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Rabbi Saunderson

By Ian Maclaren

With Twelve Illustrations by

A. S. Boyd

**LONDON: HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27 PATERNOSTER ROW**

1898

**To
Mrs. Williamson**

**OF GLENOGIL
WHO HAS INHERITED
THE GIFT OF WITTY SPEECH
AND HAS LAID IT OUT AT USURY
TO THE JOY OF HER FRIENDS
AND THE
GLADDENING OF LIFE**

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A SUPRA-LAPSARIAN

Jeremiah Saunderson had remained in the low estate of a "probationer" for twelve years after he left the Divinity Hall, where he was reported so great a scholar that the Professor of Apologetics spoke to him deprecatingly, and the Professor of Dogmatics openly consulted him on obscure writers. He had wooed twenty-three congregations in vain, from churches in the black country, where the colliers rose in squares of twenty, and went out without ceremony, to suburban places of worship, where the beadle, after due consideration of the sermon, would take up the afternoon notices and ask that they be read at once for purposes of utility, which that unflinching functionary stated to the minister with accuracy and much faithfulness. Vacant congregations desiring a list of candidates, made one exception, and prayed that Jeremiah should not be let loose upon them, till at last it came home to the unfortunate scholar himself that he was an offence and a by-word. He began to dread the ordeal of giving his name, and, as is still told, declared to a household, living in the fat wheatlands and without any imagination, that he was called Magor Missabib. When a stranger makes a statement of this kind to his host with a sad seriousness, no one judges it expedient to offer any remark; but it was skilfully arranged that Missabib's door should be locked from the outside, and one member of the household sat up all night. The sermon next day did not tend to confidence—having seven quotations in unknown tongues—and the attitude of the congregation was one of alert vigilance; but no one gave any outward sign of uneasiness, and six able-bodied men, collected in a pew below the pulpit, knew their duty in an emergency.

Saunderson's election to the Free Church of Kilbogie was therefore an event in the ecclesiastical world, and a consistent tradition in the parish explained its inwardness on certain grounds, complimentary both to the judgment of Kilbogie and the gifts of Mr. Saunderson. On Saturday evening he was removed from the train by the merest accident, and left the railway station in such a maze of meditation that he ignored the road to Kilbogie altogether, although its sign-post was staring him in the face, and continued his way to Drumtochty. It was half-past nine when Jamie Soutar met him on the high road through our glen, still travelling steadily west, and being arrested by his appearance, beguiled him into conversation, till he elicited that Saunderson was minded to reach Kilbogie. For an hour did the wanderer rest in Jamie's kitchen, during which he put Jamie's ecclesiastical history into a state of thorough repair—making seven distinct parallels between the errors that had afflicted the Scottish Church and the early heretical sects, —and then Jamie gave him in charge of a ploughman who was courting in Kilbogie, and was not averse to a journey that seemed to illustrate the double meaning of charity. Jeremiah was handed over to his anxious hosts at a quarter to one in the morning, covered with mud, somewhat fatigued, but in great peace of soul, having settled the place of election in the prophecy of Habakkuk as he came down with his silent companion through Tochty woods.



[Illustration: HE PUT JAMIE'S ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY INTO A STATE OF THOROUGH REPAIR]

Nor was that all he had done. When they came out from the shadow and struck into the parish of Kilbogio—whose fields, now yellow unto harvest, shone in the moonlight—his guide broke silence and enlarged on a plague of field-mice which had quite suddenly appeared, and had sadly devastated the grain of Kilbogio. Saunderson awoke from study and became exceedingly curious, first of all demanding a particular account of the coming of the mice, their multitude, their habits, and their determination. Then he asked many questions about the moral conduct and godliness of the inhabitants of Kilbogio, which his companion, as a native of Drumtochty, painted in gloomy colours, although indicating as became a lover that even in Kilbogio there was a remnant. Next morning the minister rose at daybreak, and was found wandering through the fields in such a state of excitement that he could hardly be induced to look at breakfast. When the "books" were placed before him, he turned promptly to the ten plagues of Egypt, which he expounded in order as preliminary to a full treatment of the visitations of Providence.

"He coves (beats) a' ye ever saw or heard," the farmer of Mains explained to the elders at the gate. "He gaed tae his room at half twa and wes oot in the fields by four, an' a'm dootin' he never saw his bed. He's lifted abune the body a'thegither, an' can hardly keep himsel awa frae the Hebrew at his breakfast. Ye'll get a sermon the day, or ma name is no Peter Pitillo." Mains also declared his conviction that the invasion of mice would be dealt with after a scriptural and satisfying fashion. The people went in full of expectation, and to this day old people recall Jeremiah Saunderson's trial sermon with lively admiration. Experienced critics were suspicious of candidates who read lengthy chapters from both Testaments and prayed at length for the Houses of Parliament, for it was justly held that no man would take refuge in such obvious devices for filling up the time unless he was short of sermon material. One unfortunate, indeed, ruined his chances at once by a long petition for those in danger on the sea—availing himself with some eloquence of the sympathetic imagery of the one hundred and seventh Psalm—for this effort was regarded as not only the most barefaced padding, but also as evidence of an almost incredible blindness to circumstances. "Did he think Kilbogio wes a fishing-village?" Mains inquired of the elders afterwards, with pointed sarcasm. Kilbogio was not indifferent to a well-ordered prayer—although its palate was coarser in the appreciation of felicitous terms and allusions than that of Drumtochty—and would have been scandalised if the Queen had been omitted; but it was by the sermon the young man must stand or fall, and Kilbogio despised a man who postponed the ordeal.

Saunderson gave double pledges of capacity and fulness before he opened his mouth in the sermon, for he read no Scripture at all that day, and had only one prayer, which was mainly a statement of the Divine Decrees and a careful confession of the sins of Kilbogio; and then, having given out his text from the prophecy of Joel, he reverently closed the Bible and placed it on the seat behind him. His own reason for this proceeding was a desire for absolute security in enforcing his subject, and a painful remembrance of the disturbance in a south country church when he landed a Bible—with clasps—on the head of the precentor in the heat of a discourse defending the rejection of Esau. Our best and simplest actions—and Jeremiah was as simple as a babe—can be misconstrued, and the only dissentient from Saunderson's election insisted that the Bible had been deposited on the floor, and asserted that the object of this profanity was to give the preacher a higher standing in the pulpit. This malignant reading of circumstances might have wrought mischief—for Saunderson's gaunt figure did seem to grow in the pulpit—had it not been for the bold line of defence taken up by Mains.

"Gin he wanted tae stand high, wes it no tae preach the word? an' gin he wanted a soond foundation for his feet, what better could he get than the twa Testaments? Answer me that."

It was seen at once that no one could answer that, and the captious objector never quite recovered his position in the parish; while it is not the least of Kilbogio's boasting, in which the Auld Kirk will even join against Drumtochty, that they have a minister who not only does not read his sermons and does not need to quote his texts, but carries the whole Bible in at least three languages in his head, and once, as a proof thereof, preached with it below his feet.

Much was to be looked for from such a man; but even Mains, whetted by intercourse with Saunderson, was astonished at the sermon. It was a happy beginning to draw a parallel between the locusts of Joel and the mice of Kilbogio, and gave the preacher an opportunity of describing the appearance, habits, and destruction of the locusts, which he did solely from Holy Scripture, translating various passages afresh, and combining lights with marvellous ingenuity. This brief preface of half an hour, which was merely a stimulant for the Kilbogio appetite, led up to a thorough examination of physical judgments, during which both Bible and Church history were laid under liberal contribution. At this point the minister halted, and complimented the congregation on the attention they had given to the facts of the case, which were his first head, and suggested that before approaching the doctrine of visitations they might refresh themselves with a Psalm. The congregation were visibly impressed, and many made up their minds while singing

"That man hath perfect blessedness";

and while others thought it due to themselves to suspend judgment till they had tasted the doctrine, they afterwards confessed their full confidence. It goes without saying that he was immediately beyond the reach of the ordinary people on the second head, and even veterans in theology panted after him in vain, so that one of the elders, nodding assent to an exposure of the Manichaeian heresy, suddenly blushed as one who had played the hypocrite. Some professed to

have noticed a doctrine that had not been touched upon, but they never could give it a name, and it excited just admiration that a preacher, starting from a plague of mice, should have made a way by strictly scientific methods into the secret places of theology. Saunderson allowed his hearers a brief rest after the second head, and cheered them with the assurance that what was still before them would be easy to follow. It was the application of all that had gone before to the life of Kilbogie, and the preacher proceeded to convict the parish under each of the ten commandments—with the plague of mice ever in reserve to silence excuses—till the delighted congregation could have risen in a body and taken Saunderson by the hand for his fearlessness and faithfulness. Perhaps the extent and thoroughness of this monumental sermon can be best estimated by the fact that Claypots, father of the present tenant, who always timed his rest to fifty minutes exactly, thus overseeing both the introduction and application of the sermon, had a double portion, and even a series of supplementary dozes, till at last he sat upright through sheer satiety. It may also be offered as evidence that the reserve of peppermint held by mothers for their bairns was pooled, doles being furtively passed across pews to conspicuously needy families, and yet the last had gone before Saunderson finished.

Mains reported to the congregational meeting that the minister had been quiet for the rest of the day, but had offered to say something about Habakkuk to any evening gathering, and had cleared up at family worship some obscure points in the morning discourse. He also informed the neighbours that he had driven his guest all the way to Muirtown, and put him in an Edinburgh carriage with his own hands, since it had emerged that Saunderson, through absence of mind, had made his down journey by the triangular route of Dundee. It was quite impossible for Kilbogie to conceal their pride in electing such a miracle of learning, and their bearing in Muirtown was distinctly changed; but indeed they did not boast vainly about Jeremiah Saunderson, for his career was throughout on the level of that monumental sermon. When the Presbytery in the gaiety of their heart examined Saunderson to ascertain whether he was fully equipped for the work of the ministry, he professed the whole Old Testament in Hebrew, and MacWheep of Pitscowrie, who always asked the candidate to read the twenty-third Psalm, was beguiled by Jeremiah into the Book of Job, and reduced to the necessity of asking questions by indicating verbs with his finger. His Greek examination led to an argument between Jeremiah and Dr. Dowbiggin on the use of the aorist, from which the minister-elect of Kilbogie came out an easy first; and his sermons were heard to within measurable distance of the second head by an exact quorum of the exhausted court, who were kept by the clerk sitting at the door, and preventing MacWheep escaping. His position in the court was assured from the beginning, and fulfilled the function of an Encyclopaedia, with occasional amazing results, as when information was asked about some Eastern sect for whose necessities the Presbytery were asked to collect, and to whose warm piety affecting allusion was made, and Jeremiah showed clearly, with the reporters present, that the Cappadocians were guilty of a heresy beside which Morisonianism was an unsullied whiteness. His work as examiner-in-general for the court was a merciful failure, and encouraged the students of the district to return to their district court, who, on the mere rumour of him, had transferred themselves in a body to a Highland Presbytery, where the standard question in Philosophy used to be, "How many horns has a dilemma, and distinguish the one from the other." No man knew what the minister of Kilbogie might not ask—the student was only perfectly certain that it would be beyond his knowledge; but as Saunderson always gave the answer himself in the end, and imputed it to the student, anxiety was reduced to a minimum. Saunderson, indeed, was in the custom of passing all candidates and reporting them as marvels of erudition, whose only fault was a becoming modesty—which, however, had not concealed from his keen eye hidden treasures of learning. Beyond this sphere the good man's services were not used by a body of shrewd ecclesiastics, as the inordinate length of an ordination sermon had ruined a dinner prepared for the court by "one of our intelligent and large-hearted laymen," and it is still pleasantly told how Saunderson was invited to a congregational soirée—an ancient meeting, where the people ate oranges, and the speaker rallied the minister on being still unmarried—and discoursed, as a carefully chosen subject, on the Jewish feasts,—with illustrations from the Talmud,—till some one burst a paper-bag and allowed the feelings of the people to escape. When this history was passed round Muirtown Market, Kilbogie thought still more highly of their minister, and indicated their opinion of the other parish in severely theological language.

Standing at his full height he might have been six feet, but, with much poring over books and meditation, he had descended some two inches. His hair was long, not because he made any conscious claim to genius, but because he forgot to get it cut, and, with his flowing, untrimmed beard, was now quite grey. Within his clothes he was the merest skeleton, being so thin that his shoulder-blades stood out in sharp outline, and his hands were almost transparent. The redeeming feature in Saunderson was his eyes, which were large and eloquent, of a trustful, wistful hazel, the beautiful eyes of a dumb animal. Whether he was expounding doctrines charged with despair of humanity, or exalting, in rare moments, the riches of a Divine love in which he did not expect to share, or humbly beseeching his brethren to give him information on some point in scholarship no one knew anything about except himself, or stroking the hair of some little child sitting upon his knee, those eyes were ever simple, honest, and most pathetic. Young ministers coming to the Presbytery full of self-conceit and new views were arrested by their light shining through the glasses, and came in a year or two to have a profound regard for Saunderson, curiously compounded of amusement at his ways, which for strangeness were quite beyond imagination, admiration for his knowledge, which was amazing for its accuracy and comprehensiveness, respect for his honesty, which feared no conclusion, however repellent to flesh and blood, but chiefly of love for the unaffected and shining goodness of a man in whose

virgin soul neither self nor this world had any part. For years the youngsters of the Presbytery knew not how to address the minister of Kilbogie, since any one who had dared to call him Saunderson, as they said "Carmichael," and even "MacWheep," though he was elderly, would have been deposed, without delay, from the ministry—so much reverence at least was in the lads—and "Mister" attached to this personality would be like a silk hat on the head of an Eastern sage. Jenkins of Pitrodie always considered that he was inspired when he one day called Saunderson "Rabbi," and unto the day of his death Kilbogie was so called. He made protest against the title as being forbidden in the Gospels, but the lads insisted that it must be understood in the sense of scholar, whereupon Saunderson disowned it on the ground of his slender attainments. The lads saw the force of this objection, and admitted that the honourable word belonged by rights to MacWheep, who was a "gude body," but it was their fancy to assign it to Saunderson—whereat Saunderson yielded, only exacting a pledge that he should never be so called in public, lest all concerned be condemned for foolishness. When it was announced that the University of Edinburgh had resolved to confer the degree of D.D. on him for his distinguished learning and great services to theological scholarship, Saunderson, who was delighted when Dowbiggin of Muirtown got the honour for being an ecclesiastic, would have refused it for himself had not his boys gone out in a body and compelled him to accept. They also purchased a Doctor's gown and hood, and invested him with them in the name of Kilbogie two days before the capping. One of them saw that he was duly brought to the Tolbooth Kirk, where the capping ceremonial in those days took place. Another sent a list of Saunderson's articles to British and foreign theological and philological reviews, which filled half a column of the *Caledonian*, and drew forth a complimentary article from that exceedingly able and caustic paper, whose editor lost all his hair through sympathetic emotion the morning of the Disruption, and ever afterwards pointed out the faults of the Free Kirk with much frankness. The fame of Rabbi Saunderson was so spread abroad that a great cheer went up as he came in with the other Doctors elect, in which he cordially joined, considering it to be intended for his neighbour, a successful West-End clergyman, the author of a *Life of Dorcas* and other pleasing booklets. For some time after his boys said "Doctor" in every third sentence, and then grew weary of a too common title, and fell back on "Rabbi," by which he was known until the day of his death, and which is now engraved on his tombstone.

