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HIS MAJESTY BABY

AND SOME COMMON PEOPLE

By Ian MacLaren

1902

To Andrew Carnegie,

The Munificent Benefactor Of Scots Students

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I.—HIS MAJESTY BABY

UNTIL the a'bus stopped and the old gentleman entered, we had been a contented and genial company, travelling from a suburb into the city in high, good fellowship, and our absolute monarch was Baby. His mother was evidently the wife of a well-doing artisan, a wise-looking, capable, bonnie young woman; and Baby was not a marvel of attire, nor could he be called beautiful. He was dressed after a careful, tidy, comfortable fashion, and he was a clear-skinned, healthy child; that is all you would have noticed had you met the two on the street. In a'bus where there is nothing to do for forty minutes except stare into one another's faces, a baby has the great chance of his life, and this baby was made to seize it. He was not hungry, and there were no pins about his clothes, and nobody had made him afraid, and he was by nature a human soul. So he took us in hand one by one, till he had reduced us all to a state of delighted subjection, to the pretended scandal and secret pride of his mother. His first conquest was easy, and might have been discounted, for against such an onset there was no power of resistance in the elderly woman opposite—one of the lower middles, fearfully stout, and of course a grandmother. He simply looked at her—if he smiled, that was thrown in—for, without her knowledge, her arms had begun to shape for his reception—so often had children lain on that ample resting-place. “Bless 'is little 'eart; it do me good to see him.” No one cared to criticize the words, and we remarked to ourselves how the expression changes the countenance. Not heavy and red, far less dull, the proper adjective for the face is motherly. The next passenger, just above Grannie, is a lady, young and pretty, and a mother? Of course; did you not see her look Baby over, as an expert at her sharpest, before she grows old and is too easily satisfied? Will she approve, or is there something wrong which male persons and grandmothers cannot detect? The mother is conscious of inspection, and adjusts a ribbon His Majesty had tossed aside—one of his few decorations which he wore on parade for the good of the public and his own glory—and then she meekly awaited approval. For a moment we were anxious, but that was our foolishness, for in half a minute the lady's face relaxed, and she passed Baby. She leant forward and asked questions, and we overheard scraps of technical detail: “My first... fourteen months... six teeth... always well.” Baby was bored, and apologised to the'bus. “Mothers, you know—this is the way they go on; but what a lot they do for us! so we must be patient.” Although rank outsiders—excluded from the rites of the nursery—yet we made no complaint, but were rather pleased at this conference. One was a lady, the other a working woman; they had not met before, they were not likely to meet again, but they had forgotten strangeness and differences in the common bond of motherhood. Opposite me a priest was sitting and saying his office, but at this point his eye fell on the mothers, and I thought his lips shaped the words “Sancta Maria” before he went on with the appointed portion, but that may have been my fancy. The'bus will soon be dropping into poetry. Let us be serious and stare before us, as becometh well-bred English people.

Baby has wearied of inaction, and has begun another campaign, and my heart sinks, for this time he courts defeat; On the other side of Grannie and within Baby's sphere of influence was a man about whose profession there could be little doubt, even if he had not a bag on his knee and were not reading from a parchment document. After a long and serious consideration of the lawyer's clear-cut, clean-shaven, bloodless face, Baby leant forward and tapped gently on the deed, and then, when the keen face looked up in quick inquiry, Baby replied with a smile of roguish intelligence, as if to say, “Full of big words as long as myself, but quite

useless; it could all have been said in a sentence, as you and I know quite well; by the way, that parchment would make an excellent drum; do you mind me? A tune has just come into my head."

The lawyer, of course, drew away the deed, and frowned at the insolence of the thing? No, he did not—there is a soul in lawyers, if you know how to find it. He smiled. Well, it was not a first-rate smile, but I swear that it was genuine, and the next time he did it better, and afterwards it spread all over his face and lighted up his eyes. He had never been exposed in such a genial, irresistible way before, and so he held the drum, and Baby played a variation on "Rule Britannia" with much spirit, while grannie appealed for applause.

"If 'e don't play as well as the band in 'yde Park of a Sunday."

After a well deserved rest of forty seconds, during which we wagged our heads in wonder, Baby turned his attention to his right-hand neighbour, and for the balance of the minute examined her with compassion. An old maid without question, with her disposition written on the thin, tightly drawn lips, and the hard, grey eyes. None of us would care to trifle with... Will he dare?... if he has not! That was his chief stroke of genius, and it deserved success—when, with an expression of unaffected pity, he put out his soft, dimpled hand and gently stroked her cheek. "Poor thing, all alone, 'lone, 'lone," he cooed in her ear, as if to say with liquid baby speech, "I'm so solly, solly, solly, so velly, velly, velly solly." Did I say that her eyes were tender and true enough to win a man's heart and keep it, and that her lips spoke of patience and gentleness? If I did not, I repair my neglect. She must have been a beautiful woman in her youth—no, no, to-day, just when she inclines her head ever so slightly, and Baby strokes her cheek again, and cooes, "Pretty, pretty, pretty, and so velly, velly, velly good." Was not that a lovely flush on her cheek?—oh, the fool of a man who might have had that love. She opens a neat little bag, and as this was an imperial incident we watched without shame. Quite so; she is to be away all day, and has got a frugal luncheon, and—it's all she can do in return. Perhaps he cannot eat it. I don't know, nor does she; that's the pity of it, poor soul, baby-ways are a mystery to her; but would he refuse that biscuit? Not he; he makes an immense to do over it, and shows it to his mother and all his loyal subjects; and he was ready to be kissed, but she did not like to kiss him. Peace be with thy shy, modest soul, the Christ-child come into thine heart!

Two passengers on Baby's left had endured these escapades with patient and suffering dignity. When a boy is profoundly conscious that he is—well, a man—and yet a blind and unfeeling world conspires to treat him as —well, a child—he must protect himself and assert his position. Which he does, to the delight of everybody with any sense of humour, by refusing indignantly to be kissed by his mother—or at least sisters—in public, by severely checking any natural tendency to enthusiasm about anything except sport, by allowing it to be understood that he has exhausted the last remaining pleasure and is fairly burnt out. Dear boy, and all the time ready to run a mile to see a cavalry regiment drill, and tormented by a secret hankering after the Zoological Gardens. These two had been nice little chaps two years ago, and would be manly fellows two years hence. Meanwhile they were provoking, and required chastisement or regeneration. Baby was to them a "kid," to be treated with contempt, and when in a paroxysm of delight over the folly of a law paper he had tilted one of the young men's hats, that blase ancient replaced it in position with a bored and weary air. How Baby had taken in the situation I cannot guess, but he had his mind on the lads, and suddenly, while they were sustaining an elaborate unconcern, he flung himself back and crowed—yes, joyfully crowed—with rosy, jocund countenance in the whites of the eyes of the two solemnities. One raised his eyebrows, and the other looked at the roof in despair; but I had hopes, and who could resist this bubbling, chortling mirth? Next minute one chuckles joyfully, and the other tickles Baby just at the right spot below the chin—has a baby at home after all, and loves it—declaring aloud that he is "a jolly little beggar." Those boys are all right; there is a sound heart below the little affectations, and they are going to be men.

This outburst of His Majesty cheered us all mightily, and a young woman at the top of the'bus catching his eye, waved her hand to him, with a happy smile. Brown glove, size six and a quarter, perhaps six, much worn, and jacket also not of yesterday; but everything is well made, and in perfect taste. Milk-white teeth, hazel eyes. Grecian nose, what a winsome girl!—and let me see, she takes off a glove—yes, is wearing an engagement ring: a lucky fellow, for she must be good with those eyes and that merry smile. Daughter of a doctor or clergyman who died before he could provide for his family; a teacher, one guesses, and to-day off duty, going to meet her fiancé in the city; and then the three—her mother, that dear woman with hair turning grey—will go upon the river, and come home in the sweet summer evening, full of content. As soon as he gets a rise in the office they will marry, and she will also have her gift, as every woman should. But where am I now?—let that Baby bear the blame.

We had one vacant place, and that was how the old gentleman intruded on our peace; but let me make every excuse for him. It is aggravating to stand on the edge of the pavement and wave your umbrella ostentatiously to a'bus which passes you and draws up fifteen yards ahead, to make your dangerous way along a slippery street with hansoms bent upon your life, to be ordered to "hurry up," by an impatient conductor and ignominiously hauled on to a moving 'bus. For an elderly man of military appearance and short temper it was not soothing, and he might have been excused a word or two, but he distinctly exceeded.

He insisted in language of great directness and simplicity that the conductor had seen him all the time; that if he didn't he ought to have been looking; that he—the Colonel—was not a fox-terrier to run after a'bus in the mud; that the conductor was an impertinent scoundrel, and that he would have him dismissed, with other things and words unworthy even of a retired Anglo-Indian. The sympathy of the'bus did not go out to him, and when he forced himself in between the lawyer and Grannie, and, leaning forward with his hands on his cane, glared at us impartially, relations were strained. A cut on his left cheek and a bristly white moustache, half hiding, half concealing a cruel mouth, did not commend the new passenger to a peaceable company. Baby regarded the old man with sad attention, pained at his unlicensed talk, but full of charity, and at last he indicates that his fancy is to examine the silver head of the Colonel's cane. The Colonel, after two moments' hesitation, removes his hands and gives full liberty. On second thoughts, he must have got that cut in some stiff fight; wonder whether he is a V.G. Baby moves the cane back and forwards to a march of his own devising—the Colonel actively assisting. Now that I see it in a proper light, his moustache is soft and sets off the face excellently. Had it not been the cut puckering the corner of the upper lip, that would have been a very sweet mouth for a man, or even for a woman. Baby is not lifted above all human weaknesses—preserve

us from perfect people—and he indicates a desire to taste as well as handle the silver head. The Colonel is quite agreeable—the most good-natured man you could meet in a day's journey. But Baby's guardian objects, and history warns us of the dangers which beset a collision between an absolute monarch and his faithful Commons. We were all concerned, but the crisis is safe in the Colonel's hands. He thrusts his hand within the tightly-buttoned frock-coat and produces a gold hunting-watch—crested, did you notice, and... yes, just what every father has done for his baby since watches were invented—before that a fist served the purpose—he blew, the lid flew open. Baby blew, and the lid flew open faster and farther. Grannie would like to know whether any baby could have done the trick better, but there was no use asking us. “Reminds me of my boy at that age... Bailed on frontier last year.” Is much ashamed of this confidence, and we all look unconscious. What a fine, simple old fellow he is!

“Saved up, has he”—the Colonel is speaking to the mother—“to give Baby and you a week at Ramsgate?... he's the right sort, your husband... it's for Baby, not for you, to get him some fol-de-rol, you know... he's done a lot of good to a crusty old chap.”... The conductor has taken in the scene with huge delight, and closes it just at the right point. “Your club, General; just wait till the'bus stops.... Can ye get near the kerb, Bill? Now, that's right, take care, sir, plenty of time... Oh, that was nothing, might'ave seen you sooner... thank ye, I do smoke at a time... Mornin', General; all right, Bill.” The Colonel was standing on the broad top step of the “Veteran's” smiling and waving his hand; the'bus waved back, and the conductor touched his cap. “A gentleman every inch; cads ain't mide that wy,” and Baby danced for sheer Christian joy, since there is no victory like Love.

II.—NEWS OF A FAMOUS VICTORY

HE had been talking that morning at the Office of the siege of Ladysmith, for six relatives of the family were at the front, three with Sir George White in the besieged place, and three with Sir Redvers Buller, fighting for their deliverance. Word had come to the house the night before that Ladysmith might be relieved any hour, and every one knew that unless help came speedily, the garrison would have to surrender. Duty took me to Cambridge that day, and I had gone upstairs to get ready, and coming down again I heard a shout in the hall as if something had happened, but it did not occur to me what it was. My hostess was speaking excitedly somewhere, and I could not catch what she was saying. Servants had rushed out from bedrooms and other places, and were standing on the breakfast-table in a house near the War landings. As I reached the hall the butler, a most stately personage, broke forth from his quarters and rushed past me carrying his coat on his arm, and then in his shirt sleeves, having forgotten to put on his coat, and without a hat—he will likely deny this, but he was a spectacle for gods and men—he ran, yes, he who was intended by nature to be an archbishop, ran across the square. Then I understood, and turned to a footman, who looked as if he would like to follow the butler.

