deeper tones of the older folk came in so effectively; and the old well-kent music, and the older and better-kent words, went up together in the summer air so sweetly—just the four lines, nothing more:—

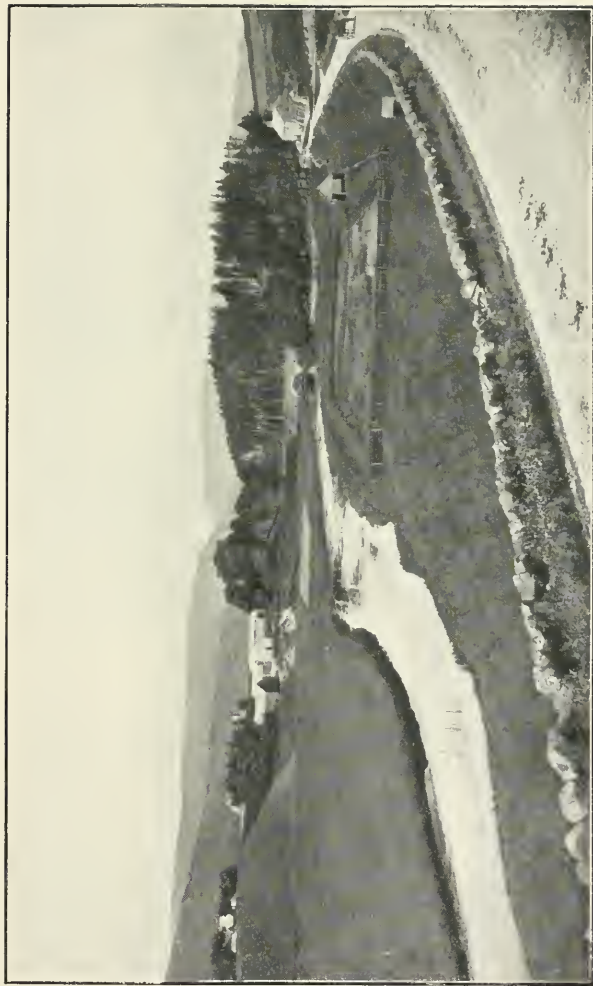


Photo by Valentine

AMULREE

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

The *Amen* with which it closed was in those days pretty commonly considered as "Popish." But we had a worthy minister in the Crieff Kirk of those days, who did not stand much in awe of Mrs. Grundy. He lightly laughed at the old lady when she groaned and shook her head at him, and he held steadily on his way. And in many things besides the *Amen* the world has come to 'gree with that stout-hearted Doctor.

But to return to the picnic. All this time they are flying hither and thither, with huge trays, among the merry groups that are outspread on the grassy plain. The fancy of each reader must show to him or her all the various viands which, on that occasion, disappeared down countless throats into countless young "stomjacks." Fancy will describe the various things far better than I could write them. I know they were good things, for I personally partook. But will the gentle reader only think—it was many, many, long, long years ago! I can't be expected to stand an examination as to what was what. I should be sure to fail. I only remember one little incident of a gastronomic nature, and it was this: A punchy, rosy, little fatty was being pressed, besought, coaxed, to try just *one* more—I think it was a jolly big, juicy tart. "Eh, no!" said the little darling very seriously, "eh, no more! 'case I bu'sts!"

What a jolly tug-of-war we did have!—ministers, elders, teachers, merchants, and our famous strong, hearty carters. There were no parties—we took sides indiscriminately. And oh, the fun—the delighted skirls

of the children! when it was ministers and carters and bankers all falling back on the grass in one humbled and discomfited mass of humanity. It is always picturesque when a score of stout *laddies* go in for a tug-of-war! What faces they do make—how they dig their cuddie-heels into the turf!

It was understood that while the children were being collected (no easy job!) and while the carts were being yoked, and while ladies were washing dishes in the Almond, it was understood that the ministerial and elderly company set to and had a little of the inevitable *speechification*! I am quite certain I heard none of it—quite certain I took no notes at the time. And I shall certainly not attempt to inflict those speeches on my dear young readers.

Yes! you want to know how we all got home. That is more to the purpose. Oh! it was a bonnie summer's nicht as ever lay sleeping over the Sma' Glen! Little "Fatty" (who did not want to "bu'st") wanted to sleep, and went to sleep. And indeed many a cosy, canny, *comfie* snooze was enjoyed to the music of the cart-wheel rattle. It is a grand soporific. But there were many wide-awake ones in the various carts, and as we brought up the tail of the line with Donald and his phaeton, we heard, all the way along, bursts of music from cart after cart. Now it was an old psalm or a sweet hymn-tune; anon it was some of our old friends from among the songs that are loved and sung by our Scotch firesides—"John Anderson, my Joe," etc.

At the Glen mouth we parted, for Donald, at that point, took the nearest way home for him. And the last echo of the close of that happy day was "Good-night! Good-night!"

HOW I CAME TO BE A TINKER BABY FOR A WHILE

I

It was my birthday. I was six years old. I have brothers and sisters, all older than me. They call me "Baby"; but I am *not* a baby, I am a *girl*. Old Nurse Dobbs is sometimes very cross. I like young Nurse Jenny much better. She talks to me, and tells me nice stories about the Highlands. That is where Jenny came from. Well, on my birthday we had *such* a nice party in the Nursery. Papa and Mamma were away from home, but all my brothers and sisters were there, even great big Tom, who can hold me up near the roof, and sister Mary, who is at French, and German, and music, and I don't know all what, and our two cousins George and Willie, who live near us. And we had, oh, *such* a supper! My! it *was* spiffy. That is what Tom said. And we danced, and had games and songs and lots of fun. That cross old patch Nurse Dobbs! She said it was now ten o'clock, and they must all go away to their beds, and let Miss Kitty go to *her* bed in the Nursery. Oh, bother! Well, I think I was as cross as Nurse herself. I would not let Jane undress me, and I kicked, and jumped, and made a row, as Jane called it. And at