Saunderson's reputation for unfathomable learning and saintly simplicity was built up out of many incidents, and grew with the lapse of years to a solitary height in the big strath, so that no man would have dared to smile had the Free Kirk minister of Kilbogie appeared in Muirtown in his shirt-sleeves, and Kilbogie would only have been a trifle more conceited. Truly he was an amazing man, and, now that he is dead and gone, the last of his race, I wish some man of his profession had written his life, for the doctrine he taught and the way he lived will not be believed by the new generation. The arrival of his goods was more than many sermons to Kilbogie, and I had it from Mains' own lips. It was the kindly fashion of those days that the farmers carted the new minister's furniture from the nearest railway station, and as the railway to Kildrummie was not yet open, they had to go to Stormont Station on the north line; and a pleasant procession they made passing through Pitscowrie, ten carts in their best array, and drivers with a semi-festive air. Mr. Saunderson was at the station, having reached it, by some miracle, without mistake, and was in a condition of abject nervousness about the handling and conveyance of his belongings.



THE FARMERS CARTED THE NEW MINISTER'S FURNITURE FROM THE NEAREST RAILWAY STATION

[Illustration: THE FARMERS CARTED THE NEW MINISTER'S FURNITURE

FROM THE NEAREST RAILWAY STATION]

"You will be careful—exceeding careful," he implored; "if one of the boxes were allowed to descend hurriedly to the ground, the result to what is within would be disastrous. I am much afraid that the weight is considerable, but I am ready to assist"; and he got ready.

"Dinna pit yirsel intae a feery-farry (commotion)"—but Mains was distinctly pleased to see a little touch of worldliness, just enough to keep the new minister in touch with humanity. "It'll be queer stuff oor lads canna lift, an' a'll gie ye a warranty that the'll no be a cup o' the cheeny broken"; and then Saunderson conducted his congregation to the siding.

"Dod, man," remarked Mains to the station-master, examining a truck with eight boxes; "the manse 'ill no want for dishes at ony rate. But let's start on the furniture; whar hae ye got the rest o' the plenishing?"

"Naething mair? havers, man, ye dinna mean tae say they pack beds an' tables in boxes; a' doot there's a truck missin'." Then Mains went over where the minister was fidgeting beside his possessions.

"No, no," said Saunderson, when the situation was put before him, "it's all here. I counted the boxes, and I packed every box myself. That top one contains the fathers—deal gently with it; and the Reformation divines are just below it. Books are easily injured, and they feel it. I do believe there is a certain life in them, and ... and ... they don't like being ill-used"; and Jeremiah looked wistfully at the ploughmen.

"Div ye mean tae say," as soon as Mains had recovered, "that ye've brocht naethin' for the manse but bukes, naither bed nor bedding? Keep's a'," as the situation grew upon him, "whar are ye tae sleep, and what are ye tae sit on? An' div ye never eat? This croons a';" and Mains gazed at his new minister as one who supposed that he had taken Jeremiah's measure and had failed utterly.

"*Mea culpa*—it's ... my blame," and Saunderson was evidently humbled at this public exposure of his incapacity; "some slight furnishing will be expedient, even necessary, and I have a plan for book-shelves in my head; it is ingenious and convenient, and if there is a worker in wood ..."

"Come awa' tae the dog-cart, sir," said Mains, realizing that even Kilbogie did not know what a singular gift they had obtained, and that discussion on such sublunary matters as pots and pans was useless, not to say profane. So eight carts got a box each; one, Jeremiah's ancient kist of moderate dimensions; and the tenth—that none might be left unrecognised—a hand-bag that had been on the twelve years' probation with its master. The story grew as it passed westwards, and when it reached us we were given to understand that the Free Kirk minister of Kilbogie had come to his parish with his clothing in a paper parcel and twenty-four packing-cases filled with books, in as many languages—half of them dating from the introduction of printing, and fastened by silver clasps—and that if Drumtochty seriously desired to hear an intellectual sermon at a time, we must take our way through Tochty woods.

Mrs. Pitillo took the minister into her hands, and compelled him to accompany her to Muirtown, where she had him at her will for some time, so that she equipped the kitchen (fully), a dining-room (fairly), a spare bedroom (amply), Mr. Saunderson's own bedroom (miserably), and secured a table and two chairs for the study. This success turned her head. Full of motherly forethought, and having a keen remembrance that probationers always retired in the afternoon at Mains to think over the evening's address, and left an impress of the human form on the bed when they came down to tea, Mrs. Pitillo suggested that a sofa would be an admirable addition to the study. As soon as this piece of furniture, of a size suitable for his six feet, was pointed out to the minister, he took fright, and became quite unmanageable. He would not have such an article in his study on any account, partly because it would only feed a tendency to sloth—which, he explained, was one of his besetting sins—and partly because it would curtail the space available for books, which, he indicated, were the proper furniture of any room, but chiefly of a study. So great was his alarm, that he repented of too early concessions about the other rooms, and explained to Mrs. Pitillo that every inch of space must be rigidly kept for the overflow from the study, which he expected—if he were spared—would reach the garrets. Several times on their way back to Kilbogie, Saunderson looked wistfully at Mrs. Pitillo, and once opened his mouth as if to speak, from which she gathered that he was grateful for her kindness, but dared not yield any further to the luxuries of the flesh.

What this worthy woman endured in securing a succession of reliable house-keepers for Mr. Saunderson and over-seeing the interior of that remarkable home she was never able to explain to her own satisfaction, though she made many honest efforts, and one of her last intelligible utterances was a lamentable prophecy of the final estate of the Free Church manse of Kilbogie. Mr. Saunderson himself seemed at times to have some vague idea of her painful services, and once mentioned her name to Carmichael of Drumtochty in feeling terms. There had been some delay in providing for the bodily wants of the visitor after his eight miles' walk from the glen, and it seemed likely that he would be obliged to take his meal standing for want of a chair.

"While Mrs. Pitillo lived, I have a strong impression, almost amounting to certainty, that the

domestic arrangements of the manse were better ordered; she had the episcopal faculty in quite a conspicuous degree, and was, I have often thought, a woman of sound judgment.

"We were not able at all times to see eye to eye, as she had an unfortunate tendency to meddle with my books and papers, and to arrange them after an artificial fashion. This she called tidying, and, in its most extreme form, cleaning.

"With all her excellences, there was also in her what I have noticed in most women, a certain flavour of guile, and on one occasion, when I was making a brief journey through Holland and France in search of comely editions of the fathers, she had the books carried out to the garden and dusted. It was the space of two years before I regained mastery of my library again, and unto this day I cannot lay my hands on the service-book of King Henry VIII., which I had in the second edition, to say nothing of an original edition of Rutherford's *Lex Rex*.

"It does not become me, however, to reflect on the efforts of that worthy matron, for she was by nature a good woman, and if any one could be saved by good works, her place is assured. I was with her before she died, and her last words to me were, 'Tell Jean tae dust yir bukes aince in the sax months, and for ony sake keep ae chair for sittin' on.' It was not perhaps quite the testimony one would have desired in the circumstances, but yet, Mr. Carmichael, I have often thought that there was a spirit of ... of unselfishness, in fact, that showed the working of grace." Later in the same evening Mr. Saunderson's mind returned to his friend's spiritual state, for he entered into a long argument to show that while Mary was more spiritual, Martha must also have been within the Divine Election.

KILBOGIE MANSE

Ministers there were in the great strath so orderly that they kept their sealing-wax in one drawer and their string in another, while their sermons were arranged under the books of the Bible, and tied with green silk. Dr. Dowbiggin, though a dull man and of a heavy carriage, could find in an instant the original draft of a motion on instrumental music he made in the Presbytery of Muirtown in the year '59, and could also give the exact page in the blue-books for every word he had uttered in the famous case when he showed that the use of an harmonium to train MacWheep's choir was a return to the bondage of Old Testament worship. His collection of pamphlets was supposed to be unique, and was a terror to controversialists, no man knowing when a rash utterance on the bottomless mystery of "spiritual independence" might not be produced from the Doctor's coat-tail pocket. He retired to rest at 10.15, and rose at six, settling the subject of his next sermon on Sabbath evening, and finishing the first head before breakfast on Monday morning. He had three hats—one for funerals, one for marriages, one for ordinary occasions—and has returned from the Presbytery door to brush his coat. Morning prayers in Dr. Dowbiggin's house were at 8.5, and the wrath of the Doctor was so dangerous that one probationer staying at the manse, and not quite independent of influence, did not venture to undress, but snatched a fearful doze sitting upright on a cane-bottomed chair, lest he should not be in at the psalm. Young ministers of untidy habits regarded Dr. Dowbiggin's study with despair, and did not recover their spirits till they were out of Muirtown. Once only did this eminent man visit the manse of Kilbogie, and in favourable moments after dinner he would give his choicer experiences.

"It is my invariable custom to examine the bed to see that everything is in order, and any one sleeping in Kilbogie Manse will find the good of such a precaution. I trust that I am not a luxurious person—it would ill become one who came out in '43—but I have certainly become accustomed to the use of sheets. When I saw there were none on the bed, I declined to sleep without them, and I indicated my mind very distinctly on the condition of the manse.

"Would you believe it?" the Doctor used to go on. "Saunderson explained, as if it were a usual occurrence, that he had given away all the spare linen in his house to a girl that had to marry in ... urgent circumstances, and had forgotten to get more. And what do you think did he offer as a substitute for sheets?" No one could even imagine what might not occur to the mind of Saunderson.

"Towels, as I am an honourable man; a collection of towels, as he put it, 'skilfully attached together, might make a pleasant covering.' That is the first and last time I ever slept in the Free Church Manse of Kilbogie. As regards Saunderson's study, I will guarantee that the like of it cannot be found within Scotland;" and at the very thought of it that exact and methodical ecclesiastic realized the limitations of language.

His boys boasted of the Rabbi's study as something that touched genius in its magnificent disorderliness, and Carmichael was so proud of it that he took me to see it as to a shrine. One whiff of its atmosphere as you entered the door gave an appetite and raised the highest expectations. For any bookman can estimate a library by scent—if an expert he could even write out a catalogue of the books and sketch the appearance of the owner. Heavy odour of polished

mahogany, Brussels carpets, damask curtains, and tablecloths; then the books are kept within glass, consist of sets of standard works in half calf, and the owner will give you their cost wholesale to a farthing. Faint fragrance of delicate flowers, and Russia leather, with a hint of cigarettes; prepare yourself for a marvellous wall-paper, etchings, bits of oak, limited editions, and a man in a velvet coat. Smell of paste and cloth binding and general newness means yesterday's books and a reviewer racing through novels with a paper-knife. Those are only book-rooms by courtesy, and never can satisfy any one who has breathed the sacred air. It is a rich and strong spirit, not only filling the room, but pouring out from the door and possessing the hall, redeeming an opposite dining-room from grossness, and a more distant drawing-room from frivolity, and even lending a goodly flavour to bedrooms on upper floors. It is distilled from curious old duodecimos packed on high shelves out of sight, and blows over folios, with large clasps, that once stood in monastery libraries, and gathers a subtle sweetness from parchments that were illuminated in ancient scriptoriums that are now grass-grown, and it is fortified with good old musty calf. The wind was from the right quarter on the first day I visited Kilbogie Manse, and as we went up the garden walk the Rabbi's library already bade us welcome, and assured us of our reward for a ten-miles' walk.

Saunderson was perfectly helpless in all manner of mechanics—he could not drive a tack through anything except his own fingers, and had given up shaving at the suggestion of his elders—and yet he boasted, with truth, that he had got three times as many books into the study as his predecessor possessed in all his house. For Saunderson had shelved the walls from the floor to the ceiling, into every corner, and over the doors and above the windows, as well as below them. The wright had wished to leave the space clear above the mantelpiece.

"Ye'll be hanging Dr. Chalmers there, or maybe John Knox, and a bit clock'll be handy for letting ye ken the 'oors on Sabbath."

The Rabbi admitted that he had a Knox, but was full of a scheme for hanging him over his own history, which he considered both appropriate and convenient. As regards time, it was the last thing of which that worthy man desired to be reminded—going to bed when he could no longer see for weariness, and rising as soon as he awoke, taking his food when it was brought to him, and being conducted to church by the beadle after the last straggler was safely seated. He even cast covetous eyes upon the two windows, which were absurdly large, as he considered, but compromised matters by removing the shutters and filling up the vacant space with slender works of devotion. It was one of his conceits that the rising sun smote first on an À'Kempis, for this he had often noticed as he worked of a morning.