“Ladysmith,” was all I said.

“Yes,” he cried; “word come, War Office, sent here, butler gone, make sure”; then he went out to the doorstep to catch the first sight of the returning butler. Meanwhile my hostess had come down to the hall, and there had gathered the household of all kinds and degrees—my host and the other guests had gone out—housemaids, ladies' maids, kitchen-maids, footmen, her majesty the cook, and every other person beneath the roof, high and low, and we were all trembling lest there had been some mistake in the message, and the news was not true. The butler came across St. James's Square, and when he saw us standing—forgetting himself again, but now he had his coat on—he waved triumphantly, and then we knew that Ladysmith was saved. We gave some sort of cheer and shook hands indiscriminately, each one with his neighbour, and with two or three neighbours, and talked together, mingling names of Generals and relatives, and places, and battles, while the butler, who had arrived and regained his breath, but not yet his unapproachable dignity, assured us that the siege was lifted, and that White, and what remained of his gallant men, were unconquered.

It was time for me to start, and I told the hansom man to drive round by the War Office, that I might see this great thing. When we got down the Press were just leaving with the intelligence, and the first of the public were reading the news. Each man took the news in his own fashion, one laughing and slapping his legs, another crying and speaking to himself, a third rushing out to cheer, and I, why I, being an unemotional Scot, remembered that if I fooled away any more time, reading news of victories, I might lose my train, so I rushed back to the hansom.

“Is't all correct?” the driver leant down from his perch, determined not to let himself go till he was perfectly certain that, not only the straight tip had been given, but that at last the event had come off.

“All right,” I said; “Buller's army have driven back the Boers, and the advance guard has entered Ladysmith.”

Whereupon he whipped off his hat, and standing up in his place, a stout, red-faced Englishman in sporting dress, he gave a cheer all on his own account, and then when I got in he opened the trap and shouted down, “Old Buller's done it; he had a bloomin' tough job, but he's a game sportsman, and I said he'd do it. And old Buller's done it.” Again he celebrated the event with a cheer, and we started for Charing Cross.

Something occurred to me, and I pushed the trap open. “Look here,” I said, “the people near the War Office have heard the news, but after we pass Piccadilly Circus you'll be the first man to tell that the siege is raised.”

“Right, sir, I'm on the job. Old Buller's done it.” By the time we reached Bloomsbury he had the whole country to himself, and he did his duty manfully. As we crossed a thoroughfare, he would shout to the'bus

drivers on either side, “Ladysmith relieved; just come from the War Office. Old Buller's done it.” Then in an instant, before we plunged into the opposite street, one could see the tidings run both ways, from 'bus to 'bus, from cab to cab, and the hats waving in the air, and hear, “Ladysmith and Buller.” Bloomsbury is a fearfully decorous and immovable district, inhabited by professors and British Museum students, and solid merchants, and professional men, but my driver for once stirred up Bloomsbury. A householder would be standing on his doorstep in tall hat and frock coat, well brushed, and with a daintily folded umbrella under his left arm, fastening the left button of the second glove, and looking out upon the world from the serene superiority of a single eyeglass. Then he would catch sight of us, and the sound of something my driver was flinging to the men on a furniture van.

“What's that?” he would cry in a sharp, excited, insistent voice; “anything about Ladysmith?”

“Relieved,” from the hansom top. “War Office news. Old Buller's done it.”

Down fell the umbrella on the step, and down came the eyeglass from the eye, and with an answering cheer the unstarched, enthusiastic, triumphant, transformed householder bolted into his home to make it known from attic to kitchen that White and his men had not fought in vain.

Round the dustbin at the corner of a street half a dozen street boys were gathered, and the driver in his glory passed a word to them also. They did not know where they would get their dinner, and they had not had much breakfast, their whole stock of clothes would not have been worth 1s. 9d., and not one of them had a cap, but they also were a bit of England, and this victory was theirs, and the last I saw of them they were standing each one upon his head and waving joyfully with his feet.

“See, sir, how the kids took it,” for my driver was getting more magnificent every minute; “said all along old Buller would do it.”

Coming down Euston Road was one blaze of glory, and when we swept into King's Cross Station at the gallop, and my driver saw the crowd of waiting porters and other hangers-on, an audience as yet unspoiled and waiting, ready for such news, it was, I take it, the greatest moment in his life. He pulled up the horse on his haunches, and again stood up on his high place.

“Straight from the War Office, as hard as we could drive; it's all right at Ladysmith—the siege is lifted, and old Buller's done it”; and then, to crown the occasion, “Three cheers for General Buller.”

He led from the top, and they joined from below, and so great was the excitement that when I offered the usual tip to the porter to carry my things to the carriage, he flatly refused to take it.

“Hexcuse me, sir, not to-day; I ain't that sort. You brought the news of Ladysmith.” Which indeed was all my share of the glory of the passage: the rest belonged to my driver, who was indeed a Mercury fit for the work of the gods.

Just as the train was starting a man arrived with a pile of newspapers to sell them on the downward journey, for the special editions with the relief of Ladysmith had been got out with vast celerity. It was a pretty sight when the train stopped at some country station to see the man jump out and hear him shout the news, while the people, a moment ago stolid and indifferent, crowded round him to buy the paper. And then the train went on its way, followed by a cheer, because Ladysmith was safe. At one station two respectable country women got into the compartment where I had been alone, and they had been so eager, as their kind is, to secure their places, that they had not caught the news before the train left the station. By-and-by they began talking together, and it appeared that the elderly woman had a son at the front, a reservist in an infantry regiment with General Buller, while the other was the wife of a reservist who was with the cavalry under General French. It was hard lines, one could not but feel, for those women to have a son and a husband taken away from their homes and peaceful employment, and sent out to hardship and danger. And it would not have been wonderful if they had complained of their lot. But no, my heart swelled with pride as in a corner of the carriage, and behind my newspaper, I heard the mother and the wife exchanging news from the seat of campaign, and talking cheerily of critical affairs. Till at last, and quite suddenly, trouble arose, and there might have been a hot quarrel in that compartment.

“My man's all right,” said the wife; “he's with French, you know, and French looks after his men, 'e does. Jim says as 'ow 'is General won't let 'is men into any traps.”

“Who are ye getting hat may I ask?” said the elderly lady, flushing purple with indignation—“talking about traps. If it's General Buller ye're meanin', hexcuse me telling you, 'e don't get 'is men into traps. My boy says that he 'ad the hardest job of them hall, 'ad General Buller, and George, 'e writes and says to me in 'is last letter, 'you just wait and see if General Buller don't do it'—them's 'is very words, 'you just wait and see if General Buller don't do it.'”

The younger woman explained she had been making no reflections on General Buller, but only had been telling how proud her husband was of his Commander, but nothing would appease the old lady.

“I know nothing about French, and I say nothing against French, but I wish you to understand that Buller is a good old sort, and, as sure as you're sitting there in this carriage, 'e'll do the job.”

Then I laid down my newspaper, and addressed the reservist's mother.

“Madam,” I said, “your son was right, and Buller is a good old sort; he's done the job, and Ladysmith is safe.”

We all shook hands, two women wept, but not for sorrow, and a man looked out of the window, intent upon the scenery.

III.—A MODEST SCHOLAR

BEING a household of moderate attainments, and not being at all superior people, we were gravely concerned on learning that it was our duty to entertain the distinguished scholar, for our pride was chastened by anxiety and we had once received moderators. His name was carried far and wide on the wings of fame, and even learned people referred to him with a reverence in the tone, because it was supposed there was almost nothing within the range of languages and philosophy and theology which he did not know, and that if there happened to be any obscure department he had not yet overtaken, he would likely be on the way to its conquest. We speculated what like he would be—having only heard rumours—and whether he would be strangely clothed, we discussed what kind of company we could gather to meet such a man, and whether we ought, that is the two trembling heads of the household, to read up some subject beforehand that we might be able at least to know where he was if we could not follow him. And we were haunted with the remembrance of a literary woman who once condescended to live with us for two days, and whose conversation was so exhausting that we took it in turns like the watch on board ship, one standing on the bridge with the spin-drift of quotations flying over his head, and the other snatching a few minutes' sleep to strengthen her for the storm. That overwhelming lady was only the oracle of a circle after all, but our coming visitor was known to the ends of the earth.

It was my place to receive him at the station, and pacing up and down the platform, I turned over in my mind appropriate subjects for conversation in the cab, and determined to lure the great man into a discussion of the work of an eminent Oxford philosopher which had just been published, and which I knew something about. I had just arranged a question which I intended to submit for his consideration, when the express came in, and I hastened down the first-class carriages to identify the great man. High and mighty people, clothed in purple and fine linen, or what corresponds to such garments in our country, were descending in troops with servants and porters waiting upon them, but there was no person that suggested a scholar. Had he, in the multitude of his thoughts, forgotten his engagement altogether, or had he left the train at some stopping-place and allowed it to go without him—anything is possible with such a learned man.

Then I saw a tall and venerable figure descend from a third-class compartment and a whole company of genuine “third classers” handing out his luggage while he took the most affectionate farewell of them. A working man got out to deposit the scholar's Gladstone bag upon the platform while his wife passed out his umbrella, and another working man handled delicately a parcel of books. The scholar shook hands with every one of his fellow-passengers including children, and then I presented myself, and looked him in the face. He was rather over six feet in height, and erect as a sapling, dressed in old-fashioned and well brushed black clothes, and his face placed me immediately at ease, for though it was massive and grave, with deep lines and crowned with thick white hair, his eyes were so friendly and sincere, had such an expression of modesty and affection, that even then, and on the first experience, I forgot the gulf between us. Next instant, and almost before I had mentioned my name he seized me by the hand, and thanked me for my coming.

“This, my good sir,” he said with his old-fashioned courtesy, “is a kindness which I never for an instant anticipated, and when I remember your many important engagements (important!) and the sacrifice which this gracious act (gracious!) must have entailed upon you, I feel this to be an honour, sir, for which you will accept this expression of gratitude.” It seemed as if there must have been something wrong in our imagination of a great man's manner, and when he insisted, beyond my preventing, in carrying his bag himself, and would only allow me with many remonstrances to relieve him of the books; when I had difficulty in persuading him to enter a cab because he was anxious to walk to our house, our fancy portrait had almost disappeared. Before leaving the platform he had interviewed the guard and thanked him by both word and deed for certain “gracious and mindful attentions in the course of the journey.”

My wife acknowledged that she had been waiting to give the great man afternoon tea in fear and trembling, but there was something about him so winsome that she did not need even to study my face, but felt at once that however trying writing-women and dilletante critics might be, one could be at home with a chief scholar. When I described the guests who were coming—to meet him at dinner—such eminent persons as I could gather—he was overcome by the trouble we had taken, but also alarmed lest he should be hardly fit for their company, being, as he explained himself, a man much restricted in knowledge through the just burden of professional studies. And before he went to his room to dress he had struck up an acquaintance with the youngest member of the family, who seemed to have forgotten that our guest was a very great man, and had visited a family of Japanese mice with evident satisfaction. During dinner he was so conscious of his poverty of attainment in the presence of so many distinguished people that he would say very little, but listened greedily to everything that fell from the lips of a young Oxford man who had taken a fair degree and was omniscient. After dinner we wiled him into a field where very few men have gone, and where he was supposed to know everything that could be known, and then being once started he spoke for forty minutes to our huge delight with such fulness and accuracy of knowledge, with such lucidity and purity of speech—allowing for the old-fashioned style—that even the Oxford man was silent and admired.