last old Nurse came up from her supper, crosser than six bears, and she stood looking at me with *such* an angry face, and she said in her loud, loud voice: "Miss Kitty! intill your bed this meenit! or I wadna wonder but the wutch comes on her bizzom-shank, an' whurls ye awa' among the Tinkers this very nicht." She went away after saying this dreadful thing. I let Jane put me to bed, for I was shaking with fear and crying like a baby. Jane was very kind, and told me that the witches were all away now, and that the Tinks were quiet, gentle people who would not hurt a little girl like me; and she told me stories about them, and about their house made of a blanket, and their little babies. There was a party downstairs, and so Jane heard me say my hymn and my prayer, and huzzh'd me for a minute, and kissed me, and went away. I had eaten all sorts of good things at supper, and I was very sorry for myself, and I couldn't sleep. I was always going to fall asleep, but always I thought I heard the witch coming, and I started up. Then I had a funny, funny dream. I saw old Nurse and a witch dancing a reel on the top of a table. Nurse's partner was a large Chicken-pie, and the witch had a Plum-pudding for her young man. They danced about among the dishes, and broke them, and kicked tarts and buns and apples all about. All at once the witch gave the pudding a *whack*, and it changed to a broom-stick! and, the next moment, she was sitting on it as if it was a horse. And then I, Kitty Crawford, was sitting in front of her, quite comfortable, and we were flying through the air quite nicely! The moon was looking down, smiling on us; and the little stars were twinkling in the blue sky, as if they were much amused

to see us. I looked down, and far below us was a great broad sea, or river, and ships and boats were sailing on it. Then we flew over it, and away, away among great high hills. Jane had often told me about what she called "the hielant hills." I would have asked the witch, but I found I could not speak like a girl, only like a wee baby. And that is what I had become—a little helpless thing, about a year and a half old. Oh, I had such wee handies and wee feeties, and a wee bit facie, and a wee peepy voice! It was so funny! The witch didn't speak. She only kept on singing a queer kind of song; and she always cried into my ear, "Huzzh! ma dawtie!" and she put a little sweetie in my mouth. It had a nasty, nasty taste, but it made me fall sound asleep very soon.

When I awoke, what a funny place I was in! The witch was away, and I was lying in a "blanket house"—just such a one as Jane had told me about. Beside me was a wee baby, much younger than me. He was so wrapped up in old ragged bits of cloth, and blanket, and old dirty, dirty sacks! and we both were lying on the ground on very nasty, dirty straw! This was my little brother. I don't know *how* I knew that. But I was sorry for him, for he wailed and cried like a poor little kitten; and I wanted to give him a kiss. But I couldn't get at anything to kiss except just the *neb* of his poor little cold red nosie. A woman was sitting beside him. Oh, she was *so* black and dirty! No cap on her head, only her black hair twisted up a little, but straggling over her shoulders. She had no gown, only a tattered shawl of no particular colour, and an old petticoat that had once been red. Her feet were bare, and she held a little black thing in her mouth, and smoke came every now

and then puffing out of her mouth ! Oh, the smoke had *such* a bad taste ! and it *would* come into my mouth, and it choked me so ! There was a funny little fire at the door of the blanket house. I liked that fire. It was like a nice friend to me. It had no grate to burn in. It just blazed away between two bricks on the ground. No coals—only branches and bits of stick. But it blazed so merrily ; and I lay and watched its blue smoke curling away up amongst the pretty green branches of the trees. For the blanket house was in a very pretty wood, and the birds were singing their songs sweetly. The woman—somehow I knew her name was “Mum” or “Mummy.” Of course she wasn’t *my* Mamma. And, indeed, all the time I was in the blanket house, I quite forgot all about Papa and Mamma, and my brothers and sisters, and Nurse, and Jane, and our house in Edinburgh. I was only the child of the blanket house. Well, then, Mum gave baby some milk out of a small bottle, and for a while he didn’t cry so much ; and she gave me something in a broken cup. It was, I think, what is given to little chickens. Don’t they call it “crowdie” ? She put a little hot water from a black pan among the meal, and stirred it with a stick ; and I was very hungry, and was glad to get it. It was a fine sunny day, and my little brother and I were left lying together outside on the green grass, whilst she went off with a basket in her hand, telling me to take care of baby. It was very nice to lie there pulling the pretty gowans, and hearing the birds sing, and seeing the bright butterflies flying about. And a wee rabbit came out from the bushes and looked at us. But just then baby made a little whimpering noise, and the map-map turned and ran back to his own

house. It was a long, long time till Mummy came back. And she was blacker and more dirty than before, and she had got a tumble and torn her shawl, and she was so cross!

Baby had been crying for some time. I think he was hungry, poor boy. So was I. Mum took a bottle out of the basket and made a drink for baby, and he soon fell sound asleep. I was very hungry, and began to cry a little, and she took a biscuit from the basket and dipped it in something—milk, I suppose—and crumbled it down for me. I was glad to get it, and I was soon sound asleep beside baby boy. The last thing I saw when I was falling asleep was a nice large *pram*—that means a perambulator, you know. It was one made to hold two people, and I thought, “Oh, that is a little carriage to hold baby boy and me to-morrow! Jolly! We shall have a nice ride!”

II

Yes, it was delightful to lie warm and cumphie, thinking I was safe in the wee rabbit's hole! But I woke up in a fright, for *such* a noise in the room—men and women shouting, and screaming, and growling! And when I peeped out, oh! they were fighting with sticks and pokers, and knocking one another down! and the fire on the floor was all scattered about, blazing! and here was poor Mum lying on the floor among the blazing sticks and cinders, and red blood running down her cheek. I think I must have screamed, for a big black woman came and shook me, and slapped me, and told me in a cross, cross voice to be quiet. She

said, "Haud your tongue this moment!" So I did hold my tongue. Baby boy was good, good, as usual. He didn't seem to mind a bit.

Then there was such a knocking at the door, and the door burst open! and men in blue, tall and strong, with bright buttons, and shiny caps on their heads, came into the room, and everybody was frightened and quiet. Somehow I must have known the blue men, somewhere, long ago, in a kind of dream, for I wasn't the least frightened at them. I think I must have *liked* them, long ago. While some of the blue men put out the blazes on the floor, and spoke to the people, and helped Mum to get up, one of them took me up in his arms, and another took poor wee baby boy. Oh, it was much more cumphie than when Mum carried us! It was so nice to be in the blue men's arms, it felt so soft and warm; and they wrapt warm things round both me and poor wee boy, especially round baby boy. And they carried us away, away, through the lighted streets. Baby boy, as usual, didn't care a button *where* they carried *him*! But I asked *my* blue man where they were taking us. Of course I spoke in my own babyish language. I said, "Fare oo take me?" And the blue man answered—he seemed to know the baby-language—"To beddy baw." He spoke nice and kind, and when he stooped down to speak to me his beard was so soft, and smooth, and nice, and warm; it put me in mind of the wee map-map in the bonnie wood, with its soft fur.