Book-shelves had long ago failed to accommodate Rabbi's treasures, and the floor had been bravely utilised. Islands of books, rugged and perpendicular, rose on every side; long promontories reached out from the shore, varied by bold headlands; and so broken and varied was that floor that the Rabbi was pleased to call it the Aegean Sea, where he had his Lesbos and his Samos. It is absolutely incredible, but it is all the same a simple fact, that he knew every book and its location, having a sense of the feel as well as the shape of his favourites. This was not because he had the faintest approach to orderliness, for he would take down twenty volumes and never restore them to the same place by any chance. It was a sort of motherly instinct by which he watched over them all, and even loved prodigals who wandered over all the study and then set off on adventurous journeys into distant rooms. The restoration of an emigrant to his lawful home was celebrated by a feast, in which, by a confusion of circumstances, the book played the part of the fatted calf, being read afresh from beginning to end. During his earlier and more agile years the Rabbi used to reach the higher levels of his study by wonderful gymnastic feats, but after two falls—one with three Ante-Nicene fathers in close pursuit—he determined to call in assistance. This he did after an impressive fashion. When he attended the roup at Pitfoodles—a day of historical prices—and purchased in open competition, at three times its value, a small stack ladder, Kilbogie was convulsed, and Mains had to offer explanations.

"He's cuttit aff seevin feet, and rins up it tae get his tapmaist bukes, but that's no' a'," and then Mains gave it to be understood that the rest of the things the minister had done with that ladder were beyond words. For in order that the rough wood might not scar the sensitive backs of the fathers, the Rabbi had covered the upper end with cloth, and for that purpose had utilised a pair of trousers. It was not within his ability in any way to reduce or adapt his material, so that those interesting garments remained in their original shape, and, as often as the ladder stood reversed, presented a very impressive and diverting spectacle. It was the inspiration of one of Carmichael's most successful stories—how he had done his best to console a woman on the death of her husband, and had not altogether failed, till she caught sight of the deceased's nether garments waving disconsolately on a rope in the garden, when she refused to be comforted. "Toom (empty) breeks tae me noo," and she wept profusely, "toom breeks tae me."

One of the great efforts of the Rabbi's life was to seat his visitors, since, beyond the one chair, accommodation had to be provided on the table, wheresoever there happened to be no papers, and on the ledges of the bookcases. It was pretty to see the host suggesting from a long experience those coigns of vantage he counted easiest and safest, giving warnings also of unsuspected danger in the shape of restless books that might either yield beneath one's feet or descend on one's head. Carmichael, however, needed no such guidance, for he knew his way about in the marvellous place, and at once made for what the boys called the throne of the fathers. This was a lordly seat, laid as to its foundation in mediaeval divines of ponderous content, but excellently finished with the Benedictine edition of St. Augustine, softened by two

cushions, one for a seat and another for a back. Here Carmichael used to sit in great content, smoking and listening while the Rabbi hunted an idea through Scripture with many authorities, or defended the wildest Calvinism with strange, learned arguments; from this place he would watch the Rabbi searching for a lost note on some passage of Holy Writ amid a pile of papers two feet deep, through which he burrowed on all-fours, or climbing for a book on the sky-line, to forget his errand and to expound some point of doctrine from the top of the ladder.



[Illustration: SEARCHING FOR A LOST NOTE]

"You're comfortable, John, and you do not want to put off your boots after all that travelling to and fro? Then I will search for Barbara, and secure some refreshment for our bodies"; and Carmichael watched the Rabbi depart with pity, for he was going on a troublous errand.

Housekeepers are, after beadles, the most wonderful functionaries in the ecclesiastical life of Scotland, and every species could be found within a day's journey of Drumtochty. Jenkins, indeed, suggested that a series of papers on Church institutions read at the clerical club should include one on housekeepers, and offered to supply the want, which was the reason why Dr. Dowbiggin refused to certify him to a vacancy, speaking of him as "frivolous and irresponsible." The class ranged from Sarah of Drumtochty, who could cook and knew nothing about ecclesiastical affairs, to that austere damsel, Margaret Meiklewham of Pitscowrie, who had never prepared an appetising meal in her life, but might have sat as an elder in the Presbytery.

Among all her class, Barbara MacCluckie stood an easy worst, being the most incapable, unsightly, evil-tempered, vexatious woman into whose hands an unmarried man had ever been delivered. MacWheep had his own trials, but his ruler saw that he had sufficient food and some comfort, but Barbara laid herself out to make the Rabbi's life a misery. He only obtained his meals as a favour, and an extra blanket had to be won by a week's abject humiliation. Fire was only allowed him at times, and he secured oil for his lamp by stratagem. Latterly he was glad to send strange ministers to Mains, and his boys alone forced lodgment in the manse. The settlement of Barbara was the great calamity of the Rabbi's life, and was the doing of his own good-nature. He first met her when she came to the manse one evening to discuss the unlawfulness of infant baptism and the duty of holding Sunday on Saturday, being the Jewish Sabbath. His interest deepened on learning that she had been driven from twenty-nine situations through the persecution of the ungodly; and on her assuring him that she had heard a voice in a dream bidding her take charge of Kilbogie Manse, the Rabbi, who had suffered many things at the hands of young girls given to lovers, installed Barbara, and began to repent that very day. A tall, bony, forbidding woman, with a squint, and a nose turning red as she stated from chronic indigestion, let it be said for her that she did not fall into the sins of her predecessors. It was indeed a pleasant jest in Kilbogie for four Sabbaths that she allowed a local Romeo, who knew not that his Juliet was gone, to make his adventurous way to her bedroom window, and then showed such an amazing visage that he was laid up for a week through the suddenness of his fall. What the Rabbi endured no one knew, but his boys understood that the only relief he had from Barbara's tyranny was on Sabbath evening when she stated her objections to his sermons, and threatened henceforward to walk into Muirtown in order to escape from unsound doctrine. On such occasions the Rabbi laid himself out for her instruction with much zest, and he knew when he had produced an impression, for then he went supperless to bed. Between this militant spirit and the boys there was an undying feud, and Carmichael was not at all hurt to hear her frank references to himself.



[Illustration: THE SUDDENNESS OF HIS FALL]

"What need he come stravagin' doon frae Drumtochty for? it wud set him better tae wait on his ain fouk. A licht-headed fellow, they say as kens; an' as for his doctrine—weel, maybe it'll dae for Drumtochty.

"Tea? Did ye expect me tae hae biling water at this 'oor o' the nicht? My word, the money wud flee in this hoose gin a' wesna here. Milk'll dae fine for yon birkie: he micht be gled tae get onything, sorning on a respectable manse every ither week."

"You will pardon our humble provision"—this is how the Rabbi prepared Carmichael; "we have taken my worthy Abigail unawares, and she cannot do for us what in other circumstances would be her desire. She has a thorn in the flesh which troubles her, and makes her do what she would not, but I am convinced that her heart is right."

That uncompromising woman took no notice of Drumtochty, but busied herself in a search for the Rabbi's bag, which he insisted had been brought home from Muirtown that morning, and which was at last found covered with books.

"Do not open it at present, Barbara; you can identify the contents later if it be necessary, but I am sure they are all right"; and the Rabbi watched Barbara's investigations with evident anxiety.

"Maybe ye hae brocht back what ye started wi', but gin ye hev, it's the first time a' can mind. Laist sacrament at Edinburgh ye pickit up twal books, ae clothes-brush, an' a crochet cover for a chair, an' left a'thing that belonged tae ye."

"It was an inadvertence; but I obtained a drawer for my own use this time, and I was careful to pack its contents into the bag, leaving nothing." But the Rabbi did not seem over-confident.

"There's nae question that ye hev filled the pack," said Barbara, with much deliberation and an ominous calmness; "but whether wi' yir ain gear or some ither body's, a'll leave ye tae judge yirsel. A'll juist empty the bag on the bukes"; and Barbara selected a bank of Puritans for the display of her master's spoil.

"Ae slipbody (bodice), weel hemmed and gude stuff—ye didna tak' that wi' ye, at ony rate; twa pillow-slips—they'll come in handy, oor ain are wearin' thin; ae pair o' sheets—'ll just dae for the next trimmie that ye want tae set up in her hoose; this'll be a bolster-slip, a'm judgin'—"

"It must be the work of Satan," cried the poor Rabbi, who constantly saw the hand of the great enemy in the disorder of his study. "I cannot believe that my hands packed such garments in place of my own."

"Ye'll be satisfied when ye read the name; it's plain eneuch; ye needna gang dodderin' aboot here and there lookin' for yir glasses; there's twa pair on your head already"; for it was an hour of triumph to Barbara's genial soul.

"It's beyond understanding," murmured the Rabbi. "I must have mistaken one drawer for another in the midst of meditation"; and then, when Barbara had swept out of the room with the varied linen on her arm, "This is very humiliating, John, and hard to bear."

"Nonsense, Rabbi; it's one of the finest things you have ever done. Half a dozen journeys of that kind would refurbish the manse; it's just a pity you can't annex a chair"; but he saw that the good man was sorely vexed.

"You are a good lad, John, and it is truly marvellous what charity I have received at the hands of young men who might have scorned and mocked me. God knows how my heart has been filled with gratitude, and I ... have mentioned your names in my unworthy prayers, that God may do to you all according to the kindness ye have shown unto me."

It was plain that this lonely, silent man was much moved, and Carmichael did not speak.

"People consider that I am ignorant of my failings and weaknesses, and I can bear witness with a clear conscience that I am not angry when they smile and nod the head; why should I be? But, John, it is known to myself only, and Him before whom all hearts are open, how great is my suffering in being among my neighbours as a sparrow upon the house-top.

"May you never know, John, what it is to live alone and friendless till you lose the ways of other men and retire within yourself, looking out on the multitude passing on the road as a hermit from his cell, and knowing that some day you will die alone, with none to ... give you a draught of water!"

"Rabbi, Rabbi,"—for Carmichael was greatly distressed at the woe in the face opposite him, and his heart was tender that night,—“why should you have lived like that? Do not be angry, but ... did God intend ... it cannot be wrong ... I mean ... God did give Eve to Adam."

"Laddie, why do ye speak with fear and a faltering voice? Did I say aught against that gracious gift or the holy mystery of love, which is surely the sign of the union betwixt God and the soul, as is set forth after a mystical shape in the Song of Songs? But it was not for me—no, not for me. I complain not, neither have I vexed my soul. He doeth all things well."

"But, dear Rabbi"—and Carmichael hesitated, not knowing where he stood.

"Ye ask me why"—the Rabbi anticipated the question—"and I will tell you plainly, for my heart has ever gone forth to you. For long years I found no favour in the eyes of the Church, and it seemed likely I would be rejected from the ministry as a man useless and unprofitable. How could I attempt to win the love of any maiden, since it did not appear to be the will of God that I should ever have a place of habitation? It consisted not with honour, for I do hold firmly that no man hath any right to seek unto himself a wife till he have a home."

"But ..."

"Afterwards, you would say. Ah, John! then had I become old and unsightly, not such a one as women could care for. It would have been cruel to tie a maid for life to one who might only be forty years in age, but was as seventy in his pilgrimage, and had fallen into unlovely habits."

Then the Rabbi turned on Carmichael his gentle eyes, that were shining with tears.

"It will be otherwise with you, and so let it be. May I live to see you rejoicing with the wife of your youth!"

So it came to pass that it was to this unlikely man Carmichael told his love for Kate Carnegie and what like Kate was, and he was amazed at the understanding of the Rabbi, as well as his sympathy and toleration.

"A maid of spirit—and that is an excellent thing; and any excess will be tamed by life. Only see to it that ye agree in that which lieth beneath all churches and maketh souls one in God. May He prosper you in your wooing as He did the patriarch Jacob, and far more abundantly!"

Very early in the morning Carmichael awoke, and being tempted by the sunrise, arose and went downstairs. As he came near the study door he heard a voice in prayer, and knew that the Rabbi had been all night in intercession.

"Thou hast denied me wife and child; deny me not Thyself.... A stranger Thou hast made me among men; refuse me not a place in the City.... Deal graciously with this lad who has been to me as a son in the Gospel.... He has not despised an old man; put not his heart to confusion...."

Carmichael crept upstairs again, but not to sleep, and at breakfast he pledged the Rabbi to come up some day and see Kate Carnegie.

THE RABBI AS CONFESSOR

One day Carmichael, who had quarrelled with Kate over Mary Queen of Scots and had lost

hope, came to a good resolution suddenly, and went down to see Rabbi Saunderson—the very thought of whose gentle, patient, selfless life was a rebuke and a tonic.

When two tramps held conference on the road, and one indicated to the other visibly that any gentleman in temporary distress would be treated after a Christian fashion at a neighbouring house, Carmichael, who had been walking in a dream since he passed the Lodge, knew instantly that he must be near the Free Kirk manse of Kilbogie. The means of communication between the members of the nomadic profession is almost perfect in its frequency and accuracy, and Saunderson's manse was a hedge-side word. Not only did all the regular travellers by the north road call on their going up in spring and their coming down in autumn, but habitués of the east coast route were attracted and made a circuit to embrace so hospitable a home, and even country vagrants made their way from Dunleith and down through Glen Urtach to pay their respects to the Rabbi. They had particular directions to avoid Barbara—expressed in cypher on five different posts in the vicinity, and enforced in picturesque language, of an evening—and they were therefore careful to waylay the Rabbi on the road, or enter his study boldly from the front. The humbler members of the profession contented themselves with explaining that they had once been prosperous tradesmen, and were now walking to Muirtown in search of work—receiving their alms in silence, with diffidence and shame; but those in a higher walk came to consult the Rabbi on Bible difficulties, which were threatening to shake their faith, and departed much relieved—with a new view of Lot's wife, as well as a suit of clothes the Rabbi had only worn three times.

"You have done kindly by me in calling"—the vagabond had finished his story and was standing, a very abject figure, among the books—"and in giving me the message from your friend. I am truly thankful that he is now labouring—in iron, did you say?—and I hope he may be a cunning artificer.

"You will not set it down to carelessness that I cannot quite recall the face of your friend, for, indeed, it is my privilege to see many travellers, and there are times when I may have been a minister to them on their journeys, as I would be to you also if there be anything in which I can serve you. It grieves me to say that I have no clothing that I might offer you; it happens that a very worthy man passed here a few days ago most insufficiently clad and ... but I should not have alluded to that; my other garments, save what I wear, are ... kept in a place of ... safety by my excellent housekeeper, and she makes their custody a point of conscience; you might put the matter before her.... Assuredly it would be difficult, and I crave your pardon for putting you in an ... embarrassing position; it is my misfortune to have to-day neither silver nor gold,"—catching sight of Carmichael in the passage, "This is a Providence. May I borrow from you, John, some suitable sum for our brother here who is passing through adversity?"