Once and again he stopped to qualify his statement of some other scholar's position lest he should have done him injustice, and in the end he became suddenly conscious of the time he had spoken and implored every one's pardon, seeing, as he explained “that the gentlemen present will likely have far more intimate knowledge of this subject than I can ever hope to attain.” He then asked whether any person present had ever seen a family of Japanese mice, and especially whether they had ever seen them waltzing, or as he described it “performing their circular motions of the most graceful and intricate nature, with almost incredible continuance.” And when no one had, he insisted on the company going to visit the menagerie, which was conduct not unbecoming a gentleman, but very unbecoming a scholar.

Next morning, as he was a clergyman, I asked him to take family worship, and in the course of the prayer he made most tender supplication for the sick relative of “one who serves in this household,” and we learned that he had been conversing with the housemaid who attended to his room, having traced some expression of sorrow on her face, and found out that her mother was ill; while we, the heads of the household, had known nothing about the matter, and while we imagined that a scholar would be only distantly aware that a

housemaid had a mother. It was plainer than ever that we knew nothing whatever about great scholars. The public function for which he came was an overwhelming success, and after the lapse of now many years people still remember that man of amazing erudition and grandeur of speech. But we, being simple people, and especially a certain lad, who is rapidly coming now to manhood, remember with keen delight how this absurd scholar had hardly finished afternoon tea before he demanded to see the mice, who were good enough to turn out of their nest, a mother and four children, and having rotated, the mother by herself, and the children by themselves, and each one having rotated by itself, all whirled round together in one delirium of delight, partly the delight of the mice and partly of the scholar.

Having moved us all to the tears of the heart by his prayer next morning, for it was as the supplication of a little child, so simple, so confiding, so reverent and affectionate, he bade the whole household farewell, from the oldest to the youngest with a suitable word for each, and he shook hands with the servants, making special inquiry for the housemaid's mother, and—there is no use concealing a scholar's disgrace any more than another man's—he made his last call upon the Japanese mice, and departed bowing at the door, and bowing at the gate of the garden, and bowing before he entered the cab, and bowing his last farewell from the window, while he loaded us all with expressions of gratitude for our “gracious and unbounded hospitality, which had refreshed him alike both in body and mind.” And he declared that he would have both that hospitality and ourselves in “continual remembrance.”

Before we retired to rest I had approached the question of his expenses, although I had an instinct that our scholar would be difficult to handle, and he had waived the whole matter as unworthy of attention. On the way to the station I insisted upon a settlement with the result that he refused to charge any fee, being thankful if his “remarks,” for he refused to give them the name of lecture, had been of any use for the furtherance of knowledge, and as regards expenses they were limited to a third-class return fare. He also explained that there were no other charges, as he travelled in cars and not in cabs, and any gifts he bestowed (by which I understood the most generous tips to every human being that served him in any fashion) were simply a private pleasure of his own. When I established him in the corner seat of a third-class compartment, with his humble luggage above his head, and an Arabic book in his hand, and some slight luncheon for the way in his pocket, he declared that he was going to travel as a prince. Before the train left an old lady opposite him in the carriage—I should say a tradesman's widow—was already explaining the reason of her journey, and he was listening with benignant interest. Three days later he returned the fee which was sent him, having deducted the third-class return fare, thanking us for our undeserved generosity, but explaining that he would count it a shame to grow rich through his services to knowledge. Some years afterwards I saw him in the distance, at a great public meeting, and when he mounted the platform the huge audience burst into prolonged applause, and were all the more delighted when he, who never had the remotest idea that people were honouring him, looked round, and discovering a pompous nonentity who followed him, clapped enthusiastically. And the only other time and the last that I saw him was on the street of a famous city, when he caught sight of a country woman dazed amid the people and the traffic, and afraid to cross to the other side. Whereupon our scholar gave the old woman his arm and led her carefully over, then he bowed to her, and shook hands with her, and I watched his tall form and white hair till he was lost in the distance. I never saw him again, for shortly after he had also passed over to the other side.

IV.—MY FRIEND THE TRAMP

ONE of the memorable and pitiable sights of the West, as the traveller journeys across the prairies, is the little group of Indians hanging round the lonely railway station. They are not dangerous now, nor are they dignified; they are harmless, poor, abject, shiftless, ready to beg or ready to steal, or to do anything else except work, and the one possession of the past which they still retain is the inventive and instinctive cunning of the savage, who can read the faintest sign like a written language, and knows the surest way of capturing his prey. One never forgets the squalid figure with some remains of former grandeur in his dress, and the gulf between us and this being of another race, unchanged amid the modern civilization. And then one comes home and suddenly recognizes our savages at our own doors.

Our savage tramps along our country roads, and loafs along our busy streets, he stops us with his whine when no policeman is near, and presents himself upon our doorstep, and when he is a master of his business he will make his way into our house. He has his own dress, combining many styles and various periods, though reduced to a harmony by his vagabond personality. He has his own language, which is unintelligible to strangers, and a complete system of communication by pictures. He marries and lives and dies outside civilization, sharing neither our habits nor our ideas, nor our labours, nor our religion, and the one infallible and universal badge of his tribe is that our savage will not work. He will hunger and thirst, he will sweat and suffer, he will go without shelter and without comfort, he will starve and die, but one thing he will not do, not even to get bread, and that is work; not even for tobacco, his dearest treasure and kindliest support, will he do fifteen minutes' honest labour. The first and last article in his creed, for which he is prepared to be a martyr and which makes him part of a community, is “I believe in idleness.” He has in him the blood of generations of nomads, and if taken off the roads, and compelled to earn his living would likely die. A general law of compulsory industry would bring the race to an end.

Besides his idleness he has many faults, for he is a liar to the bone, he is a drunkard whenever he can get the chance, he steals in small ways when it is safe, he bullies women if they are alone in a country house, he has not a speaking acquaintance with soap and water, and if he has any virtue it is not of a domestic character. He is ungrateful, treacherous, uncleanly, and vicious, to whom it is really wrong to give food, far

more money, and to whom it is barely safe to give the shelter of an outhouse, far less one's roof. And yet he is an adroit, shrewd, clever, entertaining rascal. He carries the geography of counties in his head down to the minutest details which you can find on no map, knowing every mountain track, and forgotten footpath, every spring where he can get water, and the warmest corner in a wood where he can sleep. He has also another map in his memory of the houses with the people that dwell therein; which he ought to pass by, which it were a sin to neglect, which are worth trying, and which have changed hands. And he is ever carrying on his ordnance survey, and bringing information up to date; and as he and his fellows make a note of their experiences for those who follow after, it may be safely said that no one knows better either a country-side or its inhabitants from his own point of view than our friend the vagrant.

Perhaps the struggle for existence has quickened his wits beyond those of his race, but at any rate our vagabond is not fettered by that solid and conventional English intellect which persists in doing things as our fathers used to do them, and will not accommodate itself to changing conditions. Our vagabond has certain old lines which he has long practised and which he is always willing to use, in suitable circumstances, such as the workman out of employment and tramping to another city to get a job because he has not money enough to pay his railway fare, or a convalescent just discharged from hospital and making his way home to his wife and children, or a high-spirited man too proud to beg, and only anxious for a day's work (in some employment which cannot be found within twenty miles). And when he plays any of these rôles he is able to assume an air of interesting weariness as if he could not drag one leg after the other, and on occasion will cough with such skill as to suggest galloping consumption. And poor (but proud) he only allows the truth to be dragged from him after much hesitation. But when those lines fail and new inventions are needed for new times he rises to the occasion. If there be a great miner's strike he goes from town to town begging money for his wife and children at home, and explaining the hardships of a miner's life, which he has diligently, although superficially, learned; and after a war he is a reservist who threw up a profitable job at his country's call, and is now penniless and starving, but still unwaveringly patriotic; and if there be any interest in the sea through recent storm and shipwrecks, he also, this man of many trials and many journeys, has been saved with difficulty from the waves and lost his little all. If he calls upon a priest, he is careful to call him “Father,” and to pose as a faithful Catholic; and if he be an Irishman, his brogue then becomes a fortune, but if he drops in upon a Minister of the Kirk he recalls the good which he got when sitting in the West Kirk of Paisley; and if he be so fortunate as to be really Scots in blood, and therefore acquainted with theology, he will not only deceive that minister, but even the elect themselves, I mean the Caledonian Society. When the vagabond comes upon a home of simple lay piety, he allows it to be understood that he has led a life of fearful wickedness but is now a genuine penitent, asking only for the means of gaining an honest livelihood. He is fertile in devices and brilliant in execution, without any prejudices against the past or present, but ever bringing forth from his treasury of unabashed falsehood and ingenious impudence things new and old.

Our savage has also got, what I believe the Red Indians have not, an agreeable sense of humour, which no doubt is limited by practical details, but is in its way very captivating. What a stroke of delightful irony it was for a pair of our savages to take a long street between them, the man begging down the right-hand side, and the woman the left, while the man told a mournful tale of his wife's death, and asked money to get her a coffin that she might be respectably buried—he being poor (but proud) and a broken-hearted widower—as well as to clothe their two mourning little ones in black for the funerals, and for the woman to tell exactly the same story as she went down the opposite side of the street, except that it was her husband she was burying, and she poor (but proud) and a broken-hearted widow. They took no notice of one another across the street, and none when they completed their work at the further end, but a few minutes later they were sitting in the same public-house together, both wonderfully comforted and affording a remarkable illustration of the dead burying their dead.

Our vagabond is a superb actor within his own province, and greatly enjoys a triumph in any conflict with the enemy. He was one day singing the “Sweet By-and-By” with such a voice and so much unctuous emotion that I lost patience, and broke out on him for his laziness and profanity. For a moment he was almost confounded, and then he assumed an air of meek martyrdom suggestive of a good man who had been trying to do his little best for the salvation of his fellow-creatures, and was being persecuted for righteousness sake. This was for the benefit of a simple-minded old gentleman who had been greatly shocked at my remarks, and now, as a rebuke to an ungodly and unsympathetic clergyman and an encouragement to humble piety, gave the vagabond a shilling. “God bless you,” he said with much feeling to the philanthropist, and started again the “Sweet By-and-By”! but before we parted he tipped me a wink over his victory, charged with inexpressible humour.

When one of the savages honoured our humble home by calling one day as an incapacitated member of the Mercantile Marine and obtained half-a-crown from my tender-hearted wife, partly through sympathy, but also through alarm, because the suffering sailor proposed to exhibit the sores upon his legs, I knew that the tidings would be carried far and wide throughout the nearest tribe, our local Black-feet as it were, and that we would be much favoured in days to come. So we were, by other sailors, also with sores, by persons who had been greatly helped by my preaching in the years of long ago, by widow women full of sorrow and gin, by countrymen stranded helpless in a big unsympathetic city, till our house was little better than a casual ward. Then I took the matter in hand and interviewed the next caller, who had been long out of employment, but had now obtained a job and only wanted the means of living till Monday when he would be independent of everybody. He had spent his last penny the day before on a piece of bread, and had tasted nothing since. “Not even drink,” I ventured to inquire, for by this time the air round me was charged with alcohol, when he replied with severe dignity that he had been a teetotaller since his boyhood. Then I addressed him briefly but clearly, explaining that the half-crown had been given by mistake, that we were greatly obliged for the visit of his friends, that I had enjoyed his own call, but that it would save a great deal of trouble to both sides if he would only intimate to his fellow-tribesmen and women when they gathered round the camp fire in the evening that there was no more spoil to be obtained at our house. He looked at me, and I looked at him, and a smile came over his face. “I'm fly,” he said. And then as he went out at the door he turned for a last shot, “Look here, sir, if you give me a bob, I'll join your church, and be an elder in a month.” A fellow of infinite jest, and I gave him a shilling, but without conditions.