We came to a bright lamp, above an iron gate, and the blue man pulled a bell, and looked down at me, and said, in baby language, "Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling!" and I laughed. Then I looked up at the lamp, and I

saw, in big letters, SHELTER, and I began to think, "Oh, this will be a place where poor little children like us are taken into; a nice cosy place like the bonnie little glen where the map-map lived, and where the burnie ran! The gate was opened by a girl not a great deal older than me, and she led us along a passage and up a little stair to a door where a nice old nurse stood. She was *so* like a nurse I often see in my dreams, as if I had seen her long ago. And behind her was a lady, with a face so kind and gentle, it put me in mind of another face I am sure I have seen often in dreams or somewhere. They didn't look much at *me*, but when poor wee baby boy was laid down on a little bed and uncovered, oh, how sorry for poor little boy they seemed to be. They looked at him, and looked again and again, and then they looked at one another, and I saw tears in their eyes. And then Nurse took the wee thing in her arms, and the lady said, "Little hope, Nurse!" and Nurse said, "Little hope, indeed, mem, but we'll try." A nice girl-nurse took me upstairs. And oh, what a delicious thing it was to be undressed and popped into a nice warm bath, and to be soaped, and washed, and dried. It put me in mind of something in my dream-days long ago. What a cosy, cosy bed! And my supper wasn't crowdie with a stick; it was nice, nice gruel with a spoon. And the girl-nurse sang such a bonnie hymn. I'm sure it was one of my *dream* hymns long ago. And I remember no more.

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"Miss Kitty, are ye gaun to sleep a' day! D'ye ken what time o' day it is? Past aight o'clock i' the mornin'! A daft-like thing to be lyin' i' yer bed!"

And old Nurse shook me. Oh, I was sleeping so sound, sound!

"Nurse!" I said, rubbing my eyes, "is that *you*?"

"Ay, it's *me*. Waken up!"

"Nurse, where is little baby boy?"

"Baby *wha*?"

"And the nice blue man?"

"The blue *whatt*?"

"Isn't this the *Shelter*?"

"The *whatt*? What's the lassie gaun on about? Noo, Miss Kitty, I'll tell you what it *is*. And that is—ye maun hae a dose o' castor ile this very day, for I'm thinkin' yer tea-pairty has gien ye a disjaskit stomak—as the doctor ca's it!"

Away went Nurse out of the room—I supposed, to get the castor oil. But soon my sister Mary came to me. She is always good and kind; and she sat down, so gently and quietly, and spoke so softly—not like Nurse's harsh croaking!

So I told dear Mary what a strange dream I had had about the witch and her broomstick, and the blanket house, and the poor baby boy, and the men in blue, and the *Shelter*.

"Oh!" cried Mary, "you foolish little monkey! I see it all! You were lying asleep, or half asleep, on the sofa, the other night, when Papa was telling Mamma all he had seen at the *Children's Shelter*! And about the poor half-starved children being taken in and treated so kindly! And so you have dreamed a dream! You see, your head was full of *nonsense*, after your tea-party! And so you began to dream of the witch flying through the air—and so on, and so on. And then there came

into your foolish little head what Papa had been saying about the *Shelter*. But get up now, and get dressed, and come out with me, and have a walk in the country. *That* will put you all right! And we'll ask Papa if he will take us, some time in the Christmas holidays, to see the *Children's Shelter* in the High Street! and you can look about among the children there for little baby boy and the wee girlie who lay beside him in the blanket house, and who went with him to the Shelter."

THE OLD SCHOOL EXAMINATION

I

I WONDER whether the readers of *City Sparrows* may care to read a little sketch of an old-fashioned institution, which has been out of existence since 1872 or thereabout—the annual examination of the Parish School by the parish ministers. It is an event of which a great many readers of the present day can have no recollection whatever, and I should like to tell them what a happy and amusing occasion it used to be. So here goes for “part first.”

It fell at a nice time of the year, just when folk were beginning to believe that “gloomy winter” was “noo awa’.” Dry roads, grassy braes looking almost green in the “merry March air,” the *saft* wastlan’ winds, perhaps a precocious bud or two in the hedgerow, a yellow crocus peeping up in some envied kail-yaird—all whispered deliciously of coming Spring.

And the school floor was newly washed; so were our faces; and one window was actually open to the extent of six inches, in defiance of all traditionary wisdom forbidding. Even the blackboard was washed; and the tall youth with incipient whiskers and a *coatee* (or a compromise between a boyish jacket and a manful “tail-

coat") was inscribing upon it, with the aid of iron compasses and a foot-rule, strange devices which the dominie himself, it was currently believed, was not much more than up to, and at which it was shrewdly guessed that the reverend examiners themselves would only gaze in silent wonder and speechless acquiescence.

Such wonderful dresses the girls had, to be sure! I remember the years of "crinolines," when young bachelor ministers used to be alarmed by whispers of concealed steel-plating being worn even by the young girls of the age, showing on what perilous times the world was entering. And the hair! I remember it turned back, and held back by means of semicircular combs which bestrode the head. And I remember it bunched up and bundled into a net-bag (adorned with beads), and hung at the back of the head. Chignons came in more modern days; but I dream even of two tails of plaited hair, finished off with knots of ribbon, hanging down the maiden's back. They were painfully convenient to the cruel grasp of wicked boys, and probably on that account passed out of fashion.

And the boys! Their fashions change too. Ah! never more shall we don a suit so comfortable, so pleasant to be in, with the pockets so handy to get at, as the simple suit of our youthful days. The material was corduroy ("cord of the king" was the free translation), and the suit—the whole suit—consisted of a waistcoat and sleeves, and "breeks" buttoned thereto, with smooth, bright metal buttons—the smoothest, brightest, cheeriest buttons we have ever worn! But that is an old story; let me get on with the examination day. It is the "examination day" of a *later* year. We

have no corduroys and brass buttons now ; but here are knickerbockers, and here is more than one graceful kilt. Like that of the old Duke of Argyle, my heart "warms to the tartan."