[Illustration: "SOME SUITABLE SUM FOR OUR BROTHER HERE WHO IS PASSING THROUGH ADVERSITY"]

"Do not be angry with me, John"—after the tramp had departed, with five shillings in hand and much triumph over Carmichael on his face—"nor speak bitterly of our fellow-men. Verily theirs is a hard lot who have no place to lay their head, and who journey in weariness from city to city. John, I was once a stranger and a wayfarer, wandering over the length and breadth of the land. Nor had I a friend on earth till my feet were led to the Mains, where my heart was greatly refreshed, and now God has surrounded me with young men of whose kindness I am not worthy; wherefore it becometh me to show mercy unto others"; and the Rabbi looked at Carmichael with

such sweetness that the lad's sullenness began to yield, although he made no sign.

"Moreover," and the Rabbi's voice took a lower tone, "as often as I look on one of those men of the highways, there cometh to me a vision of Him who was an outcast of the people, and albeit some may be as Judas, peradventure one might beg alms of me, a poor sinful man, some day, and lo it might be ... the Lord himself in a saint"; and the Rabbi bowed his head and stood awhile much moved.

"Rabbi," after a pause, during which Carmichael's face had changed, "you are incorrigible. For years we have been trying to make you a really good and wise man, both by example and precept, and you are distinctly worse than when we began—more lazy, miserly, and uncharitable. It is very disheartening.

"Can you receive another tramp and give him a bed? for I am in low spirits, and so, like every other person in trouble, I come to you, you dear old saint, and already I feel a better man."

"Receive you, John? It is doubtless selfish, but it is not given to you to know how I weary to see your faces, and we shall have much converse together—there are some points I would like your opinion on—but first of all, after a slight refreshment, we must go to Mains: behold the aid to memory I have designed"—and the Rabbi pointed to a large square of paper hung above Chrysostom, with "Farewell, George Pitillo, 3 o'clock." "He is the son's son of my benefactor, and he leaves his father's house this day to go into a strange land across the sea: I had a service last night at Mains, and expounded the departure of Abraham, but only slightly, being somewhat affected through the weakness of the flesh. There was a covenant made between the young man and myself, that I should meet him at the crossing of the roads to-day, and it is in my mind to leave a parable with him against the power of this present world."

Then the Rabbi fell into a meditation till the dog-cart came up, Mains and his wife in the front and George alone in the back, making a brave show of indifference.

"George," said the Rabbi, looking across the field and speaking as to himself, "we shall not meet again in this world, and in a short space they will bury me in Kilbogie kirkyard, but it will not be in me to lie still for thinking of the people I have loved. So it will come to pass that I may rise—you have ears to understand, George—and I will inquire of him that taketh charge of the dead about many and how it fares with them."



[Illustration: "WE SHALL NOT MEET AGAIN IN THIS WORLD."]

"And George Pitillo, what of him, Andrew?"

"'Oh, it's a peety you didna live langer, Mr. Saunderson, for George hes risen in the warld and made a great fortune.'

"How does it go with his soul, Andrew?"

"'Well, you see, Mister Saunderson, George hes hed many things to think about, and he maybe hasna hed time for releegion yet, but nae doot he'll be turnin' his mind that wy soon.'

"Poor George, that I baptized and admitted to the Sacrament and ... loved: exchanged his

soul for the world."

The sun was setting fast, and the landscape—bare stubble-fields, leafless trees, still water, long, empty road—was of a blood-red colour fearsome to behold, so that no one spake, and the horse chafing his bit made the only sound.

Then the Rabbi began again.

"And George Pitillo—tell me, Andrew?"

"'Weel, ye see, Mister Saunderson, ye wud be sorry for him, for you and he were aye chief; he's keepit a gude name an' workit hard, but hesna made muckle o' this warld.'

"And his soul, Andrew?"

"'Oo, that's a' richt; gin we a' hed as gude a chance for the next warld as George Pitillo we might be satisfied.'

"That is enough for his old friend; hap me over again, Andrew, and I'll rest in peace till the trumpet sound."

Carmichael turned aside, but he heard something desperately like a sob from the back of the dog-cart, and the Rabbi saying, "God be with you, George, and as your father's father received me in the day of my sore discouragement, so may the Lord God of Israel open a door for you in every land whithersoever you go, and bring you in at last through the gates into the city." The Rabbi watched George till the dog-cart faded away into the dusk of the winter's day, and they had settled for the night in their places among the books before the Rabbi spoke.

It was with a wistful tenderness that he turned to Carmichael and touched him slightly with his hand, as was a fashion with the Rabbi.

"You will not think me indifferent to your welfare because I have not inquired about your affairs, for indeed this could not be, but the going forth of this lad has tried my heart. Is there aught, John, that it becometh you to tell me, and wherein my years can be of any avail?"

"It is not about doctrine I wished to speak to you, Rabbi, although I am troubled thus also, but about ... you remember our talk."

"About the maid—surely; I cannot forget her, and indeed often think of her since the day you brought me to her house and made me known unto her, which was much courtesy to one who is fitter for a book-room than a woman's company.

"She is fair of face and hath a pleasant manner, and surely beauty and a winsome way are from God; there seemed also a certain contempt of baseness and a strength of will which are excellent. Perhaps my judgment is not even because Miss Carnegie was gracious to me, and you know, John, it is not in me to resist kindness, but this is how she seems to me. Has there been trouble between you?"

"Do not misunderstand me, Rabbi; I have not spoken one word of love to . . . Miss Carnegie, nor she to me; but I love her, and I thought that perhaps she saw that I loved her. But now it looks as if ... what I hoped is never to be"; and Carmichael told how Kate had risen and left the Church in hot wrath because he had compared Queen Mary to Jezebel.

"Is it not marvellous," mused the Rabbi, looking into the fire, "how one woman, who was indeed at the time little more than a girl, did carry men, many of them wise and clever, away as with a flood, and still divideth scholars and even ... friends?"

"It was not fitting that Miss Carnegie should have left God's house in heat of temper, and it seemeth to us that she hath a wrong reading of history, but it is surely good that she hath her convictions, and holdeth them fast like a brave maid.

"Is it not so, John, that friends, and doubtless also ... lovers, have been divided by conscience, and have been on opposite sides in the great conflict, and doth not this show how much of conscience there is among men?"

"It may be this dispute will not divide you—being now, as it were, more an argument of the schools than a matter of principle—but if it should appear that you are far apart on the greater matters of faith, then ... you will have a heavy cross to carry. But it is my mind that the heart of the maiden is right, and that I may some day see her . . . in your home, whereat my eyes would be glad."

The Rabbi was so taken up with the matter that he barely showed Carmichael a fine copy of John of Damascus he had secured from London, and went out of his course at worship to read, as well as to expound with much feeling, the story of Ruth the Moabitess, showing conclusively that she had in her a high spirit, and that she was designed of God to be a strength to the house of David. He was also very cheerful in the morning, and bade Carmichael good-bye at Tochtly woods with encouraging words. He also agreed to assist his boy at the Drumtochtly sacrament.

It was evident that the Rabbi's mind was much set on this visit, but Carmichael did not for one moment depend upon his remembering the day, and so Burnbrae started early on the Saturday with his dog-cart to bring Saunderson up and deposit him without fail in the Free Kirk manse of Drumtochty. Six times that day did the minister leave his "action" sermon and take his way to the guest-room, carrying such works as might not be quite unsuitable for the old scholar's perusal, and arranging a lamp of easy management, that the night hours might not be lost. It was late in the afternoon before the Rabbi was delivered at the manse, and Burnbrae gave explanations next day at the sacramental dinner.

"It wes just ten when a' got tae the manse o' Kilbogie, an' his hoosekeeper didna ken whar her maister wes; he nicht be in Kildrummie by that time, she said, or half-wy tae Muirtown. So a' set oot an' ransackit the parish till a' got him, an' gin he wesna sittin' in a bothie takin' brose wi' the plowmen, an' expoundin' Scripture a' the time.

"He startit on the ancient martyrs afore we were half a mile on the road, and he gied ae testimony aifter anither, an' he wesna within sicht o' the Reformation when we cam' tae the hooses; a'll no deny that a' let the mare walk bits o' the road, for a' cud hae heard him a' nicht; ma bluid's warmer yet, freends."

The Rabbi arrived in great spirits, and refused to taste meat till he had stated the burden of his sermon for the morrow.

"If the Lord hath opened our ears the servant must declare what has been given him, but I prayed that the message sent through me to your flock, John, might be love. It hath pleased the Great Shepherd that I should lead the sheep by strange paths, but I desired that it be otherwise when I came for the first time to Drumtochty.

"Two days did I spend in the woods, for the stillness of winter among the trees leaveth the mind disengaged for the Divine word, and the first day my soul was heavy as I returned, for this only was laid upon me, 'vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.' And, John, albeit God would doubtless have given me strength according to His will, yet I was loath to bear this awful truth to the people of your charge.

"Next day the sun was shining pleasantly in the wood, and it came to me that clouds had gone from the face of God, and as I wandered among the trees a squirrel sat on a branch within reach of my hand and did not flee. Then I heard a voice, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.'

"It was, in an instant, my hope that this might be God's word by me, but I knew not it was so till the Evangel opened up on all sides, and I was led into the outgoings of the eternal love after so moving a fashion that I dared to think that grace might be effectual even with me ... with me.

"God opened my mouth on Sabbath on this text unto my own flock, and the word was not void. It is little that can be said on sovereign love in two hours and it may be a few minutes; yet even this may be more than your people are minded to bear. So I shall pretermit certain notes on doctrine; for you will doubtless have given much instruction on the purposes of God, and very likely may be touching on that mystery in your action sermon."

During the evening the Rabbi was very genial—tasting Sarah's viands with relish, and comparing her to Rebekah, who made savoury meat, urging Carmichael to smoke without scruple, and allowing himself to snuff three times, examining the bookshelves with keen appreciation, and finally departing with three volumes of modern divinity under his arm, to reinforce the selection in his room, "lest his eyes should be held waking in the night watches." He was much overcome by the care that had been taken for his comfort, and at the door of his room blest his boy: "May the Lord give you the sleep of His beloved, and strengthen you to declare all His truth on the morrow." Carmichael sat by his study fire for a while and went to bed much cheered, nor did he dream that there was to be a second catastrophe in the Free Kirk of Drumtochty which would be far sadder than the offending of Miss Carnegie about Mary Queen of Scots, and would leave in one heart lifelong regret.

THE FEAR OF GOD

It was the way of the Free Kirk that the assisting minister at the Sacrament should sit behind the Communion Table during the sermon, and the congregation, without giving the faintest sign of observation, could estimate its effect on his face. When Dr. Dowbiggin composed himself to listen as became a Church leader of substantial build—his hands folded before him and his eyes fixed on the far window—and was so arrested by the opening passage of Cunningham's sermon on Justification by Faith that he visibly started, and afterwards sat sideways with his ears cocked, Drumtochty, while doubtful whether any Muirtown man could appreciate the subtlety of their minister, had a higher idea of the Doctor; and when the Free Kirk minister of Kildrummie—a

stout man and given to agricultural pursuits—went fast asleep under a masterly discussion of the priesthood of Melchizedek, Drumtochty's opinion of the intellectual condition of Kildrummie was confirmed beyond argument.

During his ministry of more than twenty years the Rabbi had never preached at Drumtochty—being fearful that he might injure the minister who invited him, or that he might be so restricted in time as to lead astray by ill-balanced statements—and as the keenest curiosity would never have induced any man to go from the Glen to worship in another parish, the Free Kirk minister of Kilbogie was still unjudged in Drumtochty. They were not sorry to have the opportunity at last, for they had suffered not a little at the hands of Kilbogie in past years, and the coming event disturbed the flow of business at Muirtown market.

"Ye're tae hae the Doctor at laist," Mains said to Netherton—letting the luck-penny on a transaction in seed-corn stand over—"an' a'm jidgin' the time's no been lost. He's plainer an' easier tae follow than he wes at the affgo. Ma word"—contemplating the exercise before the Glen—"but ye'll aye get eneuch here and there tae cairry hame." Which shows what a man the Rabbi was, that on the strength of his possession a parish like Kilbogie could speak after this fashion to Drumtochty.

"He'll hae a fair trial, Mains"—Netherton's tone was distinctly severe—"an' mony a trial he's hed in his day, they say: wes't three-an'-twenty kirks he preached in afore ye took him? But mind ye, length's nae standard in Drumtochty; na, na, it's no hoo muckle wind a man hes, but what like is the stuff that comes. It's bushels doon bye, but it's wecht up bye."

Any prejudice against the Rabbi, created by the boasting of a foolish parish not worthy of him, was reduced by his venerable appearance before the pulpit, and quite dispelled by his unfeigned delight in Carmichael's conduct of the "preliminaries." Twice he nodded approval to the reading of the hundredth Psalm, and although he stood with covered face during the prayer, he emerged full of sympathy. As his boy read the fifty-third of Isaiah the old man was moved well-nigh to tears, and on the giving out of the text, from the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Rabbi closed his eyes with great expectation, as one about to be fed with the finest of the wheat.

Carmichael has kept the sermon unto this day, and as often as he finds himself growing hard or supercilious, reads it from beginning to end. It is his hair-shirt, to be worn from time to time next his soul for the wrongness in it and the mischief it did. He cannot understand how he could have said such things on a Sacrament morning and in the presence of the Rabbi, but indeed they were inevitable. When two tides meet there is ever a cruel commotion, and ships are apt to be dashed on the rocks, and Carmichael's mind was in a "jabble" that day. The new culture, with its wider views of God and man, was fighting with the robust Calvinism in which every Scot is saturated, and the result was neither peace nor charity. Personally the lad was kindly and good-natured; intellectually he had become arrogant, intolerant, acrid, flinging out at old-fashioned views, giving quite unnecessary challenges, arguing with imaginary antagonists. It has ever seemed to me, although I suppose that history is against me, that if it be laid on any one to advocate a new view that will startle people, he ought of all men to be conciliatory and persuasive; but Carmichael was, at least in this time of fermentation, very exasperating and pugnacious, and so he drove the Rabbi to the only hard action of his life, wherein the old man suffered most, and which may be said to have led to his death. Carmichael, like the Rabbi, had intended to preach that morning on the love of God, and thought he was doing so with some power. What he did was to take the Fatherhood of God and use it as a stick to beat Pharisees with, and under Pharisees it appeared as if he included every person who still believed in the inflexible action of the moral laws and the austere majesty of God. Many good things he no doubt said, but each had an edge, and it cut deeply into people of the old school. Had he seen the Rabbi, it would not have been possible for him to continue; but he only was conscious of Lachlan Campbell, with whom he had then a feud, and who, he imagined, had come to criticise him. So he went on his rasping way that Sacrament morning, as when one harrows the spring earth with iron teeth, exciting himself with every sentence to fresh crudities of thought and extravagances of opposition. But it only flashed on him that he had spoken foolishly when he came down from the pulpit, and found the Rabbi a shrunken figure in his chair before the Holy Table.