The humour of our nomad is always practical, and when it masters him it sweeps all professional hypocrisy before it like a water-flood, and reveals the real man. Certainly quite unclothed, but also quite unashamed. He had told his story so artfully, with such care in detail and such conviction in tone, that I did believe for the moment that he was a poor Scot trying to get home by sea to Glasgow, together with his wife and four children, that he had obtained his passage-money from the Caledonian Society, and that he only needed a little money for food and such like expenses. This money I gave him somewhat lavishly, and yet not quite without suspicion, and he left full of gratitude and national enthusiasm. Three years later a man got entrance to my study on the grounds of Christianity and nationality, and before he addressed me directly I thought that I knew his voice. When he explained that he had got his passage to Glasgow from that noble institution, the Caledonian Society, but that as he had a wife and four children... I was sure we had met before, and I offered to do the rest of the story myself, which I did with such an accurate memory that he listened with keen appreciation like a composer to the playing of his own piece, and only added when I had finished, “So I did it here afore. Well, sir, ye may take my word for it, it's the first mistake I've made in my business.” And he departed with the self-conceit of the Scots only slightly chastened.

V.—OUR BOY

THE boy must have had a father, and some day he may be a father himself, but in the meantime he is absolutely different from anything else on the face of the earth. He is a race by himself, a special creation that cannot be traced, for who would venture to liken his ways to the respectability of his father, or who would ever connect him with the grave and decorous man which he is to be. By-and-by, say in thirty years, he will preside at a meeting for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or make enthusiastic speeches for the conversion of black people, or get in a white heat about the danger of explosives in the house, or be exceedingly careful about the rate of driving. Meanwhile he watches two dogs settle their political differences with keen interest, and would consider it unsportsmanlike to interfere if they were fairly matched, and the sight of a black man is to him a subject of unfailing and practical amusement, if he can blow himself and a brother up with gunpowder, he feels that time has not been lost, and it is to him a chief delight —although stolen—to travel round at early morn with the milkman, and being foolishly allowed to drive, to take every corner on one wheel. He is skilful in arranging a waterfall which comes into operation by the opening of a door; he keeps a menagerie of pets, unsightly in appearance, and extremely offensive in smell in his bedroom. He has an inexhaustible repertory of tricks for any servant with whom he has quarrelled, and it is his pleasure to come downstairs on the bannisters, and if any one is looking to make believe that he is going to fall off and dash himself to destruction three floors below. His father is aghast at him, and uses the strongest language regarding his escapades; he wonders how it came to pass that such a boy should turn up in his home, and considers him what gardeners would call “a sport” or unaccountable eccentricity in the family. He is sure that he never did such things when he was a boy, and would be very indignant if you insinuated he had simply been a prophecy of his son. According to his conversation you would imagine that his early life had been distinguished by unbroken and spotless propriety, and his son himself would not believe for a moment that the pater had ever been guilty of his own exploits. The Boy is therefore lonely in his home, cut off from the past and the future; he is apt to be misunderstood and even (in an extreme case) censured, and his sufferings as a creature of a foreign race with all the powers of government against him would be intolerable had he not such a joy in living, and were he not sustained in everything he does by a quite unaffected sense of innocence, and the proud consciousness of honourable martyrdom.

As wild animals are best studied in their native states, and are much restricted in the captivity of a cage, so the Boy is not seen at his best in a middle-class home where he is sadly fettered by vain customs (although it is wonderful how even there he can realize himself). When you want to understand what manner of creature he is, you must see him on the street. And the boy *in exedsis*, and *de profundis* too, is a message-boy.

Concluding that his son has had enough of the Board School, and learning from his master that there was not the remotest chance he would ever reach a higher standard, his father brings him some morning to a respectable tradesman, and persuades the unsuspecting man to take him as message-boy. Nothing could exceed the modesty and demure appearance of the Boy, and the only fear is that he be too timid and too simple for his duty—that he may be run over by a cab or bullied upon the streets. Carefully washed by his mother, and with his hair nicely brushed, in a plain but untorn suit of clothes, and a cap set decently on his head, he is a beautiful sight, and he listens to his father's instructions to do what he is told, and his master's commandment that he is not to meddle with anything in the shop, in respectful and engaging silence. His father departs with a warning look, and his master gives him an easy errand, and the Boy goes out to begin life in a hard, unfriendly world, while one pities his tender youth.

The Boy has started with a considerable capital of knowledge, gathered at school, and in a few weeks he is free of the streets—a full-grown citizen in his own kingdom, and, if you please, we will watch him for an hour. His master has given him some fish, and charged him as he values his life to deliver them at once at No. 29, Rose Terrace, and the boy departs with conscientious purpose. Half way to his destination he sees in the far distance the butcher's boy, who also has been sent in hot haste to some house where the cook is demanding the raw material for luncheon. They signal to one another with clear, penetrating, unintelligible cries like savages across a desert, and the result is that the two messengers rendezvous at the corner of Rose Terrace. What they talk about no person can tell, for their speech is their own, but by-and-by under the influence of, no doubt informing, conversation, they relax from there austere labours and lay down their baskets. A minute later they are playing marbles with undivided minds, and might be playing pitch and toss were they not afraid

of a policeman coming round the corner. It is nothing to them, gay, irresponsible children of nature, that two cooks are making two kitchens unbearable with their indignation, for the boy has learned to receive complaints with imperturbable gravity and ingenious falsehood. Life for him is a succession of pleasures, slightly chastened by work and foolish impatience. As they play, a dog who has been watching them from afar with keen interest, and thoroughly understands their ways, creeps near with cautious cunning, and seizing the chance of a moment when the butcher's boy has won a “streaky” from the fishmonger, dashes in and seizes the leg of mutton. If he had been less ambitious and taken a chop, he would have succeeded, and then the boy would have explained that the chop had been lost in a street accident in which he was almost killed, but a leg of mutton is heavy to lift and a boy is only less alert than a dog. The spoil is barely over the edge of the basket, and the dog has not yet tasted its sweetness, before the boy gives a yell so shrill and fearsome that it raises the very hair on the dog's back, and the thief bolts in terror without his prey. The boy picks up the mutton, dusts it on his trousers, puts it back in the basket, gives the fishmonger a playful punch on the side of the head, to which that worthy responds with an attempted kick, and the two friends depart in opposite directions, whistling, with a light heart and an undisturbed conscience.

If any one imagines that the boy will now hurry with his fish, he does not understand the nature of the race and its freedom from enslaving rule. A few yards down Rose Terrace he comes upon the grocer's boy and the two unearth a chemist's boy, and our boy produces a penny dreadful, much tom and very fishy, but which contains the picture of a battle swimming in blood, and the three sit down for its enjoyment. When they have fairly exhausted their literature the boy receives his fee, as the keeper of a circulating library, by being allowed to dip his finger carefully wetted before into a bag of moist sugar, and to keep all that he can take out, and the grocer's boy is able to close up the bag so skilfully that the cook will never know that it has been opened. From the chemist he receives a still more enjoyable because much more perilous reward, for he is allowed to put his mouth to the spout of a syphon and, if he can endure, to take what comes—and that is the reason why syphons are never perfectly full. It occurs to the chemist at this moment that he was told to lose no time in delivering some medicines, and so he departs reluctantly; the conference breaks up, and it seems as if nothing remained for the boy but to deliver the fish. Still you never know what may happen, and as at that moment he catches sight of a motor-car, it seems a mere duty to hurry back to the top of the terrace to see whether it will break down. It does of course, for otherwise one could hardly believe it to be a motor-car, and the boy under what he would consider a call of providence, hastens to offer assistance. Other boys arrive from different quarters, interested, sympathetic, obliging, willing to co-operate with the irritated motor-man in every possible way. They remain with him twenty-five minutes till he starts again, and then three of them accompany him on a back seat, not because they were invited, but because they feel they are needed. And then the boy goes back to Rose Terrace and delivers the fish, stating with calm dignity, that he had just been sent from the shop and had run all the way.

Things are said to him at the house by the cook, who is not an absolute fool, and things may be said to him by his master at the shop, who has some knowledge of boys, but no injurious reflection of any kind affects the boy. With a mind at leisure from itself he is able to send his empty basket spinning along the street after a lady's poodle, and to accompany this attention with a yell that will keep the pampered pet on the run for a couple of streets to the fierce indignation of its mistress. And the chances are that he will foregather with an Italian monkey boy, and although the one knows no Italian and the other knows no English, they will have pleasant fellowship together, because both are boys, and in return for being allowed to have the monkey on his shoulder, and seeing it run up a waterpipe, he will give the Italian half an apple which comes out of his pocket with two marbles and a knife attached to it. If he be overtaken by a drenching shower, he covers his head and shoulders with his empty basket, sticks his hands in his pockets, and goes on his way singing in the highest of spirits, but if the day be warm he travels on the steps of a'bus when the conductor is on the roof, or on a lorry, if the driver be not surly. If it be winter time, and there be ice on the streets, he does his best, with the assistance of his friends, to make a slide, and if the police interfere, with whom he is on terms of honourable warfare, he contents himself with snowballing some prudish-looking youth, who is out for a walk with his mother. All the same he is not without his ambitions in the world, and he carries sacred ideals in the secret of his heart. He would give all that he possesses,—five lurid and very tattered books, a penknife with four blades (two broken), nineteen marbles (three glass), and a pair of white mice—to be the driver of a butcher's cart. The boy is a savage, and although you may cover him with a thin veneer of civilization he remains a savage. There is a high-class school for little boys in my district, and those at a distance are driven home in cabs that they may not get wet in winter weather and may not be over-fatigued. A cab is passing at this moment with four boys, who have invited two friends to join them, and it is raining heavily. Two boys are on the box seat with the driver, and have thoughtfully left their topcoats inside in case they might get spoiled. There is a boy with his head out at either window addressing opprobrious remarks to those on the box-seat, for which insults one of them has just lost his cap, the other two are fighting furiously in the bottom of the cab, and will come out an abject spectacle. For you may train a dog to walk on its hind legs, and you may tame a tiger, but you cannot take the boyness out of a boy.

VI.—A RESIDUARY

I

EXCEPTIONS may be allowed in theory, at least, but the rule stands impregnable in reason and practice, that a wife should have the absolute control of the household, and that no male person should meddle, even as an irresponsible critic, with the servant department. There are limits to the subjection of the gentler sex which reserves the right to choose its acts of homage to the titular head of the family. Can anything be prettier, for instance, than the deference which women of very pronounced character will show to their husbands in some affairs? “Nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to have taken a stall at your charming bazaar, but my husband absolutely forbids me, and you know what a tyrant he is about my health,” or “You really must not ask my opinion about the Eastern Question, for I am shockingly ignorant of politics, but my husband knows everything, and I have heard him say that the Government has been very weak.” It would not, however, be wise for this favoured man to trespass too far on the almost Oriental deference of his wife, or hastily to suppose that because his word was useful in saving her from the drudgery of an unfashionable bazaar or the weary drone of a conversational bore, his was a universal infallibility. This sweet spirit of passive obedience will not continue if a rash man should differ from the house manager on the technical merits of a servant, for he will then be told that his views on all such matters are less than nothing and vanity.

No man knows, nor ever expects to know, what women talk about after they have left the dining-room in stately procession and secluded themselves in the parliament of the drawing-room; but it may be guessed that the conference, among other things, reviews the incredible folly of mankind in the sphere of household affairs. How it will not give the head of the family one minute's serious concern that the cook feeds her kinsfolk with tit-bits in the kitchen, provided that his toast be crisp and his favourite dish well cooked. How he would any day give a certificate of character to the housemaid, if he were allowed to perpetrate such an absurdity, simply and solely on the ground that his bath was ready every morning, and his shaving-water hot, while he did not know, nor seem to care, that the dust was lying thick in hidden corners. How he would excuse the waitress having a miscellaneous circle of admirers, provided she did not loiter at the table and was ingenious in saving him from unwelcome callers. They compare notes on the trials of household government; they comfort one another with sympathy; they revel in tales of male innocence and helplessness, till they are amazed that men should be capable of even such light duties as fall on them in their daily callings, and are prepared to receive them kindly as they enter the room with much diffidence and make an appeal by their very simplicity to a woman's protecting care.