There stand the *boys* ! What variety as you glance along the semicircular row ; variety in the colour of the hair—red, brown, black, hay-straw colour, smoothly brushed, tumbled and toozy, erect in shoebrush fashion, tending to curly. And the various expressions of face ! As varied as the various pairs of legs and feet in all different positions, some well booted and well hosed. Brecks and kilts and "nickers" are already mentioned. There are new brecks, light summer brecks, shabby tattered brecks, well-patched brecks, blue brecks, grey brecks, tartan brecks. There are bare feet. Ay ! and no shame to them. Good-fitting, light summer costume, most comfortable and not costly. The hands are everlastingly in the nicker pooches and the breck pooches, rumbling *bools* and sweeties, and fumbling for the answer which is not forthcoming. The kilt affords no such refuge or subterfuge. At least I can't remember ever seeing a kilted laddie, even when sore pressed and badgered by his ecclesiastical tormentors, make any foolish attempt to rummage in his sporran moloch for inspiration. In fact the kilt always takes it quietly and with manly dignity, and if it must be so, goes toward the bottom, step by step, with a stout staid sturdiness which we all rather like to see. It minds us of CULLODEN.

II

The Schoolmaster is, as most men would be, a little nervous withal. He knows that the children *can* do it. But only think what a little thing may upset the whole concern and make the day disastrous! The old minister of Deefestsyde is so dull of hearing, and his huge trumpet so terrifies the children, and he shouts in such a demoniacal tone to demand what they are saying, that no bairn after the first attempt ever tries it again. Then, the minister of Crosskeys, he gets nettled at the children, and corrects their “pro-nun-ci-ayshon” (for the English of Crosskeys is altogether beyond the common, and is totally different from that which is spoken in England or in parts of Scotland, other than the manse of Crosskeys).

Crosskeys, whose grammar also is utterly and perfectly irreproachable, catches up the urchins when they make the slightest slip, and, as the dominie says, “he flytes at them, an’ dings them *useless*!”

But the dominie is ill to please. What would he have? For here is the good, mild, amiable, gentle Nathanael, the minister of Sweetlyloof. He is so afraid of puzzling the children that he is always patting them on the head and bidding them “Sit doon! sit doon! good bairns! Very well! *very* well indeed! *Quite* satisfie’d! *quite* satisfie’d! *perfectly* satisfie’d!” and so on.

The dominie says “the minister of Sweetlyloof makes the examination a farce,” and that if that good gentleman had it all his own way nobody would ever know that the bairns kent their A B C! The Schoolmaster has perfect

confidence in his children. *He* could manage them. But to manage CROSSKEYS and DEEFESTSYDE and SWEETYLOOF *and* the children is more than mortal dominie can hope to do.

But lo! here come the ministers from the Manse! They are outside the school door!

But here they come! One of the "parents and friends" seated on the window sill has spied the black procession issuing from the Manse gate, and the news is telegraphed through the room; and many young hearts quake. The dominie nervously takes a pinch from his silver snuff-box (a presentation one). Here they come! and "There is silence deep as death, and the boldest holds his breath for a time."

I have always wondered why it is that "Wee Johnnie," who only came last quarter, and has just got to "Lo, we go" on a most awfully tattered book, which it takes Johnnie's wee hands all they can do to hold together, should on such occasions be set in the forefront of the hottest battle. But so it has been time immemorial. And in the centre of the floor stands Johnnie, unseen by his surviving comrades, because he is swallowed up—engulfed—enveloped in a group of black-coated gentlemen, who are bending over the tattered book, and by means of eye-glasses, trumpets, spectacles, and other engines, which must be awful to Johnnie's young mind, ascertaining that "Lo, we go," is faithfully and accurately performed. "*Lo, we go!*" Has it reference to the go-ahead speed of the present age in abolishing the old parish schools? Or does it refer to the precarious tenure of the poor dominies of the coming days at the mercy of School Boards, or what? Johnnie's voice is loud, and

treble, and trembling, threatening to break out into a loud wail of terror. But the little man keeps his dumpy, dirty forefinger close at it, and he goes on bravely; and, finally, as the group disperses from around him with loud commendations, he emerges from the black cloud, alive and safe, to the joy of his comrades—only stunned a little, as any of us would be, by a heavy patting on the head from the fat hand of Sweetlyloof, which is meant to encourage him, and quiet the palpitations of his little bosom—only it *doesn't*.

Johnnie having retired in triumph, we have the class, consisting of “me and anither lassie,” and “the lassie” far outshines “me,” and is patted on the head, and told so—which probably makes her pert and upsetting all the rest of her days. It is on this occasion that the young minister of Punjob lets off his first witticism of the day. It is something to the effect that “the little miss did not spell amiss”—which is received with roars of applause, and titterings from the older scholars (who don’t feel quite sure that they are entitled to laugh at Punjob’s good things). Old Deefestsyde insists on knowing what it is, and it is shouted through his trumpet—once and again—and yet again—but he cannot see it, and remains in ignorance.

Then comes the class who read about “Jack and his Bat,” “Poor Dog Tray,” etc.; and who spell all the easy words which Sweetlyloof gives them with an air of haughty angry surprise, as if they wondered a great big fat man like him didn’t know that! Next Deefestsyde is hearing attentively through his awful trumpet all about the growth of flax, or the manufacture of paper, or glass, or something, with astounding technical words, to which

the "parents and friends" listen admiringly, and could sit and listen all day.

A history class—consisting of wonderful frocks, and ribbons, and necklaces, and knickerbockers and jackets—knows all about the Picts, and the Scots, and the Culdees, and the Romans, and Magna Charta, and the Normans, and Richard the Lion-hearted, and all the James's, and the unfortunate Queen Mary, and John Knox, and everybody else worth knowing about.