Discerning people, like Elspeth Macfadyen, saw the whole tragedy from beginning to end, and felt the pity of it keenly. For a while the Rabbi waited with fond confidence—for was not he to hear the best-loved of his boys?—and he caught eagerly at a gracious expression, as if it had fallen from one of the fathers. Anything in the line of faith would have pleased the Rabbi that day, who was as a little child, and full of charity, in spite of his fierce doctrines. By-and-by the light died away from his eyes as when a cloud comes over the face of the sun and the Glen grows cold and dreary. He opened his eyes and was amazed, looking at the people and questioning them what had happened to their minister. Suddenly he flushed as a person struck by a friend, and then, as one blow followed another, he covered his face with both hands, sinking lower and lower in his chair, till even that decorous people were almost shaken in their attention.

When Carmichael gave him the cup in the Sacrament the Rabbi's hand shook and he spilled some drops of the wine upon his beard, which all that day showed like blood on the silvery whiteness. Afterwards he spake in his turn to the communicants, and distinguished the true people of God from the multitude—to whom he held out no hope—by so many and stringent marks that Donald Menzies refused the Sacrament with a lamentable groan. And when the Sacrament was over, and the time came for Carmichael to shake hands with the assisting

minister in the vestry, the Rabbi had vanished, and he had no speech with him till they went through the garden together—very bleak it seemed in the winter dusk—unto the sermon that closed the services of the day.



[Illustration: WHEN CARMICHAEL GAVE HIM THE CUP IN THE SACRAMENT.]

"God's hand is heavy in anger on us both this day, John," and Carmichael was arrested by the awe and sorrow in the Rabbi's voice, "else ... you had not spoken as you did this forenoon, nor would necessity be laid on me to speak ... as I must this night.

"His ways are all goodness and truth, but they are oftentimes encompassed with darkness, and the burden He has laid on me is ... almost more than I can bear; it will be heavy for you also.

"You will drink the wine of astonishment this night, and it will be strange if you do not ... turn from the hand that pours it out, but you will not refuse the truth or ... hate the preacher"; and at the vestry door the Rabbi looked wistfully at Carmichael.

During the interval the lad had been ill at ease, suspecting from the Rabbi's manner at the Table, and the solemnity of his address, that he disapproved of the action sermon, but he did not for a moment imagine that the situation was serious. It is one of the disabilities of good-natured and emotional people, without much deepness of earth, to belittle the convictions and resolutions of strong natures, and to suppose that they can be talked away by a few pleasant, coaxing words.

The Rabbi had often yielded to Carmichael and his other boys in the ordinary affairs of life—in meat and drink and clothing, even unto the continuance of his snuffing. He had been most manageable and pliable—as a child in their hands—and so Carmichael was quite confident that he could make matters right with the old man about a question of doctrine as easily as about the duty of a midday meal. Certain bright and superficial people will only learn by some solitary experience that faith is reserved in friendship, and that the most heroic souls are those which count all things loss—even the smile of those they love—for the eternal. For a moment Carmichael was shaken as if a new Rabbi were before him; then he remembered the study of Kilbogie, and all things that had happened therein, and his spirits rose.

"How dare you suggest such wickedness, Rabbi, that any of us should ever criticise or complain of anything you say? Whatever you give us will be right, and do us good, and in the evening you will tell me all I said wrong."

Saunderson looked at Carmichael for ten seconds as one who has not been understood, and sighed. Then he went down the kirk after the beadle, and the people marked how he walked like a man who was afraid he might fall, and, turning a corner, he supported himself on the end of a pew. As he crept up the pulpit stairs Elspeth gave her husband a look, and, although well accustomed to the slowness of his understanding, was amazed that he did not catch the point. Even a man might have seen that this was not the same minister that came in to the Sacrament with hope in his very step.

"A'm no here tae say 'that a' kent what wes comin'"—Elspeth, like all experts, was strictly truthful—"for the like o' that wes never heard in Drumtochty, and noo that Doctor Saunderson is awa', will never be heard again in Scotland. A' jaloused that vials wud be opened an' a' wesna wrang, but ma certes"—and that remarkable woman left you to understand that no words in

human speech could even hint at the contents of the vials.

When the Rabbi gave out his text, "Vessels of wrath," in a low, awestruck voice, Carmichael began to be afraid, but after a little he chid himself for foolishness. During half an hour the Rabbi traced the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty through Holy Scripture with a characteristic wealth of allusion to Fathers ancient and reforming, and once or twice he paused, as if he would have taken up certain matters at greater length, but restrained himself, simply asserting the Pauline character of St. Augustine's thinking, and exposing the looseness of Clement of Alexandria with a wave of the hand, as one hurrying on to his destination.

"Dear old Rabbi"—Carmichael congratulated himself in his pew—"what need he have made so many apologies for his subject? He is going to enjoy himself, and he is sure to say something beautiful before he is done." But he was distinctly conscious all the same of a wish that the Rabbi were done and all ... well, uncertainty over. For there was a note of anxiety, almost of horror, in the Rabbi's voice, and he had not let the Fathers go so lightly unless under severe constraint. What was it? Surely he would not attack their minister in face of his people.... The Rabbi do that, who was in all his ways a gentleman? Yet ... and then the Rabbi abruptly quitted historical exposition and announced that he would speak on four heads. Carmichael, from his corner behind the curtains, saw the old man twice open his mouth as if to speak, and when at last he began he was quivering visibly, and he had grasped the outer corners of the desk with such intensity that the tassels which hung therefrom—one of the minor glories of the Free Kirk—were held in the palm of his hand, the long red tags escaping from between his white wasted fingers. A pulpit lamp came between Carmichael and the Rabbi's face, but he could see the straining hand, which did not relax till it was lifted in the last awful appeal, and the white and red had a gruesome fascination. It seemed as if one had clutched a cluster of full, rich, tender grapes and was pressing them in an agony till their life ran out in streams of blood, and dripped upon the heads of the choir sitting beneath, in their fresh, hopeful youth. And it also came to Carmichael with pathetic conviction even then that every one was about to suffer, but the Rabbi more than them all together. While the preacher was strengthening his heart for the work before him, Carmichael's eye was attracted by the landscape that he could see through the opposite window. The ground sloped upwards from the kirk to a pine-wood that fringed the great moor, and it was covered with snow, on which the moon was beginning to shed her faint, weird light. Within, the light from the upright lamps was falling on the ruddy, contented faces of men and women and little children, but without it was one cold, merciless whiteness, like unto the justice of God, with black shadows of judgment.

"This is the message which I have to deliver unto you in the name of the Lord, and even as Jonah was sent to Nineveh after a strange discipline with a word of mercy, so am I constrained against my will to carry a word of searching and trembling.

"First"—and between the heads the Rabbi paused as one whose breath had failed him—"every man belongs absolutely to God by his creation.

"Second. The purpose of God about each man precedes his creation.

"Third. Some are destined to Salvation, and some to Damnation.

"Fourth"—here the hard breathing became a sob—"each man's lot is unto the glory of God."

It was not only skilled theologians like Lachlan Campbell and Burnbrae, but even mere amateurs who understood that they were that night to be conducted to the farthest limit of Calvinism, and that, whoever fell behind through the hardness of the way, their guide would not flinch. As the Rabbi gave the people a brief space wherein to grasp his heads in their significance, Carmichael remembered a vivid incident in the Presbytery of Muirtown, when an English evangelist had addressed that reverend and austere court with exhilarating confidence—explaining the extreme simplicity of the Christian faith, and showing how a minister ought to preach. Various good men were delighted, and asked many questions of the evangelist—who had kept a baby-linen shop for twenty years, and was unspoiled by the slightest trace of theology—but the Rabbi arose and demolished his "teaching," convicting him of heresy at every turn, till there was not left one stone upon another.

"But surely fear belongs to the Old Testament dispensation and is now done away with," said the unabashed little man to the Rabbi afterwards. "'Rejoice,' you know, my friend, 'and again I say, Rejoice'—that is the New Testament note."

"If it be the will of God that such a man as I should ever stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, then this tongue will be lifted with the best, but so long as my feet are still in the fearful pit it becometh me to bow my head."

"Then you don't believe in assurance?" But already the evangelist was quailing before the Rabbi.

"Verily there is no man that hath not heard of that precious gift, and none who does not covet it greatly, but there be two degrees of assurance"—here the Rabbi looked sternly at the happy, rotund little figure—"and it is with the first you must begin, and what you need to get is assurance of your damnation."

One of the boys read an account of this incident—thinly veiled—in a reported address of the evangelist, in which the Rabbi—being, as it was inferred, beaten in Scriptural argument—was very penitent and begged his teacher's pardon with streaming tears. What really happened was different, and so absolutely conclusive that Doctor Dowbiggin gave it as his opinion "that a valuable lesson had been read to unauthorized teachers of religion."

Carmichael recognised the same note in the sermon and saw another man than he knew, as the Rabbi, in a low voice, without heat or declamation, with frequent pauses and laboured breathing, as of one toiling up a hill, argued the absolute supremacy of God and the utter helplessness of man. One hand ever pressed the grapes, but with the other the old man wiped the perspiration that rolled in beads down his face. A painful stillness fell on the people as they felt themselves caught in the meshes of this inexorable net and dragged ever nearer to the abyss. Carmichael, who had been leaning forward in his place, tore himself away from the preacher with an effort, and moved where he could see the congregation. Campbell was drinking in every word as one for the first time in his life perfectly satisfied. Menzies was huddled into a heap in the top of his pew a man justly blasted by the anger of the Eternal. Men were white beneath the tan, and it was evident that some of the women would soon fall a-weeping. Children had crept close to their mothers under a vague sense of danger, and a girl in the choir watched the preacher with dilated eyeballs, like an animal fascinated by terror.

"It is as a sword piercing the heart to receive this truth, but it is a truth and must be believed. There are hundreds of thousands in the past who were born and lived and died and were damned for the glory of God. There are hundreds of thousands in this day who have been born and are living and shall die and be damned for the glory of God. There are hundreds of thousands in the future who shall be born and shall live and shall die and shall be damned for the glory of God. All according to the will of God, and none dare say nay nor change the purpose of the Eternal." For some time the oil in the lamps had been failing—since the Rabbi had been speaking for nigh two hours—and as he came to an end of this passage the light began to flicker and die. First a lamp at the end of Burnbrae's pew went out, and then another in the front. The preacher made as though he would have spoken, but was silent, and the congregation watched four lamps sink into darkness at intervals of half a minute. There only remained the two pulpit lamps, and in their light the people saw the Rabbi lift his right hand for the first time.

"Shall ... not ... the ... Judge ... of all the earth ... do ... right?" The two lamps went out together and a great sigh rose from the people. At the back of the kirk a child wailed, and somewhere in the front a woman's voice—it was never proved to be Elspeth Macfadyen—said audibly, "God have mercy upon us." The Rabbi had sunk back into the seat and buried his face in his hands, and through the window over his head the moonlight was pouring into the church like unto the far-off radiance from the White Throne.



[Illustration: "SHALL . . . NOT . . . THE . . . JUDGE . . . OF ALL THE EARTH . . . DO . . . RIGHT?"]

When Carmichael led the Rabbi into the manse he could feel the old man trembling from head to foot, and he would touch neither meat nor drink, nor would he speak for a space.

"Are you there, John?"—and he put out his hand to Carmichael, who had placed him in the big study chair, and was sitting beside him in silence.

"I dare not withdraw nor change any word that I spake in the name of the Lord this day, but ... it is my infirmity ... I wish I had never been born."

"It was awful," said Carmichael, and the Rabbi's head again fell on his breast.

"John,"—and Saunderson looked up,—"I would give ten thousand worlds to stand in the shoes of that good man who conveyed me from Kilbogie yesterday, and with whom I had very pleasant fellowship concerning the patience of the saints.

"It becometh not any human being to judge his neighbour, but it seemed to me from many signs that he was within the election of God, and even as we spoke of Polycarp and the martyrs who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, it came unto me with much power, 'Lo, here is one beside you whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and who shall enter through the gates into the city'; and grace was given me to rejoice in his joy, but I ..."—and Carmichael could have wept for the despair in the Rabbi's voice.

"Dear Rabbi!"—for once the confidence of youth was smitten at the sight of a spiritual conflict beyond its depth—"you are surely ... depreciating yourself... Burnbrae is a good man, but compared with you ... is not this like to the depression of Elijah?" Carmichael knew, however, he was not fit for such work as the comforting of Rabbi Saunderson, and had better have held his peace.

"It may be that I understand the letter of Holy Scripture better than some of God's children, although I be but a babe even in this poor knowledge, but such gifts are only as the small dust of the balance. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

"John," said the Rabbi suddenly, and with strong feeling, "was it your thought this night as I declared the sovereignty of God that I judged myself of the elect, and was speaking as one himself hidden for ever in the secret place of God?"

"I ... did not know," stammered Carmichael, whose utter horror at the unrelenting sermon had only been tempered by his love for the preacher.

"You did me wrong, John, for then had I not dared to speak at all after that fashion; it is not for a vessel of mercy filled unto overflowing with the love of God to exalt himself above the vessels ... for whom there is no mercy. But he may plead with them who are in like case with himself to ... acknowledge the Divine Justice."

Then the pathos of the situation overcame Carmichael, and he went over to the bookcase and leant his head against certain volumes, because they were weighty and would not yield. Next day he noticed that one of them was a Latin *Calvin* that had travelled over Europe in learned company, and the other a battered copy of Jonathan Edwards that had come from the house of an Ayrshire farmer.