John Leslie was devoted to his very pretty and very managing wife, and had learned wisdom, so that he never meddled, but always waited till his advice was invited. Like other wise husbands, he could read his wife's face, and he saw that afternoon, two days before Christmas, as soon as he entered the drawing-room, that there had been trouble in the household. His kiss was received without response; her cheeks had the suggestion of a flush; her lips were tightly drawn; and there was a light in her eyes which meant defiance. She stated with emphasis, in reply to a daily inquiry, that she was perfectly well, and that everything had gone well that day. When she inquired why he should suppose that anything was wrong, he knew that it had been a black storm, and that the end thereof was not yet.

“By the way, Flo,”—and Leslie congratulated himself on avoiding every hidden rock,—“I've completed my list of Christmas presents, and I flatter myself on one downright success, which suggests that I have original genius.”

“Do you mean the picture of Soundbergh School for Jack?” said Mrs. Leslie coldly. “I daresay he will be pleased, although I don't believe that boys care very much for anything except for games and gingerbread cakes; they are simply barbarians”; and as Leslie knew that his wife had been ransacking London to get a natty portable camera wherewith Jack might take bits of scenery, his worst-weather guess seemed to be confirmed.

“No, no, that was obvious, and I believe Jack will be fearfully proud of his picture,” replied Leslie bravely; “but I was at my wit's end to know what to get for old Margaret. You see, I used to give her pincushions and works of art from the Thames Tunnel when I was a little chap, and I bought her boas and gay-coloured handkerchiefs when I came up at Christmas from Oxford, and you know since she left the old home and settled with us eighteen years ago we have exhausted the whole catalogue.”

“You have, at least”; and having no clue, Leslie was amazed at his wife's indifference to the factotum and ruler of the household, whom the junior servants were obliged to call Mrs. Hoskins—“Mrs.” being a title of dignity, not of marriage—or Cook at the lowest, and who was called everything by her old boy John Leslie and his son Jack, from Maggie to Magsibus, and answered to anything by which her two masters chose to name her.

“Oh, you have been as keen as any one in the family about Magsy's present,”—and Leslie still clung to hope,—“but I've walked out before you all. What do you think of a first-class likeness of Spurgeon in an oak frame, with his autograph? You know how she goes on about him, and reads his sermons. It 'ill be hung in the place of honour in the kitchen, with burnished tin and brass dishes on either side. Now, confess, haven't I scored?”

“If you propose to put your picture on her table on Christmas morning, I fear you will be a day late, for Margaret has given up her place, and asked to be allowed to leave to-morrow: she wants to bid Jack good-bye before she goes,” and Mrs. Leslie's voice was iced to twenty degrees below freezing.

“What do you mean?” cried Leslie, aghast, for in all his dark imaginations he had never anticipated this catastrophe. “Maggie! our Meg! leaving at a day's notice! It's too absurd! You've... had a quarrel, I suppose, but that won't, come to anything. Christmas is the time for... making up.”

“You do not know much about household management, John,” Mrs. Leslie explained with much dignity. “Mistresses don't quarrel with servants, however much provoked they may be. If I have to find fault, I make a rule of doing so quickly and civilly, and I allow no reply. It was Margaret flung up her place with very unbecoming language; and you may be sure this time there will be no 'making up,' as you call it.

“What happened, Florence?” said John Leslie, with a note in his voice which a woman never treats with disrespect. “You know I do not interfere between you and the young servants, but Margaret has been with us since we married, and before that was for sixteen years in my father's house. We cannot part lightly; did she

speak discourteously to you?”

“I do not know what a man may call discourtesy, but Margaret informed me that either she or the housemaid must leave, and that the sooner the housemaid went the better for the house.”

“But I thought that the housemaid was a Baptist too, and that Margaret and she got on capitally, and rather looked down on the waitress because she was a Methodist.”

“So they did for a time, till they found out that they were different kinds of Baptists, just imagine! They had such arguments in the kitchen that Lucy has had to sit in her pantry, and last evening Margaret called the housemaid a 'contracted Baptist,' and she said Margaret was a 'loose Baptist.' So Margaret told me that if she was a 'loose Baptist,' it was not good for the housemaid to stay in the house with her; and if I preferred a woman like that, she would go at once, and so she is going.” “When men break on theology in the smoking-room,” remarked Leslie, “the wise go to bed at once, and two women—and one of them old Margaret—on the distinctions among the Baptist denomination must be beyond words and endurance. It is natural that places should be given up, but not necessary that the offer should be accepted. What did you say to Margaret, Florence?”

“That she had secured the dismissal of five servants already within three years: one because she was High Church; a second because she was no Church; that big housemaid from Devon for no reason I could discover except that she ate too much, as if we grudged food; the last waitress because she did not work enough, as if that concerned her; and the one before because she had a lover Margaret did not approve, and that I did not propose to lose a good housemaid because she was not the same sort of Baptist as Margaret.

“It is very nice and romantic to talk about the old family servant,” continued Mrs. Leslie with a vibrant voice, “and I hope that I have not been ungrateful to Margaret, but people forget what a mistress has to suffer from the 'old family servant,' and I tell you, John, that I can endure Margaret's dictation no longer. She must leave, or... I must”; and when his wife swept out of the room to dress for dinner, Leslie knew that they had come to a crisis in family life.

II

“How are you, mummy?” and Jack burst in upon the delighted household gathered in the hall with a trail of loosely packed luggage behind him, and a pair of skates he had forgotten to pack altogether, round his neck. “I say, that's a ripping dress you have on. Cusack, our house 'pre,' says yours is the prettiest photo he ever saw. You're looking fit, pater, but you must come a trot with me, or you'll have a pot soon. Jolly journey? Should rather think so! dressed old Swallow up in a rug, and laid him out on a seat; people thought he had small-pox, and wouldn't come in; four of us had the place to ourselves all the way: foxey, wasn't it? Cold, not a bit. We shoved every hot-water pan in below the seats, and the chaps put more in at every stop, till we had eight in full blast.

“Look out, cabby, and be kind to that hamper with my best china. What is it? Oh, that's some really decent booze for the festivities—three dozen Ripon stone ginger; and there's a dozen among my shirts. Can't get that tipple in the South. How are you, Lucy and Mary? I've got a pair of spiffing caps for you; do for church if you like. But where is the youthful Marguerite? She used to be always dodging round, pretending that she was just passing by accident. Dinner ready? All right; I'm pretty keen, too. Tell Magsibus I'll be down after dessert with a brimming bowl of stone ginger.

“Hello, old lady! As you didn't come up to welcome the returning prodigal at the door, he's come down to give you his blessing. It's all right, Mag, I was only fooling. You daren't have taken your eye off that pudding one minute, I know. It was A 1; best thing you ever did, and awfully good to have it for the first night.

“That gingerbread you sent took the cup this term, and no second. Fellows offered to do my lines for me, and sucked up to me no end just to get a slice. Ain't that the tin up there you make it in? Chap next study had a thing he called gingerbread—feeblest show you ever saw—burnt crust outside and wet dough inside.

“There's the old brass jam-pan, Peg, ain't it? Do you remember when Billy Poole and I used to help at the boiling, and get the skim for our share? Billy's won a scholarship at Cambridge; youngest chap to take it, and is a howling Greek swell, but you bet he hasn't forgot that hot jam. Not he; was asking for you last week. I'll get him here next autumn before he goes up, and we'll have a jam blow-out.... What's wrong, Magsy?

“Don't blub. Tell me who's been hitting you. Is it those two young fools? The mater will soon settle their hash. Here's my handkerchief. There, now you're all right, ar'n't you?”

“It's really silly of me, Master Jack, and I ought to be ashamed of myself, at my age too, but it was you speaking of next year. I thought perhaps your mother had told you that... I am leaving tomorrow.”

“Going to leave us and your home?” and Jack sat down on the kitchen table in stark amazement. “Where would you go to, Magsy? Why, you nursed me when I was a kid, and you knew the pater when he was a fellow at school. Why, you couldn't get on without us, and, look here, this circus can't be worked without you.

“If you don't feel fit for the cooking,—and it must be a beastly stew over the fire,—mother'ill get another hand, and you'll just order her round and have a good time.” But Margaret sat with sad, despairing eyes, looking straight before her, and making no sign.

“You couldn't do it, Magsibus,” and the lad came over and put his arm round her; “it would be too mean. Didn't you promise to wait and start house with me, the same as you did with father? and now you calmly announce that you are going to set up for yourself, and be a lady. Oh, you treacherous, wicked woman!”

“Master Jack, I have not a relative living, and I couldn't go to another place—I've been too long with one family—four-and-thirty years—and I don't know what I'll do without the sight of you, for my heart has no portion outside this house on earth; but I must go, I cannot do otherwise, I must go.

“You see, I'm getting old, dear, and I've been so long here that I forget it's not my own house—God knows that I would die for you all—and I have a temper, and I shall be... a trouble and not a help. Your mother has been a good mistress to me, and been kinder to me than I have been to her. I'll pray for you all as long as I live, and I would like to... see you sometimes; but I must go, Master Jack, I must go.”

III

“It seems to me, Flo,” and Leslie stretched out his legs in the warmth, “the chief good of easy circumstances is being able to afford a wood fire in one's bedroom,—that and books. Do you remember that evil-smelling oil-stove in our little house at Islington? By the way, did I tell you that I ran out one afternoon last week, when I had an hour to spare, and paid an outside visit to our first home. It looked rather forlorn, and so small and shabby.”

“It was the dearest little house when we lived in it, John,” and Mrs. Leslie saw wonderful things in the firelight; “and when you were at the office I used to go from room to room, arranging and dusting and admiring.”

“Yes, but you also had the most toothsome evening meals ready at eight p.m. for a struggling colonial broker, and used to dress perfectly, and did it all on next to nothing.”

“Two hundred and twenty-two pounds five shillings and threepence—that, sir, was the first year's income. Don't you remember making up the book, and finding we had thirty pounds over; but, then, Jack, we had... a perfect servant.”

“Poor Margaret! what an interest she took in our daring enterprise! By the way, your memory is better than mine, wife: didn't we tell her how the balance stood, and she was the best pleased of the three?”

“'Praise God!' she cried, 'I knew, Mr. John, you did right to trust and to marry, and some day I'll see you in a big house, if God will'; and then you told her to bring up her missionary box and you gave her a sovereign, and when she put it in, her hand was shaking for joy. Her temper has got masterful since she grew old, and she is aggravating; but I know she's a good woman.”

“Yes, Meg wouldn't have left us if we had been down on our luck: I believe she would have seen us through and gone without wages”; and Leslie spoke with the tone of one hazarding a wild speculation.

“You believe, John!” clever women are sometimes befooled. “Why, have you forgotten that winter when you lost so heavily, and it looked as if we would have to go into rooms, how Margaret wanted to go out cooking to help the family, and she would have done it had not things taken a turn? Whatever be her faults,—and she has been provoking,—she is a loyal soul.”

“Well, we only had one bad illness, Flo, and I'll never forget the mornings when I came from my lodgings and stood on the street, and you told me what kind of night Jack had had, and the days when I toiled at the office, and you fought scarlet fever at home. You were a brave woman—without a nurse, too.”

“Without what—for shame, John!—when Maggie sat up all night and worked all day, and was so clever that the doctor said she had saved Jack's life—well, perhaps be admitted that I helped, but she did more than I could—I would rather have let twenty housemaids go than see Maggie leave, John, if she had given me the chance.”

“Margaret always had a temper, Flo, even in the old days when I was a boy, and now she's fairly roused.”

“It isn't temper at all now, John, or I would not be so vexed: it's her goodness which will drive her out in the end, and she'll never know one day of happiness again. She told me to-night that she was sure that there would always be trouble between her and the other servants, and as she had tried to serve us well when she was younger she would not make our home unhappy in her old age. Jack pleaded with her, and I—I nearly cried; she was quite affected, too, but she is immovable.”

