

THE PIG IN A POKE

ROBERT FORSYTH, the father of the advocate, and himself gravedigger, bellman, and minister's man, was asked by his master, who was knowing in pigs, to take one of a very fine litter to his friend, the then minister of Dolphinton. Rob was told to be sure to inform the receiver of everything about its "blood and culture"—not only who its father and mother, but who its forebears generally were. "And ye see, Rab, be shure ye tell this afore ye let it oot, for he'll never heed a word ye say after that for glowerin' at its perfections." So off Rob trudged with his poke and its high-bred burden. When he came to Candy

Burn, a little way out o' Biggar, where a dram was then sold, he met Richie Robb, a humorist and wag, who, seeing the bedral, says, "Whaur are ye gaun?" "Oo, I'm gaun to Dowfintoun, wi' juist the wunnerfuest pig ever was piggit; it's for the minister." "Ay, man! Come yer ways in and tak' a dram, and let's see the pig." The pig was seen and admired, and then the dram and a crack. Meantime, Richie takes out the pig and puts in a young puppy-dog about the same weight, and Robbie trudges off, arriving in the afternoon at the Manse of Dolphinton. The minister was out looking about him, and knew Rob. "What's this in the poke, Robbie, my man?" "Ay, ye may well speir, Mr Meek. It's juist the maist extraordinar pig ever was. My maister has sent it as a parteekler present to you, wi' his compliments." "Let us see't, Robbie." "Na, na, sir, I maun first put ye up to its generation, sae to speak." He then detailed its antecedents, and let it solemnly escape at the corner. Out came the puppy, winking and lively. "That's a dows, Robbie?" says the minister. "A dug! A dug! as shure's daith it is a dug; it was as shure, Mr Meek—as fac's daith—it was a pig when it gaed in!" "Weel, Robbie, it's a dug noo, so you may tak' it back. But come in and hae yer four oors." Robbie took a fearful look at the beast, returned it with much subdued blasphemy, astonishment, and cruelty to the poke, and, making a hearty meal, started again, giving a sceptical keek into the poke every now and then on his way, when he thought nobody saw him, to see what further change was going on. He arrived once more, disgusted, bewildered, and weary, at Candy Burn, where, of course, Richie was waiting for him. "Ye've been lang, Robbie, and what for are ye carryin' the poke ower yer shouter?" Robbie gave a grunt of disgust, and told his story. "That's awfu', Robbie, perfectly fearsome; ye maun stap in and hae a dram.

Oo maun tell Tibbie." Rob flung down his poke with its portentous contents—which gave an unmistakable yowl—and took his dram and told his woes. Of course, Richie transposed the pig once more, and on went Rob, heartened by drink a little, but full of alarm as to his master, who met him at the door eager to know what his friend thought of the pig. Robbie flung down his poke with a desperate air, took his stand, and, rubbing his forehead, poured out the prodigious story—"A whaulp, an absolute whaulp, as ye may see, sir, wi' yer ain een." Opening the poke, and giving it a vindictive kick, out came the pig of the morning! "As fac's death, Mr Watson, it was a whaulp at Dowfinton, and I lookit in noos and thans to see if it was turnin' into anything else; and it was a whaulp at Candy Burn, and that Richie Robb can aver and sweer." "Nae doot, Robbie, Richie kens a' about it," said the more knowing minister.

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