

## A SAIR TRACHLE.

“**I**T’S you, Missis Broon!”

“Ay! whit’s left o’ me.”

Mrs Broon was a shabbily-dressed little woman with thin lips and a lisp. She proffered the conductor a ha’penny and then, turning to her elderly friend, resumed the conversation.

“Ay! whit’s left o’ me, as I wis sayin’—fair run aff my feet I am—twa o’ them doon, an’ the baby’s that bad; I didna sleep a wink a’ nicht. Pewmonia! The distrik nurse was in just afore I left. She wanted to pit a poultice on ’er. ‘A poultice!’ I says: ‘ye’ll pit nae poultice on ma wean—when ye hae weans o’ yer ain ye can pit poultices on them,’ I says. Ye wad think we didna ken hoo to bring up oor ain weans, an’ me wi’ six o’ them, an’ three deid.”

“An’ whaur are ye aff tae noo?”

The schule management committee—as *per usual*;<sup>”</sup> (the latter said with great deliberation). “Johnnie’s been plunkin’ again. I’ll gie them a bit o’ my mind this mornin’. Hoo dae they expect a laddie to go to the schule wi’ the back oot o’ his troosers? Wad they gang about wi’ the back oot o’ their ain troosers? Naw! No’ them! I’ll pit a few questions to them this very day—them sittin’ there an’ tellin’ ye hoo tae rear yer weans as if they kent anythin’ about it.”

“They’ll mebbe pit ye a’ the road.”

“Let them! It wid be a kin’ o’ chyngie to gang to jile; ye nicht as well be in the jile onywey. Whit

between the cares o' yer ain faimly, an' impiddent neebors; life's no' worth leevin'—it is nut. Yon yin Lambie says to me the ither day, says she—ye ken her nippy wey o' talkin'—she says: 'An' whit wey are ye aye hingin' oot yer windy, Missis Broon, an' you wi' six weans to look efter?' I shune telt her. I says, says I: 'If you had six weans in a single end,' says I, 'ye wid hing oot yer windy tae; it's the only place whaur a bodie can get room let alane a breath o' fresh air.' Twa o' them at the clinic tae—ringworm. An' I could tell ye whaur they got it, but I'm keepin' ma mooth shut!"

"Hoo's yer man daein'?"

"He's no' daein' at a'. He should never have gone near their auld sanitorium—windys up mornin', noon, an' nicht; nae constitution could staun' it. Ye might as weel be at the North Pole. It wasna wi' my will he went."

"But he lookit fine when he cam' hame."

"Ay, he lookit!—that's a'. It's me that kens—up half the nicht wi' him. Nae appetite either—a cup o' tea, an' he's bye wi't. He canna even look at mince—efter me gaun a' the way to Scorgie's for it tae—yer lucky that has a healthy man."

"O he has his tillivees wi' the rest o' them."

"Ay! I ken. Men's a' the same; they're aye decin'—if it's no' a cough it's a corn."

"Ay! that's whit I say—a man's waur to bring up than a faimly."

"Ye canna bring a man up; I've stoppit tryin'; they're as thrawn as cuddies, an' the mair ye dae for them the mair they lie doon to it."

“Was it six weans ye said ye had?”

“Ay, six leevin’.”

“It’s a peety they’re no’ strong.”

“It’s no’ for want o’ care I’m tellin’ ye—they hae their tea every mornin’ afore they go to the schule, an’ a *piece* when they come hame at dinner-time; an’ there’s never a nicht but they hae something to eat—I canna understan’ it at a’; ither folk’s weans thrive on less.”

“It’s constitutional, I suppose.”

“Weel, the doctor says it’s aneemena, an’ they should be leevin’ in the country—leevin’ in the country—fancy that!”

“Ay, it’s easy for them to talk; that’s whit they’re paid for.”

“I think yer aboot richt there—a lot o’ auld wifes—codliver ile an’ chemical food! Some o’ them couldna write oot a perscription if they tried. Jist look at that man o’ mine’s; he’s been laid up badly for five months noo, an’ the last bottle the doctor gie’d him wasna as big’s yer thoom. ‘Three draps in a teaspoonful o’ water *before* going to bed’—ye must be polite you know—three draps! I diddled them fine—six draps three times a day I gied him. ‘Yer bottle’s awfu’ sune dune,’ they said to me. ‘Hoo can ye keep a bottle,’ says I, ‘wi’ six weans steerin’ aboot a single end?’”

“Yer wan owre mony for them, Missis Broon.”

“Weel, I ken whit I ken onywey, an’ that’s mair than they dae.”

At this point, I regret to say, there was a break in the pleasant flow of conversation. It was caused by a question put with motherly solicitude by the elder

lady. There are questions and questions, and one should be careful not to impinge too closely on matters personal. Said the elder lady: "D'ye no' think, Missis Broon, wi' a big faimly like that, an' yer man sae delicate, ye wad be better no' to hae ony mair weans?"

At once we had a new Missis Broon, pert, polite, disdainful. And this is what issued from those thin lips of hers: "I'm mair than surprised at ye, Missis Simpson—that for a wumman o' your age, an' your experience, an' your eddication, ye can't—talk—sense."

As she uttered the last three words, detached, emphatic, final, she tossed her head, drew her shawl across her bosom proudly and left the car.