“Well, we can do no more, and you mustn't blame yourself, Flo: it has just been a smash; and if she does go, we must see that she be made comfortable in her last years. But I wish old Margaret were not leaving us on Christmas Eve. Jack is very sick about it, and I rather suspect that he was crying when I looked into his room just now; but he pretended to be asleep, and I couldn't insult a fellow in the fifth form with remarks.”

IV

When the Leslies set up house, eighteen years before, Margaret received them on their return from their ten days' wedding tour in the Lake District, and she was careful to ask in the evening whether Mr. John would like prayers before or after breakfast next morning. She also produced a book of family prayers, which she had purchased in anticipation of the sole difficulty which is understood to prevent the majority of male householders from having worship in their homes, and asked her young master and mistress to accept it from her. So it came to pass that owing to Margaret there were always morning prayers at the Leslies'; and in observance of a custom begun when there were just the three in the little house of Islington, fighting the battle of life together, the chapter was read round, each person taking one verse in turn. To-night Leslie divided his time between short snatches of sleep, when he dreamt of funerals in which Margaret departed sitting beside the driver of the hearse, while a mourning coach followed with her luggage on the roof, and long periods of wakefulness when he regarded next morning's prayers with dismay. Was there a special prayer for a servant leaving her household after eighteen—no, thirty-four years' faithful duty; and if there was not, could he weave in a couple of sentences among the petitions? At half-past six he was certain that he could not, and was ashamed at the thought that with that well worn prayer-book of Margaret's before him he would allow her to depart without a benediction, when he was visited quite suddenly, he declares, with the most brilliant inspiration of his life. He leaped from bed and lit the gas in hot haste, as poets are said to do when the missing word to rhyme with Timbuctoo flashes upon the mind.

“Florence, please tell me something”; and Mrs. Leslie saw her husband standing by her bed in poorly concealed excitement. “Where are those words that were sung at the sacred concert: 'Intreat me not to leave thee'? I want to know at once; never mind why. Ruth? Thanks so much,” and the noise he made in his bath was audible through the wall, and was that of a man in hot haste.

When Mrs. Leslie came down, her husband had a marker in the Bible projecting six inches, and was checking certain calculations on a sheet of paper with much care.

“Morning, Jack—slept well—not very? That's right, I mean I'm very sorry, must have been the pudding. Not

there, for any sake; sit here, and, let me see—Florence, where are you wandering to? Take this chair. Six, seven, eight... seventeen, yes, that's Margaret. Now ring the bell.” And Mrs. Leslie could only look at Leslie in silence, while Jack felt that the firmament was being shaken that day, and one catastrophe more did not matter.

“We shall read,” said the head of the household in a shaky voice, “from—eh—the—eh—Book of Ruth, the first chapter and the sixth verse”; and as soon as his wife saw the passage she understood, and so did Margaret.

Round the circle went the verses—Leslie very nervous lest he should have miscalculated—till Jack read:

“'And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'”

Then it came to Margaret, and she began bravely, but soon weakened: “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried... the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death... part...”

“Let us pray,” said Leslie; and it is his fixed belief that, having lost the place, he read the prayer for the close of the year and making an attempt to right himself landed in a thanksgiving for the gift of a new-born child; but nobody is certain and nobody cared.

“I ought to go,” said Margaret, standing very white by the sideboard after the other servants had left the room, “and it would be better for you all, whom I love, that I should go; but... I cannot, I can...”

“Dear old Magsibus,” and Jack had her round the waist before she could say “not” again, or even explain, as she did afterwards, how good a woman the housemaid was, and how much she would miss her; and as Mrs. Leslie thought of the days they had been together, the saving the lad from death and many another deed of loyal, ungrudging service, she did that which was contrary to every rule of household discipline. But Leslie could not have seen his wife kiss Margaret, for his back was turned, and he was studying the snow-covered garden with rapt attention.

VII.—A RACONTEUR

YOU must excuse me the gaucherie of a compliment,” I said to Bevan in the smoking-room, after a very pleasant dinner, “but you have never been more brilliant. Five stories, and each a success, is surely a record even in your experience.”

“It is very good of you to appreciate my poor efforts so highly. I felt it a distinct risk to attempt five in one evening—six is the farthest limit sanctioned by any raconteur of standing. You can always distinguish an artist from a mere amateur by his severe reserve. He knows that an anecdote is a liqueur, and he offers it seldom; but the other pours out his stuff like vin ordinaire, which it is, as a rule, the mere dregs of the vine. Did you ever notice how a man will come back from Scotland in autumn, and bore companies of unoffending people with a flood of what he considers humorous Scottish stories? It is one of the brutalities of conversation. What irritates me is not that the material is Scottish, for there are many northern stories with a fine flavour; it is the fellow's utter ignorance of the two great principles of our art.”

“Which are?”

“Selection and preparation,” said Bevan, with decision. “One must first get good stuff, and then work it into shape. It is amazing how much is offered and how little is of any use. People are constantly bringing me situations that they think excellent, and are quite disappointed when I tell them they are impossible for the purposes of art. Nothing can be done with them, although of course another artist in a different line might use them. Now I have passed several 'bits' on to Brown-Johnes, who delivers popular lectures. The platform story is scene-painting, the after-dinner miniature.”

“May I ask whether you are ever taken in, as it were, with your material, and find it 'give' after it has been manufactured, like rotten yarn or unseasoned wood?”

“Rarely; one's eye gets to be trained so that you know a promising subject at sight, but then comes the labour. I've heard a man bore a dinner-table to the yawning point with a story that had some excellent points in it, but he had taken no trouble, perhaps had no insight.”

“And you succeeded with it...?”

“It is, in my humble judgment, as good a story of its kind now as you would wish to hear, and it bears improvement, which is a good sign. A really high-class story will take years to perfect, just as I am told by clergymen that a sermon only begins to go after it has been preached twenty times.”

“You have been working on that Shakespeare bit, by the way; I noticed at least one new touch this evening which was excellent.”

“Now that is very gratifying,” and Bevan was evidently pleased; “it is a great satisfaction to have one's work appreciated in an intelligent manner; perhaps you are the only one present who saw any difference.

“What I think I like best”—and he tapped his snuff-box in a meditative way—“is to get an old, decayed, hopeless story, and restore it. Breaking out a window here, adding a porch there, opening up a room, and touching up the walls—it is marvellous what can be done. Besides new drains,” he added, with significance, “the sanitary state of some of those old stories is awful. You feel the atmosphere at the door—quite intolerable, and indeed dangerous.”

“Then you do not think that indecency...?”

“No, nor profanity. Both are bad art; they are cheap expedients, like strong sauces to cover bad cooking. It sounds like boasting, but I have redeemed one or two very unpleasant tales, which otherwise had been uninhabitable, if I may trifle again with my little figure, and now are charming.”

“You rather lean, one would gather, to old tales, while some of the younger men are terrified of telling a 'chestnut,' always prefacing, 'This must be well known, but it is new to me; say at once if you have heard it.'”

“Most humiliating, and quite unworthy of an artist. Heard it before!” and the old gentleman was full of scorn. “Imagine a painter apologizing for having taken a bend of the Thames or a Highland glen some man had used before. Of course, if one makes a copy of a picture and exhibits it as his own, that is fraud, and the work is certain to be poor. One must respect another artist's labour, which is the ground of his copyright. But if one makes a 'bit' of life as old as Aristophanes or Horace his own, by passing it through his own fancy and turning it out in his own style, then it is ever new. Then there is the telling! There are musicians who can compose, but who cannot play, and *vice versâ*. So with our art, there are story-tellers and story-makers. The former can suffer no wrong, for they are self-protected, but the latter have never been protected as they deserve in the fruit of their brains. You will see at once that, if I am right, the ownership of an anecdote is quite beyond dispute. The original material is really for the most part common property, and usually very poor property—prairie land, in fact. Personal rights come in when one has put capital into the land, has cleared and ploughed and sown it; then it's his own, and he is entitled to fence it, and he cannot be dispossessed except on fair terms.”

“Which would be?”

“Well, that depends. He might sell to an editor, or he might give the use of it to a friend. Personally, as an artist of now thirty years' standing, I do not part with my work; it may be an old-fashioned prejudice, but I don't like to let it go to the public.”

“But to a friend?”

“Of course that is different; still, how few can be trusted. Now I once gave Higginbotham a very nice little thing of French extraction, but not too subtle, with just enough body to suit our palate. He beard me tell it three times in exactly the same form, and I pledged him to make no changes, for his hand is heavy. Would you believe me?”—and my friend sat up in his indignation—“he gave it in my presence—but that did not matter—and left out the best point, which I now think he had never seen. Life has various trials in store for us as times go on,” and Bevan leant back again. “Some are greater, some are less, but among our minor vexations I know none like sitting at one end of a table and making talk with your partner, while a rank amateur at the other end mangles one of your pet anecdotes.”

“Torture, I should think; but isn't it rather trying when people miss the point altogether or ask stupid questions?”

“Artists must take their chance of that, and one is careful; besides, I've distinctly enjoyed such remarks,” and he looked quite genial. “It's like a painter hearing the people criticize the pictures on a free day. Once or twice I've got a very happy addition to a story in that way. After all, the main end of a raconteur must be to give pleasure. Yes”—and he began to glow—“no art is wholesome which lives for itself or for a professional class. Art must be a criticism of life and an aid to better living. No one can tell how much story-telling has contributed to the brightness and elevation of life. How? By correcting foibles, by explaining human nature, by destroying cant, by infusing good humour, by diminishing scandal, by—but I remind myself that a raconteur ought never to be excited or eloquent. He may, however, be a philanthropist, as it would appear. Do you know,” with a tone of great delight, “that I was once asked by a physician to call upon one of his patients, a mutual friend, and spend an hour with him, as a... tonic, in fact. It was after influenza, and the convalescent began by asking me whether I would distribute a sum of money among the poor. 'I'm not sure what I'm dying of; either peritonitis or pneumonia, but I'm glad to see you, Bevan, and you will do this little kindness for me'—those were his affecting words. 'Certainly,' I said, and that led me to give him a trifle from Devonshire—excellent place for stories—which seemed to interest him. I only told four stories—for he was rather weak, having had a slight touch of bronchitis—and he is pleased still to thank me,” and Bevan nodded with much satisfaction.

As I looked at him, so filled with the pride of his art, the time seemed to have come for a question that had long been in my mind. But it was necessary to be careful.

“What, may I ask, Mr. Bevan, do you feel about the matter of... well, you won't misunderstand me... of accuracy?”

“You mean whether is there any difference between giving evidence in a witness-box and relating an anecdote. Everything. The one is a land surveyor's plan, and must be correct to an inch. The other is a picture, and must interpret nature. The one is a matter of fact, the other a work of art. Imagine the folly”—and the good man rose to his feet—“if one should demand to know whether the figures in a historical painting stood exactly so and were dressed in those particular colours; we should think the man mad. A story is a miniature novel, shot through with humour, a morsel of the irony of things, a tiny comedy, and for it there is but one rule of judgment—does it represent the spirit of life?”

“What then do you think of one who should certify an anecdote as a fact?”

“That he did not know his craft, for if the tale has no merit, then it is little compensation to tell us it happened; if it has merit, we are sure it ought to have happened.”

“And if one should interrupt a raconteur as he approached his point, and should inquire whether the thing be true?”

“I am a merciful man,” said the venerable artist, “but my conviction is that he ought to be shot.”

VIII.—WITH UNLEAVENED BREAD

RABBI SAUNDERSON, minister of Kilbogie, had been the preacher on the fast day before Carmichaele's first sacrament in the Glen, and, under the full conviction that he had only been searching out his own sins, the old man had gone through the hearts of the congregation as with the candle of the Lord, till Donald Menzies, who had all along suspected that he was little better than a hypocrite, was now fully persuaded that for him to take the sacrament would be to eat and drink condemnation to himself, and Lauchlan Campbell was amazed to discover that a mere Lowland Scot like the rabbi was as mighty a preacher of the law as the chief of the Highland host. The rabbi had been very tender withal, so that the people were not only humbled, but also moved with the honest desire after better things.