"Forgive me that I have troubled you with the concerns of my soul, John"—the Rabbi could only stand with an effort—"they ought to be between a man and his God. There is another work laid to my hand for which there is no power in me now. During the night I shall ask whether the cup may not pass from me, but if not, the will of God be done."

Carmichael slept but little, and every time he woke the thought was heavy upon him that on the other side of a narrow wall the holiest man he knew was wrestling in darkness of soul, and that he had added to the bitterness of the agony.

THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND

Winter has certain mornings which redeem weeks of misconduct, when the hoar frost during the night has resilvered every branch and braced the snow upon the ground, and the sun rises in ruddy strength and drives out of sight every cloud and mist, and moves all day through an expanse of unbroken blue, and is reflected from the dazzling whiteness of the earth as from a mirror. Such a sight calls a man from sleep with authority, and makes his blood tingle, and puts new heart in him, and banishes the troubles of the night. Other mornings Winter joins in the conspiracy of principalities and powers to daunt and crush the human soul. No sun is to be seen, and the grey atmosphere casts down the heart, the wind moans and whistles in fitful gusts, the black clouds hang low in threatening masses, now and again a flake of snow drifts in the wind. A storm is near at hand, not the thunder-shower of summer, with its warm rain and the kindly sun ever in ambush, but dark and blinding snow, through which even a game-keeper cannot see six yards, and in which weary travellers lie down to rest and die.

The melancholy of this kind of day had fallen on Saunderson, whose face was ashen, and who held Carmichael's hand with such anxious affection that it was impossible to inquire how he had slept, and it would have been a banalité to remark upon the weather. After the Rabbi had been compelled to swallow a cup of milk by way of breakfast, it was evident that he was ready for speech.

"What is it, Rabbi?" as soon as they were again settled in the study. "If you did not ... like my sermon, tell me at once. You know that I am one of your boys, and you ought to ... help me." Perhaps it was inseparable from his youth, with its buoyancy and self-satisfaction, and his training in a college whose members only knew by rumour of the existence of other places of theological learning, that Carmichael had at that moment a pleasing sense of humility and charity. Had it been a matter of scholastic lore, of course neither he nor more than six men in Scotland could have met the Rabbi in the gate. With regard to modern thought, Carmichael knew that the good Rabbi had not read *Ecce Homo*, and was hardly, well ... up to date. He would not for the world hint such a thing to the dear old man, nor even argue with him; but it was flattering to remember that the attack could be merely one of blunderbusses, in which the modern thinker would at last intervene and save the ancient scholar from humiliation.

"Well, Rabbi?" and Carmichael tried to make it easy.

"Before I say what is on my heart, John, you will grant an old man who loves you one favour. So far as in you lies you will bear with me if that which I have to say, and still more that which my conscience will compel me to do, is hard to flesh and blood."

"Didn't we settle that last night in the vestry?" and Carmichael was impatient; "is it that you do not agree with the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood? We younger men are resolved to base Christian doctrine on the actual Scriptures, and to ignore mere tradition."

"An excellent rule, my dear friend," cried the Rabbi, wonderfully quickened by the challenge, "and with your permission and for our mutual edification we shall briefly review all passages bearing on the subject in hand—using the original, as will doubtless be your wish, and you correcting my poor recollection."

About an hour afterwards, and when the Rabbi was only entering into the heart of the matter, Carmichael made the bitter discovery—without the Rabbi having even hinted at such a thing—that his pet sermon was a mass of boyish crudities, and this reverse of circumstances was some excuse for his pettishness.

"It does not seem to me that it is worth our time to haggle about the usage of Greek words or to count texts: I ground my position on the general meaning of the Gospels and the sense of things"; and Carmichael stood on the hearthrug in a very superior attitude.

"Let that pass then, John, and forgive me if I appeared to battle about words, as certain scholars of the olden time were fain to do, for in truth it is rather about the hard duty before me than any imperfection in your teaching I would speak"; and the Rabbi glanced nervously at the young minister.

"We are both Presbyters of Christ's Church, ordained after the order of primitive times, and there are laid on us certain heavy charges and responsibilities from which we may not shrink, as we shall answer to the Lord at the great day."

Carmichael's humiliation was lost in perplexity, and he sat down, wondering what the Rabbi intended.

"If any Presbyterian should see his brother fall into one of those faults of private life that do beset us all in our present weakness, then he doth well and kindly to point it out unto his brother; and if his brother should depart from the faith as they talk together by the way, then it is a Presbyterian's part to convince him of his error and restore him."

The Rabbi cast an imploring glance, but Carmichael had still no understanding.

"But if one Presbyterian should teach heresy to his flock in the hearing of another ... even though it break the other's heart, is not the path of duty fenced up on either side, verily a straight, narrow way, and hard for the feet to tread?"

"You have spoken to me, Rabbi, and ... cleared yourself"—Carmichael was still somewhat sore—"and I'll promise not to offend you again in an action sermon."

"Albeit you intend it not so, yet are you making it harder for me to speak.... See you not ... that I ... that necessity is laid on me to declare this matter to my brother Presbyters in court assembled ... but not in hearing of the people?" Then there was a stillness in the room, and the Rabbi, although he had closed his eyes, was conscious of the amazement on the young man's face.

"Do you mean to say," speaking very slowly, as one taken utterly aback, "that our Rabbi would come to my ... to the Sacrament and hear me preach, and ... report me for heresy to the Presbytery? Rabbi, I know we don't agree about some things, and perhaps I was a little ...

annoyed a few minutes ago because you ... know far more than I do, but that is nothing. For you to prosecute one of your boys and be the witness yourself.... Rabbi, you can't mean it ... say it's a mistake."

The old man only gave a deep sigh.

"If it were Dowbiggin or ... any man except you, I wouldn't care one straw, rather enjoy the debate, but you whom we have loved and looked up to and boasted about, why, it's like ... a father turning against his sons."

The Rabbi made no sign.

"You live too much alone, Rabbi," and Carmichael began again as the sense of the tragedy grew on him, "and nurse your conscience till it gets over tender; no other man would dream of ... prosecuting a ... fellow-minister in such circumstances. You have spoken to me like a father, surely that is enough"; and in his honest heat the young fellow knelt down by the Rabbi's chair and took his hand.



[Illustration: "YOU HAVE SPOKEN TO ME LIKE A FATHER: SURELY THAT IS ENOUGH."]

A tear rolled down the Rabbi's cheek, and he looked fondly at the lad.

"Your words pierce me as sharp swords, John; spare me, for I can do none otherwise; all night I wrestled for release, but in vain."

Carmichael had a sudden revulsion of feeling, such as befalls emotional and ill-disciplined natures when they are disappointed and mortified.

"Very good, Doctor Saunderson"—Carmichael rose awkwardly and stood on the hearthrug again, an elbow on the mantelpiece—"you must do as you please and as you think right. I am sorry that I ... pressed you so far, but it was on grounds of our ... friendship.

"Perhaps you will tell me as soon as you can what you propose to do, and when you will bring ... this matter before the Presbytery. My sermon was fully written and ... is at your disposal."

While this cold rain beat on the Rabbi's head he moved not, but at its close he looked at Carmichael with the appeal of a dumb animal in his eyes.

"The first meeting of Presbytery is on Monday, but you would no doubt consider that too soon; is there anything about dates in the order of procedure for heresy?" and Carmichael made as though he would go over to the shelves for a law book.

"John," cried the Rabbi—his voice full of tears—rising and following the foolish lad, "is this all you have in your heart to say unto me? Surely, as I stand before you, it is not my desire to do such a thing, for I would rather cut off my right hand.

"God hath not been pleased to give me many friends, and He only knows how you and the others have comforted my heart. I lie not, John, but speak the truth, that there is nothing unto life itself I would not give for your good, who have been as the apple of my eye unto me."

Carmichael hardened himself, torn between a savage sense of satisfaction that the Rabbi was suffering for his foolishness and the inclination of his better self to respond to the old man's love.

"If there be a breach between us, it will not be for you as it must be for me. You have many friends, and may God add unto them good men and faithful, but I shall lose my one earthly joy and consolation when your feet are no longer heard on my threshold and your face no longer brings light to my room. And, John, even this thing which I am constrained to do is yet of love, as ... you shall confess one day."

Carmichael's pride alone resisted, and it was melting fast. Had he even looked at the dear face he must have given way, but he kept his shoulder to the Rabbi, and at that moment the sound of wheels passing the corner of the manse gave him an ungracious way of escape.

"That is Burnbrae's dogcart ... Dr. Saunderson, and I think he will not wish to keep his horse standing in the snow, so unless you will stay all night, as it's going to drift.... Then perhaps it would be better.... Can I assist you in packing?" How formal it all sounded; and he allowed the Rabbi to go upstairs alone, with the result that various things of the old man's are in Carmichael's house unto this day.

Another chance was given the lad when the Rabbi would have bidden him good-bye at the door, beseeching that he should not come out into the drift, and still another when Burnbrae, being concerned about his passenger's appearance, who seemed ill-fitted to face a storm, wrapt him in a plaid; and he had one more when the old man leant out of the dogcart and took Carmichael's hand in both of his, but only said, "God bless you for all you've been to me, and forgive me for all wherein I have failed you." And they did not meet again till that never-to-be-forgotten sederunt of the Free Kirk Presbytery of Muirtown, when the minister of Kilbogie accused the minister of Drumtochty of teaching the Linlathen heresy of the Fatherhood of God in a sermon before the Sacrament.

Among all the institutions of the North a Presbytery is the most characteristic, and affords a standing illustration of the contradictions of a supremely logical people. It is so anti-clerical a court that for every clergyman there must be a layman—country ministers promising to bring in their elder for great occasions, and instructing him audibly how to vote—and so fiercely clerical that if the most pious and intelligent elder dared to administer a sacrament he would be at once tried and censured for sacrilege. So careful is a Presbytery to prevent the beginnings of Papacy that it insists upon each of its members occupying the chair in turn, and dismisses him again into private life as soon as he has mastered his duties, but so imbued is it with the idea of authority that whatever decision may be given by some lad of twenty-five in the chair—duly instructed, however, by the clerk below—will be rigidly obeyed. When a Presbytery has nothing else to do, it dearly loves to pass a general condemnation on sacerdotalism, in which the tyranny of prelates and the foolishness of vestments will be fully exposed; but a Presbytery wields a power at which a bishop's hair would stand on end, and Doctor Dowbiggin once made Carmichael leave the Communion Table and go into the vestry to put on his bands.

When a Presbytery is in its lighter moods, it gives itself to points of order with a skill and relish beyond the Southern imagination. It did not matter how harmless, even infantile, might be the proposal placed before the court by such a man as MacWheep of Pitscowrie; he has hardly got past an apology for his presumption in venturing to speak at all before a member of Presbytery—who had reduced his congregation to an irreducible minimum by the woodenness of his preaching—inquires whether the speech of "our esteemed brother is not *ultra vires*," or something else as awful. MacWheep at once sits down with the air of one taken red-handed in arson, and the court debates the point till every authority has taken his fill, when the clerk submits to the moderator, with a fine blend of deference and infallibility, that Mr. MacWheep is perfectly within his rights; and then, as that estimable person has by this time lost any thread he ever possessed, the Presbytery passes to the next business—with the high spirit of men returning from a holiday. Carmichael used, indeed, to relate how, in a great stress of business, some one moved that the Presbytery should adjourn for dinner, and the court argued for thirty minutes, with many precedents, whether such a motion—touching as it did the standing orders—could even be discussed, and, with an unnecessary prodigality of testimony, he used to give perorations which improved with every telling.

The love of law diffused through the Presbytery became incarnate in the clerk, who was one of the most finished specimens of his class in the Scottish Kirk. His sedate appearance, bald, polished head, fringed with pure white hair, shrewd face, with neatly cut side whiskers, his suggestion of unerring accuracy and inexhaustible memory, his attitude for exposition—holding his glasses in his left hand and enforcing his decision with the little finger of the right hand—carried conviction even to the most disorderly. Ecclesiastical radicals, boiling over with new schemes, and boasting to admiring circles of MacWheeps that they would not be brow-beaten by red-tape officials, became ungrammatical before that firm gaze, and ended in abject surrender. Self-contained and self-sufficing, the clerk took no part in debate, save at critical moments to lay down the law, but wrote his minutes unmoved through torrents of speech on every subject, from the Sustentation Fund to the Union between England and Scotland, and even under the

picturesque eloquence of foreign deputies, whose names he invariably requested should be handed to him, written legibly on a sheet of paper. On two occasions only he ceased from writing: when Dr. Dowbiggin discussed a method of procedure—then he watched him over his spectacles in hope of a nice point; or when some enthusiastic brother would urge the Presbytery to issue an injunction on the sin of Sabbath walking—then the clerk would abandon his pen in visible despair, and sitting sideways on his chair and supporting his head by that same little finger, would face the Presbytery with an expression of reverent curiosity on his face why the Almighty was pleased to create such a man. His preaching was distinguished for orderliness, and was much sought after for Fast days. It turned largely on the use of prepositions and the scope of conjunctions, so that the clerk could prove the doctrine of Vicarious Sacrifice from "for," and Retribution from "as" in the Lord's Prayer, emphasizing and confirming everything by that wonderful finger, which seemed to be designed by Providence for delicate distinctions, just as another man's fist served for popular declamation. His pulpit masterpiece was a lecture on the Council of Jerusalem, in which its whole deliberations were reviewed by the rules of the Free Kirk Book of Procedure, and a searching and edifying discourse concluded with two lessons. First: That no ecclesiastical body can conduct its proceedings without officials. Second: That such men ought to be accepted as a special gift of Providence.

The general opinion among good people was that the clerk's preaching was rather for upbuilding than arousing, but it is still remembered by the survivors of the old Presbytery that when MacWheep organized a conference on "The state of religion in our congregations," and it was meandering in strange directions, the clerk, who utilised such seasons for the writing of letters, rose amid a keen revival of interest—it was supposed that he had detected an irregularity in the proceedings—and offered his contribution. It did not become him to boast, he said, but he had seen marvellous things in his day: under his unworthy ministry three beadles had been converted to Christianity, and this experience was so final that the conference immediately closed.

