

ELIZABETH GEORY.

ANARROW uninviting thoroughfare in Gorbals, connecting Main Street and Bedford Street, not a place to linger in. And yet it has a story. For Bedford Lane was not always Bedford Lane. In my young days it was known as the *Puddock Raw* and even that was but a corruption of an earlier and more romantic name, nothing less indeed (as old titles testify), than PADDOCK ROW.

Think of it! Here the young bloods of Carlton Place went galloping by on their three-year-olds, the world at their feet. And here it was maybe that the Provost's son frae the 'Shaws first met that fair-haired limmer wha, wi' her cantrips, led him a bonnie dance, breaking his he'rt; so that at the last—an auld dodderin' bodie—he had to scart bawbees thegither to keep the breath o' life in his body by playing a tin whistle in that same Main Street whereabout his fair Alison first wiled him wi' her flashin' e'e.

But it was as the *Puddock Raw* that I knew it. Very decent working people dwelt there in what at one time had been a weavers' row. My recollection is of one Elizabeth Geory by name, a spinster, who lived to be a very old woman. The daughter of a Wigtownshire dominie, she had, in early life, and perhaps in the wake or, for that matter, on the tide of a love affair, drifted into town; and there she was, domiciled in the *Puddock Raw*. Her name no less than her person had the flavour of romance. It was thought that she was of French extraction; that long ago, a French privateers-

man of the name of *Jaures* had landed on the Wigtownshire coast on some ploy, and had there fallen a victim to twa bonnie e'en. Be that as it may, Elizabeth was the last of the Georys; and from her window looking over the vacant ground where now stand the Gorbals Baths, and where in that day itinerant showmen put up their booths, what she saw was maybe the green fields of Wigtown, and what she heard, the music of the sea.

She had neither man nor cat about the house; but she had one comfort greater than either. Miss Geory (as we called her) had, of all things—a *hole in her stomach*; at least she thought she had. It was a lovely companionable complaint that evoked the sympathy of neighbours and carried her triumphantly well past the allotted span. The rich in their mansions could have their *pate de foie gras* and die; Miss Geory in her but-an'-ben had a *hole in her stomach* and lived. At every meal she took a pinch of baking soda, and it was our firm belief as children that the soda somehow soldered up the hole while the meal was being digested.

"Mother told us to ask you how you were keeping," we would say. To which came the invariable reply: "Tell yer mither I'm keepin' fine if it wasna for the hole in ma stomach."

She had been an upholsterer's seamstress, but when we knew her she was too old for regular work, and eked out a livelihood by making hassocks at home, and by attending deathbeds. The imminence of her own demise made her invaluable at the latter occupation.

"Ay, ay!" she would say, happin' them up, "it'll no' be lang or I jine ye." And away they went, year after year, generation after generation. And Miss

Geory lived on. She might have parted with life for all it held, but she was loath to part with her complaint. Finally, and in extreme old age, she did go.

And now when I pass through what was once the *Puddock Raw*, I think of her and what she saw and what she heard from her window, and of how she kept up an interest in life to the very end by means of a delusion. And I feel disposed to thank God that lonely old women, if they cannot have wealth and the comforts that wealth brings, can at least have their delusions.