Although it was a bitter day, and the snow was deep upon the ground, the rabbi would not remain over-night with Carmichael. Down in Kilbogie an old man near fourscore years of age was dying, and was not assured of the way everlasting, and the rabbi must needs go back through the snow that he might sit by his bedside and guide his feet into the paths of peace. All that night the rabbi wrestled with God that it might be His good pleasure to save this man even at the eleventh hour; and it was one of the few joys that visited the rabbi in his anxious ministry, that, before the grey light of a winter morning came into that lowly room, this aged sinner of Kilbogie had placed himself within the covenant of grace.

While he was ministering the promises in that cottage, and fighting a strong battle for an immortal soul, Carmichael had sent away his dogs, and was sitting alone in the low-roofed study of the Free Kirk manse, with the curtains drawn and the wood fire lighting up the room—for he had put out the lamp—but leaving shadows in the corners where there were no books, and where occasionally the red paper loomed forth like blood.

As the rabbi preached that day, the buoyancy and self-confidence of youth had been severely chastened, and sitting in the manse pew, curtained off from the congregation, the conscience of the young minister had grown tender. It was a fearful charge to lay on any man, and he only four-and-twenty years of age, the care of human souls; and what manner of man must he be who should minister unto them after a spiritual sort the body and blood of Jesus Christ? How true must be his soul, and how clean his hands! For surely, if any man would be damned in this world, and in that which is to come, it would be the man who dispensed the sacrament unworthily.

As he sat in the firelight the room seemed to turn into a place of judgment. Round the walls were the saints of the Church Catholic, and St. Augustine questioned him closely regarding the evil imagination of youthful days, and Thomas à Kempis reproached him because he had so often flinched in the way of the holy cross. Scottish worthies whose lives he had often read, and whose sayings had been often quoted from the pulpit, sat in judgment upon him as to his own personal faith and to his own ends in the ministry. Samuel Rutherford, with his passionate letters, reproached him for his coldness towards Christ; and MacCheyne's life, closed in early manhood, and filled with an unceasing hunger for the salvation of human souls, condemned him for his easy walk and conversation; and Leighton, the gentlest of all the Scotch saints, made him ashamed of bitter words and resentful feelings. And from the walls the face of his mother's minister regarded him with wistful regret, and seemed to plead with him to return to his first love and the simplicity of his mother's faith.

The roof hung heavy over his head, and the walls took a deeper red, while the burning logs reminded him of the consuming fire. An owl hooted outside—a weird and mournful cry—and to the mind of a Celt like Carmichael it seemed to be a warning to set his house in order. He crossed to the window, which faced west, and commanded a long stretch of Glen, and, standing within the curtain, he looked out upon the clear winter night. How pure was the snow, putting all other white to shame! How merciless the cold light of the moon, that flung into relief the tiniest branches of the trees! “Holiness be-cometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.” And he was a minister of the Word and sacrament! The people had been called unto repentance, but he needed most of all the contrite heart. The people had been commanded to confess their sins; it were time that he began.

He knelt at his table, bending his head over the very place where he wrote his sermons, and as he prayed before God the sins of early years came up before him, and passed as in a woful procession—ghosts which had risen from their graves, in which they had long been hid beneath the green grass and the flowers. There remained nothing for him but to acknowledge them one by one with shame and confusion of face, and behold! as he did so, and humbled himself before the Lord, they vanished from his sight till he hoped that the last of them had come and gone. When it seemed to him as if one had lingered behind the rest, and desired to see him quite alone, and when the shroud fell down, he looked into the face of one who had been his friend in college days, and then he knew that all which had gone before was only a preparation, and this was now his testing time.

It was a mighty college to which Carmichael had belonged, and the men thereof had been lifted high above their fellows, and among them all there had been none so superior as this man who was once his friend. Some he looked down upon because they were uncouth in manner; and some because they were deficient in scholarship; and others, who were neither ill-bred nor unlearned, he would have nothing to do with because they had not the note of culture, but were Philistine in their ideas of art and in their ignorance of “precious” literature.

In spite of all this foolishness, the root of the matter was in Frederick Harris. No man had a keener sense of honour, no man was more ready to help a fellow-student, none worked harder in the mission of the college, none lived a simpler life. Yet because he was without doubt a superior person, even beyond all other superior persons—and the college was greatly blessed with this high order of beings—certain men were blind to his excellences, and cherished a dull feeling of resentment against him; and there were times when Carmichael dared to laugh at him, whereat Harris was very indignant, and reproached him for vulgar frivolity.

One day a leaflet was found in every class-room of the college, and in the dining-hall, and in the gymnasium, and in every other room—even, it is said, in the Senate-room itself. Its title was, *A Mighty Young Man*, and it was a merciless description of Harris in verse, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, in all his ways and words—coarse and insulting, but incisive and clever. He was late in entering the Hebrew class-room that morning, and was soon conscious that the students were interested in other things besides the authorship of the Pentateuch. Opposite him lay the poem, and, after he had read the first verse, his face turned to a fiery red, and then he left the class-room with much dignity.

It had been better for himself, and it would have saved much sorrow to Carmichael, if Harris had treated the poem with indifference; but, like many other people who allow themselves the luxury of despising their fellow-creatures, he was morbidly sensitive when his fellow-creatures turned on him. For some reason, known only to himself, he concluded that Carmichael had written the poem, and demanded an apology with threats; and Carmichael, who had thought the thing in very poor taste, and would have been willing to laugh at it along with Harris, was furious that he should have been supposed guilty of such a breach of friendship. So, being a Celt, who acts by impulse rather than by reason, he told Harris in the Common Hall that, if he supposed that he had written the sheet, he was at liberty to do so, and need not expect either a denial or an apology.

They never spoke again, nor met except in a public place, and when Carmichael was ordained minister in the Glen, Harris joined a mission settlement in one of the lowest quarters of a southern city.

From time to time Carmichael read greedily of his heroic service, and the power which he was acquiring—for he had never been haughty with poor people, but ever with them most gentle and humble. Again and again it had been laid on Carmichael to write to his old friend, and express regret for his pride, and assure him of his innocence in the matter of the squib, but he thought that Harris ought first to write to him, and then, if he did, Carmichael meant to telegraph, and invite his friend to come up to the Glen, where they would renew the fellowship of former days. But Harris gave no sign, and Carmichael had no need to telegraph.

Carmichael rose from his knees, and opened a drawer in his writing-table, and from below a mass of college papers took out a photograph. The firelight was enough to show the features, and memory did the rest. They had once shared rooms together, and a more considerate chum no man could have. They had gone on more than one walking tour together, and never once had Harris lost his temper; they had done work together in a mission school, and on occasion Harris had been ready to do Carmichael's as well as his own; they had also prayed together, and there was no pride in Harris when he prayed.

What were his faults, after all? A certain fastidiousness of intellect, and an unfortunate mannerism, and a very innocent form of self-approbation, and an instinctive shrinking from rough-mannered men—nothing more. There was in him no impurity, nor selfishness, nor meanness, nor trickiness, nor jealousy, nor evil temper. And this was the man—his friend also—to whom he had refused to give the satisfaction of an explanation, and whom he had made to suffer bitterly during his last college term. And just because Harris was of porcelain ware, and not common delf, would he suffer the more.

He had refused to forgive this man his trespass, which was his first transgression against him, and now that he thought of it, hardly to be called a transgression. How could he ask God to forgive him his own trespasses? and if he neither forgave nor was forgiven, how dare he minister the sacrament unto his people? He would write that night, and humble himself before his friend, and beseech him for a message, however brief, that would lift the load from off his heart before he broke bread in the sacrament.

Then it came to his mind that no letter could reach that southern town till Saturday morning, and therefore no answer come to him till Monday, and meanwhile who would give the people the sacrament, and how could he communicate himself? For his own sin, his foolish pride and fiery temper, would fence the holy table and hinder his approach. He must telegraph, and an impression took hold upon his heart that there must be no delay. The clock in the lobby—an eight-day clock that had come from his mother's house, and seemed to him a kind of censor of his doings—struck three, for the hours had flown in the place of judgment, and now the impression began to deepen that there was not an hour to be lost. He must telegraph, and as the office at Kilbogie would be open at five o'clock to dispatch a mail, they would send a wire for him. It would be heavy walking through the snow, but the moon was still up, and two hours were more than enough.

As he picked his way carefully where the snow had covered the ditches, or turned the flank of a drift, he was ever grudging the lost time, and ever the foreboding was deeper in his heart that he might be too late, not for the opening of Kilbogie post-office, but for something else—he knew not what. So bravely had he struggled through the snow that it was still a quarter to five when he passed along sleeping Kilbogie; and so eager was he by this time that he roused the friendly postmaster, and induced him by all kinds of pleas, speaking as if it were life and death, to open communication with Muirtown, where there was always a clerk on duty, and to send on to that southern city the message he had been composing as he came down through the snow and the woods:

"It was not I. I could not have done it. Forgive my silence, and send a message before Sunday, for it is my first sacrament in Drumtochty.

"Your affectionate friend,

"John Carmichael."

It was still dark when he reached the manse again, and before he fell asleep he prayed that the telegram might not be too late, but as he prayed, he asked himself what he meant, and could not answer. For the Celt has warnings other men do not receive, and hears sounds they do not hear.

It was noon next day, the Saturday before the sacrament, and almost time for the arrival of the preacher, before he awoke, and then he had not awaked unless the housekeeper had brought him this telegram from "Mistress Harris, St. Andrew's Settlement, Mutford, E.":

"My son Frederick died this morning at eight o'clock of malignant fever. He was conscious at the end, and we read your telegram to him. He sent this message: 'Long ago I knew it was not you, and I ought to have written. Forgive me, as I have forgiven you. My last prayer is for a blessing upon you and your people in the sacrament to-morrow. God be with you till we meet at the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

The text which Carmichael took for his action sermon on the morrow was, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us,” and he declared the forgiveness of sins with such irresistible grace that Donald Menzies twice said “Amen” aloud, and there are people who will remember that day unto the ages of ages.

IX.—OUR FOREIGN MANNERS

IF a student of life will only take his stand in the hall of one of those Swiss caravansaras which receives a trainful of Britons about six o'clock some evening in August and despatches them on their way by Diligence next morning, he will not lose his time, for he will have an opportunity of studying the foreign manners of his nation. The arrival of an Englishman of the John Bull type is indeed an event, and the place is shaken as by a whirlwind. A loud, clear, strident voice is heard sounding in the English tongue to the extremities of the hall, demanding that its owner be instantly taken to the rooms—“First floor,” I said, “with best view, according to the telegram sent yesterday,” refusing every explanation as to there being none disengaged, insisting that, somehow or other, rooms of that very kind be offered, and then grumbling its way upstairs, with an accompaniment in the minor key from a deprecating landlord, till a distant rumble dying away into the silence closes the incident. The landlord has reluctantly admitted that he has rooms on the second floor, better than any other in the house, which are being kept for a Russian prince, and if Monsieur will accept them for the night—and then Monsieur calls his wife's attention to the fact that when he put his foot down he gets his way. One does not, of course, believe that the landlord said what was absolutely true, and one would have been delighted had he plucked up courage and shown our compatriot to the door. But nothing is easier (and more enjoyable) than to point out how other people ought to conduct their affairs, and no doubt, were we Swiss innkeepers, needing to make a year's profit out of three months, we also would have taken rampant Englishmen by guile, as bulls are lassoed with ropes. Your heart would be adamant if you did not pardon the poor little device when our national voice is again raised in the dining-room ordering away a plate on account of an invisible smut, complaining of the wine because of a bit of cork, comparing the beef with the home roasts, and enlarging on a dozen defects in bedroom service to sympathetic spirits right and left, and, for that matter, as far as the voice can reach. In England that voice will give it to be understood that it could not be heard amid the chatter of noisy foreigners “gabbling away goodness knows what,” but as a matter of fact no combination of German, French, and Italian could resist the penetrating, domineering, unflinching accent. When that host bows the voice into an omnibus next morning with great politeness, then one has an illustration of the spread of the Christian spirit enough to reinforce the heart in the hours of blackest pessimism.