III

Then a pair of reciters perform "The Saxon and the Gael," Roderick Dhu being unfortunately in breeks, and FitzJames in a kilt. The recitation concluded, Roderick Dhu reads in Latin that "All Gaul is divided into three parts" (or, as the little Irish chappie put it, "halved into three quarters"). Then a large semicircle of mingled frocks, and breeks, and knickers, and kilts, stand respectfully round our old and valued friend the "Map of Europe," which is bounded on the north, south, east, and west, as of old. And they go through the Little Belt, and the Great Belt, and the Straits of Bonifacio (which Crosskeys insists on their pronouncing "Bonnie-fat-she oh"), at which they giggle and titter—and Crosskeys *is* *Crosserkeys*. And they roll down rivers in Russia, and fall into the Caspian Sea. And they know Vesuvius, and Hecla, and Etna. "The *craturs*!" says Punjob, under his breath, are only stopped when they reach the inevitable Oural Mountains! A junior band of geographers are quite at home with all the Lochs of

the Caledonian Canal, and all the Bens beside them, and Rum, Egg, Coll, Tiree, and Benbecula, into the bargain.

Wonders are executed—with slates and without them—concerning jobs that took so many men so many days, and so many more men nobody knows how short a time (for that *is* the *job*) ; and about hundreds at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for ten months ; and gallons of water running out of one cask into another at a most indefinite rate, and for no apparent earthly purpose ; and thousands of farthings that can't stay contented to be as they came from the Mint, but must bother young brains to change them into sovereigns—and pounds that insanely insist on being changed first into sixpences, then pence, then shillings, and, in the height of absurdity, finally into farthings.

Then the tall youth with the *coatee*, after all the slates have sat down, has a go all by himself, and, amidst dead silence and most earnest attention from “parents and friends,” who stretch their necks and start their eyes to follow him, he demonstrates (and with the iron compasses in one hand and the footrule by way of pointer in the other—demanding first and solemnly from all present that they shall regard A B C as a right-angled triangle—which apparently “parents and friends” are content to do) that the angle A B C equals the angles, etc., etc. “Parents and friends” don't seem quite ready to admit *that* though ! So Coatee goes at it with the ruler and compasses, extends lines and makes more angles, and triumphantly demolishes the unbelieving looks of two most attentive “parents and friends”—the village joiner and the village smith—who, to tell the

truth, have for the last five minutes quite lost their reckoning among the "angles," and with a wise nod of the head they give in. Q.E.D.!

A smart round of the Shorter Catechism forms a concluding *feu-de-joie*; and woe betide the little musketeer who happens to miss fire, and whose parent, learned long ago in "The Singles," is looking on and listening.

The decks are cleared for action. A mysteriously covered table is unveiled, and gorgeous cloth binding and bright gilt edging glitter pleasantly in the light of the setting sun. We have been at it all day, and the air is pretty well used up, and heads young and old are getting into a dull spin or whirr, in which "Lo, we go," the making of paper, Roderick Dhu, Agricola, and the Normans, and Mary Queen of Scots, are dancing reels with all the Rivers and Straits of Europe, and all the Bens and Lochs of Scotland, complicated and involved with gallons of water, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and the angles A B C, into which "superiors, inferiors, and equals," most unwarrantably intrude. Wee Johnnie, indeed, has fairly succumbed to the long-continued mental strain and the drowsy atmosphere, and giving a melancholy "lo, we go" "object-lesson" to the school, has tumbled back over on the floor. However, the glory of the cloth bindings and gilt edges revives everybody, and the most enchanting little curtseys are made as little ladies take their well-earned books, and patronising little bows are bobbed at Mr. Sweetuloof, as—in his element—he hands the prizes—bows which seem meant to assure the good old body that they knew him, and will keep him in mind! The last book is given, and makes Wee Johnnie's heart very glad, and his mother's very proud. Ah! the

days! they will never come again! when a threepenny book could make our little hearts happy and our mother's proud. And now is it "Lo, we go"? Not yet! There are *the speeches*. They were grand things in their day *the speeches*! All gone—with the old parish schools and the annual examinations!

Well! let me only say *this* (for as to printing space I am at the length of my tether)—that the Rev. Deefest-syde spoke for twenty minutes, and got louder and louder till he made (if the simile is not irreverent) "roof and rafters dirl." He propounded the question—for no earthly reason apparent but that he himself might answer it—"What are the benefits to be derived by man from the pursuit of knowledge?" The rev. gentleman took a comprehensive and exhaustive view of the subject—so exhaustive, indeed, that Wee Johnnie gave the school one more object-lesson—for he did not *quite* follow the speaker's line of argument, and went to sleep. For the speech of the Rev. Minister of Crosskeys I must refer to the local newspaper where the speech appeared. The composition is fine—very fine—and the punctuation is perfect. Punjob was so very witty, and the roars of laughter and clapping of hands so frequent, that old Deefestsyde was scandalised, thought it unbecoming an institution for the education of the juvenile generation, and was nigh smiting Punjob with his trumpet in his virtuous wrath. Now, Mr. Sweetyloof went at it as the sun went down, and might have held at it till daybreak (as Punjob unwarrantably described it, "laying on the butter thick all round"), but happily an urgent message came from the Manse from his good lady, intimating in brief but pointed phrase that "the roast would soon be

a cinder." Punjob pleasantly remarked it was high time in that case to *sinder*, and we *sindere*d.

There followed the pleasant cheery dinner in the Manse, which I shall be delighted to describe for the readers of *City Sparrows* at some future time.

POETICAL PIECES



COTTAGE IN FOULIS WESTER VILLAGE



JEELY WELL, FOULIS WESTER

AULD FOULIS AND THE JEELY WELL ¹

FAIN wad I wander North, ance mair—
The simmer days are fine—
An' see the bonnie braes o' FOULIS,
I kent sae weel lang syne !

I've seen the day I'd little thocht
But shank the road ma lane ;
I'm no sae soople as I was,
An' troth ! I'se tak' the train.

(Arrived at Abercairny Station.)

I ken the road—across the Pow—
It *aye* was unco drumlie !
Yon's ABERCAIRNY's braw Gate-ludge—
It's verra nate an' comely !

The “CURACH” ! that's a heelent name !
KINTOCHAR's weel wrought land !—
The Auld Sawmill ! eh ! peety me !
Whaur's the Auld “Sawmill *Band*” ?

¹ The name is from the Gaelic, and signifies the clear, or bright, or white, *i.e.*, bleaching well. [Otherwise, from the French, *gelée*, frozen.—EDITOR.]