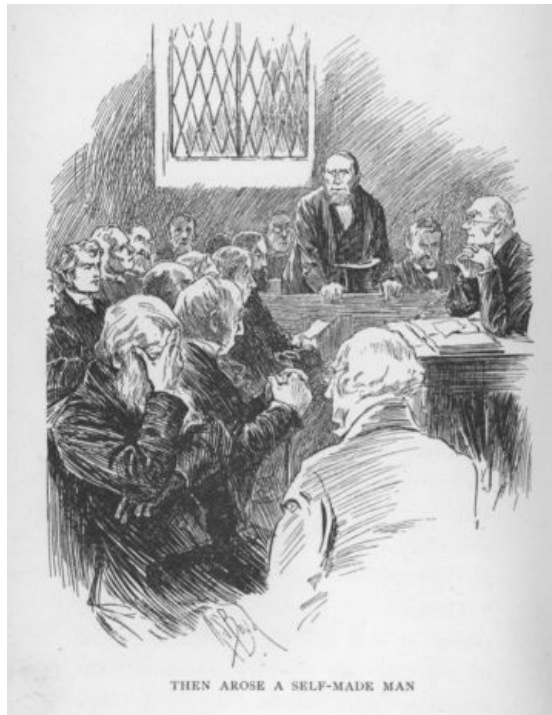
Times there were, however, when the Presbytery rose to its height and was invested with an undeniable spiritual dignity. Its members, taken one by one, consisted of farmers, shepherds, tradesmen, and one or two professional men, with some twenty ministers, only two or three of whom were known beyond their parishes. Yet those men had no doubt that as soon as they were constituted in the name of Christ they held their authority from the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and they bore themselves in spiritual matters as His servants. No kindly feeling of neighbourliness or any fear of man could hinder them from inquiring into the religious condition of a parish or dealing faithfully with an erring minister. They had power to ordain, and laid hands on the bent head of some young probationer with much solemnity; they had also power to take away the orders they had given, and he had been hardened indeed beyond hope who could be present and not tremble when the Moderator, standing in his place, with the Presbytery around, and speaking in the name of the Head of the Church, deposed an unworthy brother from the holy ministry. MacWheep was a "cratur," and much given to twaddle, but when it was his duty once to rebuke a fellow-minister for quarrelling with his people, he was delivered from himself, and spake with such grave wisdom as he has never shown before or since.

When the Presbytery assembled to receive a statement from Doctor Saunderson "re error in doctrine by a brother Presbyter," even a stranger might have noticed that its members were weighted with a sense of responsibility, and although a discussion arose on the attempt of a desultory member to introduce a deputy charged with the subject of the lost Ten Tribes, yet it was promptly squelched by the clerk, who intimated, with much gravity, that the court had met *in hunc effectum*, viz. to hear Doctor Saunderson, and that the court could not, in consistence with law, take up any other business, not even—here Carmichael professed to detect a flicker of the clerkly eyelids—the disappearance of the Ten Tribes.

It was the last time that the Rabbi ever spoke in public, and it is now agreed that the deliverance was a fit memorial of the most learned scholar that has been ever known in those parts. He began by showing that Christian doctrine has taken various shapes, some more and some less in accordance with the deposit of truth given by Christ and the holy Apostles, and especially that the doctrine of Grace had been differently conceived by two eminent theologians, Calvin and Arminius, and his exposition was so lucid that the clerk gave it as his opinion afterwards that the two systems were understood by certain members of the court for the first time that day. Afterwards the Rabbi vindicated and glorified Calvinism from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, from the Fathers, from the Reformation Divines, from the later creeds, till the brain of the Presbytery reeled through the wealth of allusion and quotation, all in the tongues of the learned. Then he dealt with the theology of Mr. Erskine of Linlathen, and showed how it was undermining the very foundations of Calvinism; yet the Rabbi spake so tenderly of our Scottish Maurice that the Presbytery knew not whether it ought to condemn Erskine as a heretic or love him as a saint. Having thus brought the court face to face with the issues involved, the Rabbi gave a sketch of a certain sermon he had heard while assisting "a learned and much-beloved brother at the Sacrament," and Carmichael was amazed at the transfiguration of this very youthful performance, which now figured as a profound and edifying discourse, for whose excellent qualities the speaker had not adequate words. This fine discourse was, however, to a certain degree marred, the Rabbi suggested, by an unfortunate, although no doubt temporary, leaning to the teaching of Mr. Erskine, whose beautiful piety had exercised its just fascination upon his spiritually-minded brother. Finally the Rabbi left the matter in the hands of the Presbytery, declaring that he had cleared his conscience, and that the minister in question was

one—here he was painfully overcome—dear to him as a son, and one to whose many labours and singular graces he could bear full testimony, the Rev. John Carmichael, of Drumtochty. The Presbytery was slow and pedantic, but was not insensible to a spiritual situation, and there was a murmur of sympathy when the Rabbi sat down—much exhausted, and never having allowed himself to look once at Carmichael.

Then arose a self-made man, who considered orthodoxy and capital to be bound up together, and especially identified any departure from sovereignty with that pestilent form of Socialism which demanded equal chances for every man. He was only a plain layman, he said, and perhaps he ought not to speak in the presence of so many reverend gentlemen, but he was very grateful to Doctor Saunderson for his honourable and straight-forward conduct. It would be better for the Church if there were more like him, and he would just like to ask Mr. Carmichael three questions. Did he sign the Confession of Faith?—that was one; and had he kept it?—that was two; and the last was, When did he propose to leave the Church? He knew something about building contracts, and he had heard of a penalty when a contract was broken. There was just one thing more he would like to say—if there was less loose theology in the pulpit there would be more money in the plate. The shame of the Rabbi during this harangue was pitiable to behold.



[Illustration: THEN AROSE A SELF-MADE MAN]

Then a stalwart arose on the other side, and a young gentleman who had just escaped from a college debating society wished to know what century we were living in, warned the last speaker that the progress of theological science would not be hindered by mercenary threats, advised Doctor Saunderson to read a certain German, called Ritschl—as if he had been speaking to a babe in arms—and was re-freshing himself with a Latin quotation, when the Rabbi, in utter absence of mind, corrected a false quantity aloud.

"Moderator," the old man apologized in much confusion, "I wot not what I did, and I pray my reverend brother, whose interesting and instructive address I have interrupted by this unmannerliness, to grant me his pardon, for my tongue simply obeyed my ear." Which untoward incident brought the modern to an end, as by a stroke of ironical fate. It seemed to the clerk that little good to any one concerned was to come out of this debate, and he signalled to Doctor Dowbiggin, with whom he had dined the night before, when they concocted a motion over their wine. Whereupon that astute man explained to the court that he did not desire to curtail the valuable discussion, from which he personally had derived much profit, but he had ventured to draw up a motion, simply for the guidance of the House—it was said by the Rabbi's boys that the Doctor's success as an ecclesiastic was largely due to the skilful use of such phrases—and then he read: "Whereas the Church is set in all her courts for the defence of the truth, whereas it is reported that various erroneous doctrines are being promulgated in books and other public prints, whereas it has been stated that one of the ministers of this Presbytery has used words that might be supposed to give sanction to a certain view which appears to conflict with statements contained in the standards of the Church, the Presbytery of Muirtown declares, first of all, its unshaken adherence to the said standards; secondly, deplors the existence in any quarter of notions contradictory or subversive of said standards; thirdly, thanks Doctor Saunderson for the vigilance he has shown in the cause of sound doctrine; fourthly, calls upon all ministers within the bounds to have a care that they create no offence or misunderstanding by their teaching, and finally enjoins all parties concerned to cultivate peace and charity."

This motion was seconded by the clerk and carried unanimously—Carmichael being

compelled to silence by the two wise men for his own sake and theirs—and was declared to be a conspicuous victory both by the self-made man and the modern, which was another tribute to the ecclesiastical gifts of Doctor Dowbiggin and the clerk of the Presbytery of Muirtown.

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE

The Rabbi had been careful to send an abstract of his speech to Carmichael, with a letter enough to melt the heart even of a self-sufficient young clerical, and Carmichael had considered how he should bear himself at the Presbytery. His intention had been to meet the Rabbi with public cordiality and escort him to a seat, so that all men should see that he was too magnanimous to be offended by this latest eccentricity of their friend. This calculated plan was upset by the Rabbi coming in late and taking the first seat that offered, and when he would have gone afterwards to thank him for his generosity the Rabbi had disappeared. It was evident that the old man's love was as deep as ever, but that he was much hurt and would not risk another repulse. Very likely he had walked in from Kilbogie, perhaps without breakfast, and had now started to return to his cheerless manse. It was a wetting spring rain, and he remembered that the Rabbi had no coat. A fit of remorse overtook Carmichael, and he scoured the streets of Muirtown to find the Rabbi, imagining deeds of attention—how he would capture him unawares mooning along some side street hopelessly astray; how he would accuse him of characteristic cunning and deep plotting; how he would carry him by force to the Kilspindie Arms and insist upon their dining in state; how the Rabbi would wish to discharge the account and find twopence in his pockets—having given all his silver to an ex-Presbyterian minister stranded in Muirtown through peculiar circumstances; how he would speak gravely to the Rabbi on the lack of common honesty, and threaten a real prosecution, when the charge would be "obtaining a dinner on false pretences"; how they would journey to Kildrummie in high content, and—the engine having whistled for a dogcart—they would drive to Drumtochty manse, the sun shining through the rain as they entered the garden; how he would compass the Rabbi with observances, and the old man would sit again in the big chair full of joy and peace. Ah, the kindly jests that have not come off in life, the gracious deeds that never were done, the reparations that were too late! When Carmichael reached the station the Rabbi was already half-way to Kilbogie, trudging along wet, and weary, and very sad, because, although he had obeyed his conscience at a cost, it seemed to him as if all he had done was simply to alienate the boy whom God had given him, as a son in his old age, for even the guileless Rabbi suspected that the ecclesiastics considered his action foolishness and of no service to the Church of God. Barbara's language on his arrival was vituperative to a degree; she gave him food grudgingly, and when, in the early morning, he fell asleep over an open Father, he was repeating Carmichael's name, and the thick old paper was soaked with tears.

His nemesis seized Carmichael so soon as he reached the Dunleith train in the shape of the Free Kirk minister of Kildrummie, who had purchased six pounds of prize seed potatoes, and was carrying the treasure home in a paper bag. This bag had done after its kind, and spilt its contents, and as the distinguished agriculturist—who had not seen his feet for years—could only have stooped at the risk of apoplexy, he watched the dispersion of his potatoes with dismay, and hailed the arrival of Carmichael with exclamations of thankfulness. It is wonderful over what an area six pounds of (prize) potatoes can deploy on a railway platform, and how the feet of passengers will carry them unto far distances. Some might never have been restored to the bag had it not been for Kildrummie's comprehensive eye and the physical skill with which he guided Carmichael, till even prodigals that had strayed over to the neighbourhood of the Aberdeen express were restored to the extemporized fold in the minister's top-coat pockets. Carmichael had knelt on that very platform six months or so before, but then he laboured in the service of two most agreeable dogs and under the approving eyes of Miss Carnegie; that was a different experience from hunting after single potatoes on all fours among the feet of unsympathetic passengers, and being prodded to duty by the umbrella of an obese Free Kirk minister. As a reward for this service of the aged, he was obliged to travel to Kildrummie with his neighbour—in whom for the native humour that was in him he had often rejoiced, but whose company was not congenial that day—and Kildrummie laid himself out for a pleasant talk. After the roots had been secured and their pedigree stated Kildrummie fell back on the proceedings of Presbytery, expressing much admiration for the guidance of Doctor Dowbiggin and denouncing Saunderson as "fair dottle," in proof of which judgment Kildrummie adduced the fact that the Rabbi had allowed a very happily situated pig-sty at the Manse of Kilbogie to sink into ruin. Kildrummie, still in search of agreeable themes to pass the time, also mentioned a pleasant tale he had gathered at the seed shop.



[Illustration: HE WATCHED THE DISPERSION OF HIS POTATOES WITH DISMAY]

"Yir neebur upbye, the General's dochter, is cairryin' on an awfu' rig the noo at the Castle"—Kildrummie fell into dialect in private life, often with much richness—"an' the sough (noise) o' her ongaeins hes come the length o' Muirtown. The castle is foo' o' men—tae say naethin' o' weemin; but it's little she hes tae dae wi' them or them wi' her—officers frae Edinburgh an' writin' men frae London, as weel as half a dozen coonty birkies."

"Well?" said Carmichael, despising himself for his curiosity.

"She hes a wy, there's nae doot o' that, an' gin the trimmie hesna turned the heads o' half the men in the Castle, till they say she hes the pick of twa lords, five honourables, and a poet. But the lassie kens what's what; it's Lord Hay she's settin' her cap for, an' as sure as ye're sittin' there, Drum, she'll hae him.

"Ma word"—and Kildrummie pursued his way—"it'll be a match, the dochter o' a puir Hielant laird, wi' naethin' but his half pay and a few pounds frae a fairm or twa. She's a clever ane; French songs, dancin', shootin', ridin', actin', there's nae deevilry that's beyond her. They say upbye that she's been a bonnie handfu' tae her father—General though he be—an' a' peety her man."

"They say a lot of ... lies, and I don't see what call a minister has to slander ..."; and then Carmichael saw the folly of quarrelling with a veteran gossip over a young woman that would have nothing to say to him. What two Free Kirk ministers or their people thought of her would never affect Miss Carnegie.

"Truth's nae slander," and Kildrummie watched Carmichael with relish; "a' thoct ye wud hae got a taste o' her in the Glen. Didna a' heer frae Piggie Walker that ye ca'd her Jezebel frae yir ain pulpit, an' that ma lady whuppit oot o' the kirk in the middle o' the sermon?"

"I did nothing of the kind, and Walker is a ..."

"Piggie's no very particular at a time," admitted Kildrummie; "maybe it's a makup the story about Miss Carnegie an' yirsel'.

"Accordin' tae the wratch," for Carmichael would deign no reply, "she wes threatenin' tae mak' a fule o' the Free Kirk minister o' Drumtochty juist for practice, but a' said, 'Na, na, Piggie, Maister Carmichael is ower quiet and sensible a lad. He kens as weel as onybody that a Carnegie wud never dae for a minister's wife. Gin ye said a Bailie's dochter frae Muirtown 'at hes some money comin' tae her and kens the principles o' the Free Kirk.'