And QUARTER BANK, a bonnie hoose,
 Stands lookin' doon the brae ;
 The Ludges ! ch ! but wae's my heart !
 Baith PETERS worn away !

But here's Wull Tyler, mason true
 As ever laid a stane ;
 An' JAMIE, in his faither's hoose
 He's bidin' quate his lane.

And here's New-Mill—no *new* to me !
 It's wearin' auld, I doot !
 JOHN ANDERSON ! my Joe, John !
 I hope ye're haddin' stoot !

NEW FOULIS ! But what new hoose is this ?
 Wull Dooglas' hammer's ringin' !
 An' there the Plump. I used to hear
 The linties sweetly singin'.

The Manse !—an' bonnie Shannochar !
 An' Drummie—*fut i brae !*
 Ower the Bull-hill, an' into Foulis !—
 I fain wad roar " HORRAY ! "

.
 In mids the Square, the Ancient Cross !
 Auld Frien' ! but ye've been clever !
 Ye've wash't your face wi' *bilin' ile*,¹
 An' look as young as ever !

I wonder gin' the wives o' Foulis
 Hae tried your patent plan ;
 Was't unco' sair ? I'll try't mysel'
 An' turn a younger man !

¹ The Cross was recently coated with boiled linseed oil for its preservation.

The SCHULE ! It's full o' bairns—wheesht !

They're gettin' "music dreel !"

Feggs, it was *dreelins'* that *we* got

When I was at the skeel.

The graivel spread afore the door—

An' floo'ers upon the wa' !

THE INN ! it minds my wearie hert

O' them that's noo awa' !

The Shop ! I mind the auld ane fine,

Wi' its winnock unco wee ;

The bairns wad flett their noses on't—

The sugar bools to see.

There's no the like o' this new Shop

In a' the kintra roon !

It's keepit by a Cooncillor

A credit to the toon !

The POST OFFISH !—The Postman, he

Comes whirlin' on his wheel !

The folk wad said, when I was young

"The laddie's in a creel !"

The KIRK !—The bonnie lang white kirk—

In mony lands I've been,

But dearer is the lang white Kirk

Than ony Kirk I've seen ;

For 'neath the shelter o' its wa's

Are restin' peacefully ;

Hoo mony—dear, in ither days,

An' still dear, dear, to me !

And roond outside the Kirkyard wa',
 The burnie rins alang,
 An' seems to hush the sleepers there,
 Wi' its calm and gentle sang.

Oh, weel I ken thae braes o' Foulis !
 Loanfit, an' Crannach-ha' !
 Muntheely—whaur's Muntheely gaen ?
 Crafrandie—It's awa !

Pitlandie, wi' its lichtsomeness face,
 Looks doon on cosy Tail ;
 Pitmonie, cockit up sae heigh,
 Stands glowerin' ower the Vale.

I'm standin' in the Auncient Close—
 Plenty room *noo* to stand—
 Whaur oor Weavers held their Parliament
 An' managed a' the land.

Thae was the lads—weel read an' shrewd—
 They crackit lood and hearty ;
 They managed Europe's hail concerns,
 An' banged at Bonny-pairty.

Three worthy maiden women's a'
 That bides i' the Auncient Square,
 Content wi' them for Parliament—
 Foulis is no seekin' mair.

That's Pate Macpherson, 'cross the road
 As guid a man's ye ken ;
 The faithful Beadle o' the Kirk—
 He bides in Seggieden.

.

Whaur am I noo ! sic rubbish heaps !
 Sae mony hooses doon !
 Na ! wha wud thocht that I'd gae wull'd
 In my ain auld-farrant toon ?

Aweel, nae doot, I'se no deny
 There's a gey wheen awa' ;
 But, peety me, the *folk* has gaen—
 Weavers an' looms an' a'.

But look ye roon'—it's nae that ill—
 The truth sud aye be statit ;
 There's half-a-dizen hooses new
 Weel built, wiselike, an' sklatit.

Weel dune the LAIRD ! He's dune his pairt ;
 Forbye new hooses biggit,
 There's a wheen o' thae auld *but-an'-bens*
 Been sortit up and riggit.

An' weel dune FOULIS ! She'll flourish yet ;
 She's nane sae needin' peety ;
 She'll cock her head, an' waur them a'—
 The AULD CELESTIAL CITY !

I'll stan' a while an' look aroon'
 'Neath the Auld Sycamore
 Thoom-planted—wha can tell me whan ?—
 On a Sabbath nicht o' yore.

James Rutherford—his braw new hoose—
 It stan's fornent them a' ;
 An' Will M'Nicoll's bonnie flowers
 But WULLIE ! he's awa' !

The Foreman's hoose, it stands ower bye
 Jess Kettle's i' th' loan ;
An' Annie Marshall—she looks well
 Noo that her sklates are on.

There's Nell Maclaren—Bell's awa'—
 An' dear auld Auntie Lizzie ;
An' eh ! I mind auld Jamie Cock,
 Aye reddin' up an' busy.

John Cock's auld Mansion stands its lane,
 The centre o' the toon,
And there a thrifty wumman bides
 Ca'd Jenny Meiklejohn.

Whaur Peggy bade—an' Lizzie Roy—
 The auld lang rickle's doon ;
There travelin' bodies creepit in
 At nicht, an' sleepit soun'.

Whaur ance oor Carrier Ritchie bade,
 Noo Jamie Drummond dwells,
And in their hoosie Nell and Wull
 Are bidin' quate theirsells.

In Weellum Rutherford's auld hoose
 Miss Mary Kettle bides ;
And yonder's Jenny Davidson's,
 And Lizzie Dow's besides.

King Jamie Miller's bidin' whaur
 His faither bade afore,
And clean an' snod, an' well redd up
 Does Annie keep the door.

Yon bonnie sklatit hoose, it hauds

Tam Kettle an' his mither.

An' noo I've coontit ilka hoose

But stop! there's yet anither!

For up the brae John Borland stands;

He sees as faur as ony;

He's lookin' doon on a' the toon—

A weel built hoose, and bonnie.

Wha's bidin' i' the aist o' Foulis?

Is there ony folk ava?

Jess Miller's in her faither's hoose—

The lave's maist a' awa'!

M'Ainshes—Tylers—Camerons—

Made blythe *the aist i' toon*.

Yet Stratton's yonder, gin ye want

A gude new pair o' shoon.