"Noo a' can speak frae experience, having been terrible fortunate wi' a' ma wives.... Ye'll come up tae tea; we killed a pig yesterday, and ... Weel, weel, a wilfu' man maun hae his wy"; and Carmichael, as he made his way up the hill, felt that the hand of Providence was heavy upon him, and that any highmindedness was being severely chastened.

Two days Carmichael tramped the moors, returning each evening wet, weary, hungry, to sleep ten hours without turning, and on the morning of the third day he came down in such heart that Sarah wondered whether he could have received a letter by special messenger; and he congratulated himself, as he walked round his garden, that he had overcome by sheer will power the first real infatuation of his life. He was so lifted above all sentiment as to review his

temporary folly from the bare, serene heights of common sense. Miss Carnegie was certainly not an heiress, and she was a young woman of very decided character, but her blood was better than the Hays', and she was ... attractive—yes, attractive. Most likely she was engaged to Lord Hay, or if he did not please her—she was ... whimsical and ... self-willed—there was Lord Invermays' son. Fancy Kate ... Miss Carnegie in a Free Kirk manse—Kildrummie was a very ... homely old man, but he touched the point there—receiving Doctor Dowbiggin with becoming ceremony and hearing him on the payment of probationers, or taking tea at Kildrummie Manse—where he had, however, feasted royally many a time after the Presbytery, but.... This daughter of a Jacobite house, and brought up amid the romance of war, settling down in the narrowest circle of Scottish life—as soon imagine an eagle domesticated among barn-door poultry. This image amused Carmichael so much that he could have laughed aloud, but ... the village might have heard him. He only stretched himself like one awaking, and felt so strong that he resolved to drop in on Janet Macpherson, Kate's old retainer—to see how it fared with the old woman and ... to have Miss Carnegie's engagement confirmed. The Carnegies might return any day from the South, and it would be well that he should know how to meet them.

"You will be hearing," Janet mentioned, "that they hef come back to the Lodge yesterday morning, and it iss myself that will be glad to see Miss Kate again; and very pretty iss she looking, with peautiful dresses and bonnets, for I hef seen them all, maybe twelve or ten.

"Oh yes, my dear, Donald will be talking about her marriage to Lord Kilspindie's son, who iss a very handsome young man and good at the shooting; and he will be blowing that they will live at the Lodge in great state, with many gillies and a piper and he will be head of them all.

"No, it iss not Janet Macpherson, my dear, that will be believing Donald Cameron, or any Cameron—although I am not saying that the Camerons are not men of their hands—for Donald will be always making great stories and telling me wonderful things. He wass a brave man in the battle, and iss very clever at the doctrine too, and will be strong against human himes (hymns), but he iss a most awful liar iss Donald Cameron, and you must not be believing a word that comes out of his mouth.

"She will be asking many questions in her room as soon as Donald had brought up her boxes and the door was shut. Some will be about the Glen, and some about the garden, and some will be about people—whether you ever will be visiting me, and whether you asked for her after the day she left the kirk. But I will say, 'No; Mr. Carmichael does not speak about anything but the religion when he comes to my cottage.'

"That iss nothing. I will be saying more, that I am hearing that the minister iss to be married to a fery rich young lady in Muirtown who hass been courting him for two years, and that her father will be giving the minister twenty thousand pounds the day they are married. And I will say she iss very beautiful, with blue eyes and gold hair, and that her temper iss so sweet they are calling her the Angel of Muirtown.

"Toot, toot, my dear, you are not to be speaking about lies, for that iss not a pretty word among friends, and you will not be meddling with me, for you will be better at the preaching and the singing of himes than dealing with women. It iss not good to be making yourself too common, and Miss Kate will be thinking the more of you if you be holding your head high and letting her see that you are not a poor lowland body, but a Farquharson by your mother's side, and maybe of the chief's blood, though twenty or fifteen times removed.

"She will be very pleased to hear such good news of you, and be saying that it iss a mercy you are getting somebody to dress you properly. But her temper will not be at all good, and I did not ask her about Lord Hay, and she said nothing to me, nor about any other lord. It iss not often I hef seen as great a liar as Donald Cameron.

"Last evening Miss Kate will come down before dinner and talk about many things, and then she will say at the door, 'Donald tells me that Mister Carmichael does not believe in the Bible, and that his friend, Doctor Saunderson, has cast him off, and that he has been punished by his Bishop or somebody at Muirtown.'

"Donald will be knowing more doctrine and telling more lies every month,' I said to her. 'Doctor Saunderson—who is a very fine preacher and can put the fear of God upon the people most wonderful—and our minister had a little feud, and they will fight it out before some chiefs at Muirtown like gentlemen, and now they are good friends again.'

"Miss Kate had gone off for a long walk, and I am not saying but that she will be calling at Kilbogie Manse before she comes back. She is very fond of Doctor Saunderson, and maybe he will be telling her of the feud. It iss more than an hour through the woods to Kilbogie," concluded Janet, "but you will be having a glass of milk first."

Kate reviewed her reasons for the expedition to Kilbogie, and settled they were the pleasures of a walk through Tochtly woods when the spring flowers were in their glory, and a visit to one of the dearest curiosities she had ever seen. It was within the bounds of possibility that Doctor Saunderson might refer to his friend, but on her part she would certainly not refer to the Free Church minister of Drumtochtly. Her reception by that conscientious professor Barbara could not be called encouraging.

"Ay, he's in, but ye canna see him, for he's in his bed, and gin he disna mend faster than he wes daein' the last time a' gied him a cry, he's no like to be in the pulpit on Sabbath. A' wes juist thinkin' he wudna be the waur o' a doctor."

"Do you mean to say that Doctor Saunderson is lying ill and no one nursing him?" and Kate eyed the housekeeper in a very unappreciative fashion.

"Gin he wants a nurse she'll hae tae be brocht frae Muirtown Infirmery, for a've eneuch to dae without ony fyke (delicate work) o' that kind. For twal year hev a' been hoosekeeper in this manse, an' gin it hedna been for peety a' wad hae flung up the place.

"Ye never cud tell when he wud come in, or when he wud gae oot, or what he wud be wantin' next. A' the waufies (disreputable people) in the countryside come here, and the best in the hoose is no gude eneuch for them. He's been an awfu' handfu' tae me, an' noo a' coont him clean dottle (silly). But we maun juist bear oor burdens," concluded Barbara piously, and she proposed to close the door.

"Your master will not want a nurse a minute longer; show me his room at once"; and Kate was so commanding that Barbara's courage began to fail.

"Wha may ye be," raising her voice to rally her heart, "'at wud take chairge o' a stranger in his ain hoose an' no sae muckle as ask leave?"

"I am Miss Carnegie, of Tochtly Lodge; will you stand out of my way?" and Kate swept past Barbara and went upstairs.

"Weel, a' declare," as soon as she had recovered, "of a' the impudent hizzies"; but Barbara did not say this in Kate's hearing.

Kate had seen various curious hospitals in her day, and had nursed many sick men—like the brave girl she was—but the Rabbi's room was something quite new. His favourite books had been gathering there for years, and now lined two walls and overhung the bed after a very perilous fashion and had dispossessed the looking-glass—which had become a nomad and was at present resting insecurely on John Owen—and stood in banks round the bed. During his few days of illness the Rabbi had accumulated so many volumes round him that he lay in a kind of tunnel, arched over, as it were, with literature. He had been reading Calvin's *Commentary on the Psalms*, in Latin, and it still lay open at the 88th, the saddest of all songs in the Psalter; but as he grew weaker the heavy folio had slid forward, and he seemed to be feeling for it. Although Kate spoke to him by name, he did not know any one was in the room. "Lord, why castest Thou off my soul?... I suffer Thy terror, I am distracted ... fierce wrath goeth over me ... lover and friend hast Thou put far from me ... friend far from me."

His head fell on his breast, his breath was short and rapid, and he coughed every few seconds.

"My friend far from me...."

At the sorrow in his voice and the thing which he said the tears came to Kate's eyes, and she went forward and spoke to him very gently. "Do you know me, Dr. Saunderson—Miss Carnegie?"

"Not Saunderson ... Magor Missabib."

"Rabbi, Rabbi"—so much Carmichael had told her; and now Kate stroked the bent white head. "Your friend, Mister Carmichael—"

"Yes, yes"—he now looked up and spoke eagerly—"John Carmichael, of Drumtochtly ... my friend in my old age ... and others ... my boys ... but John has left me ... he would not speak to me ... I am alone now ... he did not understand ... mine acquaintance into darkness ... here we see in a glass darkly ..." (he turned aside to expound the Greek word for darkly), "but some day ... face to face." And twice he said it, with an indescribable sweetness, "face to face."

Kate hurriedly removed the books from the bed and wrapt round his shoulders the old gray plaid that had eked out his covering at night, and then she went downstairs.

"Bring," she said to Barbara, "hot water, soap, towels, and a sponge to Dr. Saunderson's bedroom, immediately."

"And gin a' dinna?" inquired Barbara aggressively.

"I'll shoot you where you stand."

Barbara shows to her cronies how Miss Carnegie drew a pistol from her pocket at this point and held it to her head, and how at every turn the pistol was again in evidence; sometimes a dagger is thrown in, but that is only late in the evening when Barbara is under the influence of tonics. Kate herself admits that if she had had her little revolver with her she might have been tempted to outline the housekeeper's face on the wall, and she still thinks her threat an inspiration.

"Now," said Kate, when Barbara had brought her commands in with incredible celerity, "bring up some fresh milk and three glasses of whisky."

"Whisky!" Barbara could hardly compass the unfamiliar word. "The Doctor never hed sic a thing in the hoose, although mony a time, puir man ..." Discipline was softening even that austere spirit.

"No, but you have, for you are blowing a full gale just now; bring up your private bottle, or I'll go down for it."

"There's enough," holding the bottle to the light, "to do till evening; go to the next farm and send a man on horseback to tell Mr. Carmichael, of Drumtochty, that Doctor Saunderson is dying, and another for Doctor Manley of Muirtown."

Very tenderly did Kate sponge the Rabbi's face and hands, and then she dressed his hair, till at length he came to himself.

"This ministry is ... grateful to me, Barbara ... my strength has gone from me ... but my eyes fail me.... Of a verity you are not ..."

"I am Kate Carnegie, whom you were so kind to at Tochty. Will you let me be your nurse? I learned in India, and know what to do." It was only wounded soldiers who knew how gentle her voice could be, and how soft her hands.

"It is I that ... should be serving you ... the first time you have come to the manse ... no woman has ever done me ... such kindness before...." He followed her as she tried to bring some order out of chaos, and knew not that he spoke aloud. "A gracious maid ... above rubies."

His breathing was growing worse, in spite of many wise things she did for him—Doctor Manley, who paid no compliments, but was a strength unto every country doctor in Perthshire, praises Kate unto this day—and the Rabbi did not care to speak. So she sat down by his side and read to him from the *Pilgrim's Progress*—holding his hand all the time—and the passage he desired was the story of Mr. Fearing.

"This I took very great notice of, that the valley of the shadow of Death was as quiet while he went through it as ever I knew it before or since. I suppose these enemies here had now a special check from our Lord and a command not to meddle until Mr. Fearing was passed over it.... Here also I took notice of what was very remarkable: the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last, not much above wet-shod. When he was going up to the gate ..."

The Rabbi listened for an instant.

"It is John's step ... he hath a sound of his own ... my only earthly desire is fulfilled."

"Rabbi," cried Carmichael, and half kneeling, he threw one arm round the old man, "say that you forgive me. I looked for you everywhere on Monday, but you could not be found."

"Did you think, John, that I ... my will was to do you an injury or ... vex your soul? Many trials in my life ... all God's will ... but this hardest ... when I lost you ... nothing left here ... but you ...—my breath is bad, a little chill— . . . do you understand?"

"I always did, and I never respected you more; it was my foolish pride that made me call you Doctor Saunderson in the study; but my love was the same, and now you will let me stay and wait on you."

The old man smiled sadly, and laid his hand on his boy's head.

"I cannot let you ... go, John, my son."

"Go and leave you, Rabbi!" Carmichael tried to laugh. "Not till you are ready to appear at the Presbytery again. We'll send Barbara away for a holiday, and Sarah will take her place—you remember that cream—and we shall have a royal time, a meal every four hours, Rabbi, and the Fathers in between"; and Carmichael, springing to his feet and turning round to hide his tears, came face to face with Miss Carnegie, who had been unable to escape from the room.

"I happened to call"—Kate was quite calm—"and found Doctor Saunderson in bed; so I stayed till some friend should come; you must have met the messenger I sent for you."

"Yes, a mile from the manse; I was on my way ... Janet said ... but I ... did not remember anything when I saw the Rabbi."

"Will you take a little milk again ... Rabbi?" and at her bidding and the name he made a brave effort to swallow, but he was plainly sinking.

"No more," he whispered; "thank you ... for service ... to a lonely man; may God bless you ... both...." He signed for her hand, which he kept to the end.



[Illustration: HE SIGNED FOR HER HAND, WHICH HE KEPT TO THE END]

"Satisfied ... read, John ... the woman from coasts of—of—"

"I know, Rabbi," and kneeling on the other side of the bed, he read the story slowly of a Tyrian woman's faith.

"It is not meet to take the children's meat and cast it to dogs."

"Dogs"—they heard the Rabbi appropriate his name—"outside ... the covenant."

"And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

"Lord, I believe ... help Thou mine ... unbelief."

He then fell into an agony of soul, during which Carmichael could hear: "Though ... He slay ... me ... yet will I trust ... trust ... in Him." He drew two or three long breaths and was still. After a little he was heard again with a new note—"He that believeth ... in Him ... shall not be confounded," and again, "A bruised reed ... shall He not ...". Then he opened his eyes and raised his head—but he saw neither Kate nor Carmichael, for the Rabbi had done with earthly friends and earthly trials—and he, who had walked in darkness and seen no light, said in a clear voice full of joy, "My Lord, and my God."

It was Kate who closed his eyes and laid the old scholar's head on the pillow, and then she left the room, casting one swift glance of pity at Carmichael, who was weeping bitterly and crying between the sobs, "Rabbi! Rabbi!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RABBI SAUNDERSON ***

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