I've feenish'd a' the Auncient Toon—

There's naething mair to tell—

But, ere I stop, ye maun come oot

And taste the JEELY WELL.

Oh, ye wha kent the JEELY SPRING,

I'm sure ye like't it weel,

How bonnie was't when you an' me

Was laddies at the skeel!

Ye mind the paith—the wudden brig—

The crystal spoot that play'd

Sae bonnily—sae merrily—

Aneath the plantin's shade!

Eh ! mony a time, when faur awa',
Ye dootless ken yersel',
When ceety streets were het and close
Ye've thocht o' JEELY WELL !

There's Bannachy ! and Bogie Well !
Rehacmy, and Muntheely ;
But nane o' them in simmer drooth,
Could gie ye drink like JEELY.

We've splash't an' paidle't at the spring
Through the leeve lang simmer day ;
Nae cloud upon oor happy hearts—
Nae thocht but bairns' play.

But whiles 'twas *wark* ; and up the park
We skelp't to fesh the coo,
Chowin' a bannock a' the gate—
Syne JEELY slock't oor mou'.

And oor Mithers and oor Aunties !
Ye mind hoo they wad streetch,
On the bonnie green beside the well,
Their hanks' o' yarn to bleach !

O, JEELY ! you an' me's been freens
For mony and mony a year,
But *noo* ye're no like what ye was !
Wow ! sic' a change is here !

The broken brig, the fuitpaith spoilt,
The spring chock't up wi' sand !
Ye'll hardly won atower to drink,
Sae weet an' saft the land !

They tell us that afore the hairst
 A spate brok doon like thunder,
 An' smoor'd the Spring wi' rubbish-wreck—¹
 Puir JEELY ! she was under !

The folk o' FOULIS they thocht that they
 Wad see auld JEELY never ;
 But neest day JEELY trickle't through
 An' spootit clear as ever.

But, O, it's no sae aisy noo,
 For ony puir auld body,
 To fesh a drap frae JEELY WELL
 To mak' her tea—or toddy.

An auld lass says—"yestreen I gaed
 To fesh a gang o' watter ;
 I skin'd ma shank ; I wat my cots ;
 I fell wi' unco clatter !
 I hirple't hame—a broken can,
 An' no a drap o' watter !"

¹ [The Jeely Well was put into perfect order—and now so remains—
 with the money got at the time from the sale of the Poem.—EDITOR.]

AULD LANG SYNE IN TARTAN

SHOULD Gaelic speech be e'er forgot,
And never brought to min',
For she'll pe spoke in Paradise
In the days o' auld lang syne.

When Eve, all fresh in beauty's charms,
First met fond Adam's view,
The first words that he'll spoke to her
Was "*Cumar achun dew.*"

And Adam in his garden fair,
Whene'er the day did close,
The dish that he'll to supper tuke
Was always Athole brose.

When Adam from his leafy bower
Cam' oot at broke o' day,
He'll always for his morning tuke
A quaich o' usquebae.

And when wi' Eve he had a crack,
He'll tuke his sneeshin' horn,
And on the tap ye'll weel nicht mark,
A poney praw Cairngorm.

The sneeshin' mull is fine, my freens,
Ta sneeshin' mull is gran';
We'll tuke a hearty sneesh, my freens,
An' pass frae han' to han'.

When man first fan' the want o' claes,
The wind and cauld to fleg,
He twisted roon' about his waist
The tartan philabeg.

And music first on earth was heard
In Gaelic accents deep,
When Jubal in his oxter squeezed
The blether o' a sheep.

Ta braw bagpipes is grand, my freens,
Ta braw bagpipes is fine,
We'll tuke't another pibroch yet
For the days o' auld lang syne.

By DR. MILROY, Moneydie, and
DR. HARDY, Foulis.

OUR SCRIPTURE LESSON FOR THE DAY AT BLANTYRE, B.C.A.

WE met in our own dear red-brick Church,
At the morning hour of prayer,
And, with worries that bother'd our hearts a bit,
It was rest—it was peace—to be there !

We had “local” troubles, that mission folk
Are not very often without :
And “the mail from home” had come in, with words
That were slightly unpleasant, no doubt.

But that Scripture lesson ! oh ! how it chased
All the worries and troubles away !
The old story was told ; and it seem'd indeed
The lesson for *us* that day !

For it told how strangely, long ago,
“A Mission to Europe” began,
When the cry for help reach'd the sleeping Paul
By the “Macedonian man.”

And he rose, and summon'd his trusty friend—
They were “pioneer” mission men,
And they steer'd for the darksome Europe shore—
It was “the dark land” then !

And how fared the "Foreign Mission" in days
When a Foreign Mission was new?
Its "Report" was read in our Church that morn
In the old words—strange, but true.

First came the calm bright days, that seem'd
With blessings and hopes to glide
When the Gospel was gladdening "opened" hearts
Down by the "waterside."

And some folk said: "Oh, this Mission new
Is a great success, it is clear!
The Lord is blessing those meetings so!
There's no room for a doubt or a fear!"

But what said the pioneers?—thank'd the Lord
For each soul that His grace had won:
"But—the work of the future—leave it to HIM;
He will tell how He wishes it done."

For no novices, strange to the task, were they!
Theirs were no "prentice hands";
They had mission-work done, for the Lord they served,
Many years, and in many lands.

And their ship of faith was no fancy craft
For only the summer breeze;
It was built and found to hold and to live
In the wildest of stormy seas.

And the storm did come,—when the angry mob
Was around them with fiendish yell;
And the stripes of the "Roman rods," and the *stocks*,
And the loathsome prison-cell!

And some folk said : “ Ah ! the Mission is gone !
As to that we were all agreed—
Your Foreign Mission’s a foolish dream !
We *knew* it could never succeed.”

But what said *they*? From their midnight cell
A psalm-tune of gladness came,
Thanking the Lord that He honour’d *them*
To suffer, for His sake, shame !

And the Foreign Mission ! it weather’d the storm
Tho’ as yet ’twas but weak and young ;
For never fail’d Mission—nor anything else—
In hands to the Master that clung !

And He set them free ; and He set them to work
With a cheering “ workman sign ” ;
He gave them for “ arles ” their jailer’s soul,
Saved by His grace divine.

And they set to work, and a Church arose
(For the Master was true to His word) ;
’Twasn’t stone and lime, but living men,
Loving and serving the Lord.

’Twas a MISSION CHURCH ; and it spread the light
Over Europe, far and wide ;
And that Mission owed more to the stripes and the cell
Than it did to “ the waterside.”



FOULIS WESTER CHURCH



BACK VIEW OF CHURCH

‘CHEERY AS A WHIN’

(SCOTCH SAYING)

A’BODY likes the bonnie BROOM !
There’s no’ a sicht sae fair !
Its lichtsome green, its yellow bloom—
When Spring smiles i’ the air.

But oh ! the sturdy WHIN gie me !
Its dark green *wearin’* claes !
Wi’ bits o’ gowd that glint wi’ glee
Through a’ the *winter* days !

Whene’er a bus’ o’ Whin I see,—
In day o’ snaw or rain—
It cries—“ Haud up yeer hert, like me !
The Spring will come again ! ”

Oh ! hamely Whin ! ye ken the airt
To preach oontil us a’,
We’s bide *oor* Spring, wi’ cheery hert,
Or Winter wear awa’ !

THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM

THE SABBATH AT HOME

OH, weel I lo'e the bonnie Kirk
That stands upon the brae !
My very heart is thirstin' for
The Hoose o' God this day.

Wuss I was like yon blithesome bird
That flees sae free in air ;
Can flichter roon the auld Kirk roof,
An' mak' its nestie there.

But oh ! that I was wi' the folk
That's gatherin' there to pray !
They're blessed folk that's gettin' strength,
Within His Hoose the day.

Oh, weel they're aff that's ta'en the gait—
Their ilka step I ken—
It's ower the hill, an' thro' the muir,
An' doon the birken glen.

I think I see them at the well,
Where aye we sit an' rest,
Till neebor folk, to join the band,
Come in frae east an' west.



ARCH-DRUID'S TEMPLE, FOULIS WESTER



ABERCAIRNY HOUSE

Photo by Valentine

A happy band they gather in !
Whiles I can think I'm there—
I hear their bonny mornin' psalm,
Their solemn mornin' prayer.

Yet happy me ! And what for no ?
Tho' sittin' lanesome here—
It's Bethel, it's the Hoose o' God,
If Jacob's God be near.

For oh ! I lo'e God's Kirk ! Ae day
Is worth a thoosand, there ;
I'd rather sit ayont the door
To hear the sough o' prayer—

I'd sooner sit at His door stane
Than feast at banquet board,
'Mang silks an' braws, wi' graceless folk,
That doesna' fear the Lord.

I lo'e His Hoose : there's shelter there,
An' sun glints sweetly fa'
And a' that heart can wish or want
Is in His banquet ha'.

Sae whether yonder wi' the lave,
Or lanesome here the day,
The folk that have their trust in God—
It's happy, happy they.

AT THE BAPTISM OF THOMAS HARDY
SCOTT, A GRANDSON, IN THE
PARISH CHURCH OF LOGIE-BUCHAN

MAY 10, 1891

ON the bright May Sabbath morning
With our baby boy we came,
To be owned as of the Saviour's Church,
Bless'd in the Saviour's name.

And it touched our hearts, on entering
The homely house of prayer,
To see the graceful welcome
That waited Baby there.

For twined around the sacred font,
And through the Manse-pew screen,
Were the clinging ivy-tendrils
With their leaves of living green.

And the bright flowers of the Spring-time,
And the white buds, pure and fair,
The flowers that whisper all that's good,
They welcomed Baby there.

We did not see the fairy hands
That twined these flowerets fair ;
But we read the wreaths and blessed the hearts
That welcomed Baby there.

IN THE BONNIE WOODS OF
ABERCAIRNY

THE NOVEMBER LEAF TO ITS MOTHER TREE

I'm wae to leave ye, Mother, dear !
But it canna *noo* be lang !
For unco slight's my grip o' ye,
An' I doot I'll hae to gang !

I wuss oor pairtin' michtna' be
When wild storm winds hae blawn,
To be whirlin' faur awa' frae you
An' no ken whaur I'm gaun.

I wad like, some bonnie peacefu' day—
A sabbath nicht be best—
To flichter slowly, slowly, doon,
An' 'mang yer feet to rest.

D'ye mind ! when first I cam', Mother,
Your "wee bit leafie green,"
Ye thocht that sic' a bonnie bairn
This world had never seen.

An' when the saft winds kiss't me,
An' the sun-glints gar't me smile,
Ye was fear't they'd steal awa' your bairn,
An' ye held a grip the while.

When simmer cam', an' a' your bairns,
A merry band were we !
We glanced an' danced frae morn till nicht,
An' fill'd oor wud wi' glee !

Nae fear o' pairtin' *than*, Mother !
Ye ken't your grup was fast,
An' the gentle winds that danced us
Were nane like wintry blast.

Eh ! Mother ! ye was prood o' us !
Deed, oor Mother wasna seen !
For your bairns a' cluster't roond ye
In oor claes o' glossy green.

But, oh ! it's different noo, Mother !
I'm no like what ye kenn'd,
I'm wizen'd, feckless, fushionless,
The life's gey near its end.

Ye're a' but bairnless noo, Mother,
The lave's maist a' awa',
An' the bairn ye kiss't the first is near
The hinmost o' them a'.

Oh, Mother, dinna, dinna murn !
Ye wadna haud me here !
The winter day is short and dull,
The winter nights are drear.

But ye'll haud me to the last, Mother,
 Syne let me waver doon,
 An' let me lie wi' a' the lave
 At rest, an' sleepin' soun'.

But we'll maybe meet again, Mother,
 For, d'ye ken, I had a dream !
 It cam' to me ae bonnie nicht
 In a simmer sunset gleam.

An' I thocht that I had flichter't doon,
 An' lain sleepin'—oh, hoo lang !
 Till ae morn' ye kiss't me, Mother, dear,
 An' up in life I sprang.

An' I thocht ye stood, a bonnier Tree
 Than this world has ever seen,
 An' I hardly kent my Mother there,
 Buskit wi' livin' green !

An' eh ! that was a bonnier wud
 Than een hae look't on ever !
 An' Mother ! your bit leafie green
 Was—leaf that fadeth never !

THE END