Would a foreigner believe that the owner of this terrible voice is really one of the best? He is the soul of honour, and would cut off his hand rather than do a mean deed; his servants adore him, though he gives them what he calls a round of the guns once a week; and the last thing he did before leaving home was to visit an old gamekeeper who taught him to shoot the year he went to Harrow. When a good man preaches the charity sermon, this unsympathetic Englishman is quite helpless, and invariably doubles the sum set aside in his waistcoat pocket. Upon the bench he is merciless on poachers and tramps; in private he is the chosen prey of all kinds of beggars. In fact, he is in one way just what he specially detests—a sham—being the most overbearing, prejudiced, bigoted, the most modest, simple-minded, kind-hearted of men; and, in spite of that unchastened voice, a gentleman from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. Certainly he ordereth over much, but he will take care that every servant has a reward before he leaves—going back from the omnibus to tip “that fellow with the green apron” who did some trifle for him last night—and if the landlord had only had the discernment to have described that accident to him, the driver's widow would have been richer by fifty francs.

The blame of our foreign manners is partly geographical. We happen to be bom in an island, and our amazing ideas about continentals are being very slowly worn away by travel. It is just breaking on the average Briton that, although a foreigner does not splash in his bath of a morning so that neighbouring rooms can follow the details of his toilette, he may not be quite uncleanly; that one need not hide all his valuables beneath his pillow because the other three men in his compartment of the wagon lit do not speak English; that an Italian prince is not always a swindler, but may have as long a pedigree as certain members of the House of Lords; and that the men who constructed the Mont Cenis and St. Gothard tunnels must at least have understood the rudiments of engineering science. The puzzled expression on our countryman's face when he discovers that the foreigner can give us points—in conveyance of luggage, for instance, or the making of coffee, or in the small agriculture—goes to your heart. It seems to him a surprise on the part of Providence, and a violation of the favoured nation's clause.

Perhaps it ought also to be said in our defence that we are afflicted by the infirmities of a ruling people. We are not only profoundly conscious that we are an invincible nation ourselves, but also are saturated with the belief that we have a commission to govern other nations. Our talents are mostly exercised in India and Africa, but if one reigns absolutely anywhere, he carries himself as a king everywhere, and the ordinary Englishman annexes any place he fancies in holiday time because his fathers have been appropriating provinces from time immemorial. One sometimes falls a prey to the Philistine that is in us all, and begins also to despise what our friend pleasantly calls “all this scraping and bowing,” by which he means a Frenchman's politeness in little things, and is tempted to think that it would be better if local government on the Continent were relieved of a burden of petty rules and a host of gorgeous officials, and were reinforced by a strong infusion of downright common sense. One means, in plain words, that if a foreign district were handed over

to an English stipendiary magistrate and a score of London policemen, its people would learn for the first time the scope and meaning of good government.

Many well-doing Englishmen cannot unto this day achieve a single grammatical sentence in any language except their own, and are free from all pretensions. Our rector stoutly declares that in his popular lecture, “To Paris and back, or a Glimpse of French Life,” he did not cite the familiarity of Parisian children with French as a proof of the precocity of foreigners, but he can never watch two Frenchmen in conversation without innocent enjoyment. The sounds they make are marvellous, but it is beyond question that they mean something, and it is pleasant to know that persons who cannot speak English are not left without means of communication. Foreigners, an Englishman remembers, labour under hopeless disabilities. Little can be expected from a people whose language permits a sentence—in a scientific book too—to end with “zu, ab,” and one may not be Pharisaic and yet have gloomy views—this illustration can be used in the pulpit—about a nation that has no word for home. One of our French class at school, a stout gentleman now, and worth £100,000, declares he would never demean himself by any attempt at foreign tongues, and demands that foreigners should learn English, “which will yet be the language of the world.” He was recently boasting that he had travelled a month by the aid of signs, although he does himself less than justice, for on sight of the railway station he will say “Bannhof, eh?” to the driver in quite a jocular way, as one by way of pleasing a four-footed pet.

Tittups, on the other hand, who reached the confines of the future tense with Moossy, and who affects culture, is understood to have an easy acquaintance with at least three Continental tongues in their more literary forms—colloquialisms he firmly refuses—and is worth hearing in a Florentine shop. “Avete voi” (Tittups is a little man, with a single eyeglass, and a voice three sizes too large for him); “ah... what you call... ah, papier und... ah, ein, that is eine Feder,” goes through a panto-mine of writing, and finally obtains what he wants by pointing it out with his stick. He is fond of enlarging on the advantage of reading Italian, and insists that no translation has ever conveyed the grander ideas of Dante, although Tittups admits that the ancient Italian tries him. “Have to work at it, you know; but the modern, a boy who knows his grammar can manage it. Seen the *Giomate di Roma* to-day?” Italians have a keener insight into character than any people in Europe, and one could almost pardon the attendant in the Mediterranean sleeper who insisted that Tittups must be a native-born Tuscan from the way he said “baga-glia.”

“Gli,” Tittups mentioned casually to a friend, is a test in Italian pronunciation, and he presented the discerning critic with a five-franc piece at Calais.

But why should the average man laugh at Tittups, as if he had never had experiences? Has he never been asked by his companion, to whom he has been an oracle on German literature, to translate some utterly absurd and unnecessary piece of information posted on the carriage, and been humbled in the dust?

“Oh,” he said, quite carelessly, “something about not leaving the train when it is in motion—zug, you know.”

“Pardon, mein Herr” (voice from the opposite side—what business had he to interfere?) “but the rule, when it has into English been translated, shall read———” and it turns out to be a warning not to stop the train without “plausible” reasons. Nothing is more disconcerting (and offensive) than to discover that the two imperturbable Germans in your carriage understand English perfectly, after you have been expressing your mind on German habits with that courtesy and freedom which are the prerogative of the Briton abroad. And can anything be more irritating and inexplicable than to find one's painfully accumulated store of foreign words ooze away in the crisis of travel, so that a respectable British matron, eager to be driven by the sea road at Cannes, is reduced to punching cocher in the small of the back with her parasol and shouting “eau de vie”—“and he drew up at a low public-house, as if we had been wanting a drink”—while her husband just escapes an apoplectic seizure, utilizing the remnants of three languages to explain his feelings as a Custom-house officer turns the contents of his portmanteau upside down.

It is not wise, however, for avaricious foreigners to trade upon our simplicity, for there is always a chance that they may catch a Tartar. Never have I seen a more ingenuous youth (in appearance) than one who travelled with me one night from Geneva to Paris. His unbroken ignorance of Continental ways, which opposed (successfully) the introduction of more than four persons into our second; his impenetrable stupidity, which at last saved him from the Customs; his unparalleled atrocities on the French language, seemed to precede him on the line and suggest opportunities of brigandage. They charged him eighteen francs for his supper at a place where we stopped for nearly twenty minutes, and would likely have appropriated the remaining two francs out of the Napoleon he offered, but the bell sounded, and he bolted, forgetting in his nervousness that he had not paid. The garçon followed, whom he failed to understand, and three officials could not make the matter plainer. When the public meeting outside our door reached its height there were present the station-master, seven minor officials, two gendarmes in great glory, a deputation of four persons from the buffet, an interpreter whose English was miraculous, and a fringe of loafers. Just as the police were about to do their duty our fellow passenger condescended on French—he had preferred English words with foreign terminations up to that point. His speech could not have exceeded three minutes, but it left nothing to be desired. It contained a succinct statement of facts—what he had eaten, and how much each dish cost; what he was charged, and the exact difference between the debt and the demand; an appeal to the chef de gare to investigate the conduct of the buffet where such iniquities were perpetrated on guileless Englishmen; and lastly a fancy sketch of the garçon's life, with a selection of Parisian terms of abuse any two of which were enough to confer distinction for a lifetime. He concluded by offering three francs, forty-five cents, as his just due to the manager of the buffet, and his thanks to the audience for their courteous attention.

“I am an Englishman by birth,” he explained to a delighted compartment, “but Parisian by education, and I think this incident may do good.”

Certainly it has often done one man good, and goes excellently with another where imagination reinforces memory with happy effect. One had a presentiment something was going to happen when two devout ladies secured their places in the Paris express at Lourdes, and before they entered placed the tin vessel with water from the sacred well on the floor of the compartment. It was certainly unfortunate that they did not keep it in their arms till the precious treasure could be deposited in the rack. Lourdes pilgrims would recognize the

vessel even in its state of temporary humiliation, but there was a distinct suggestion of humbler uses, and an excited Englishman must not be hardly judged.

“Here you are, dear,” he shouts to his wife, guarding the rugs; “plenty of room, and a hot water pan for your feet.”

They all got in together—two Parisian ladies, who (likely) could not speak a word of English, and our fellow patriot, who was (likely) as ignorant of French. And the tin vessel.

Did they lift it with reverence and fold it in many wraps, and did he fight for its possession? Are they still describing the wanton impiety of this heretic? and has he a conclusive illustration of the incredible folly of our neighbours? Perhaps, after all, they knew each other's tongues, and then nothing happened; but surely there must have been circumstances, and I, with a spare moment at my disposal occasionally, refused to be robbed of that interior.

X.—NILE VIEWS

IF one has only three weeks' holiday, and desires sunshine for his body, let him spend the time upon the Riviera, where he will get a few degrees higher temperature and a little more sunshine than in Cornwall—with worse food and a more treacherous climate—and if he rather desires inspiration for his mind, let him go to Florence; but in any case let him understand that there is no place in Europe where one can get equal good both for mind and body, and no place where one can escape winter. Upon this matter doctors dream dreams and invalids fondly talk against facts, for the cold in Florence, say, in the month of February, is quite monumental for its piercing quality, and bad weather on the Riviera is more cheerless than a wet day in the West Highlands, since in the latter case you can get a decent fire during the day, and in the evening you may have a sunset to remember for life. If, however, through any conjunction of favourable circumstances, a man has six weeks at his disposal in winter time (it is not likely he will have this very often in the present vale of tears), then let him take his courage in both his hands, and go to the Nile. Suppose he had three months, and were a good sailor, then he ought to join a P. and O. liner at London, and go the long sea voyage, for there is a chance, even in December or January, that he might have summer weather on the fickle Mediterranean, and—such things have happened—across the Bay. But with half that, time his plan is to go by the special boat express to Marseilles, and join his steamer there for Port Said; or, if he be hopelessly in fear of the sea, and wishes to save every hour for Egypt, to take the Brindisi mail, and cross to Port Said by one of the two passenger torpedo boats which make the passage between Italy and Egypt in about forty-eight hours either over the sea or through it.

Until it has been completely rebuilt after Western fashions, and electric trolley cars are running down a widened Mooskee, and the men have given up the tarboosh and the women their veil, Cairo will always fascinate a European by its Eastern atmosphere. Sitting on the verandah before his hotel, and looking over the heads of a herd of dragomen, guides, pedlars, and beggars, he will see a panorama pass. A Pasha's carriage, with a running footman in front, and the great man within, mourning the restraints of European government; a camel from the outlands laden with fresh green grass; a water-seller with his leather barrel upon his back; a company of Egyptian soldiers, marching admirably, and looking as if they could go anywhere; working women in dark blue, with only their eyes visible, which are said to be the single beautiful feature they possess; a closed carriage, with two ladies of a great man's harem; a miscellaneous crowd of sellers of many articles, shouting their goods, and workmen of many trades carrying things they have made; a Bedouin from the desert in his white flowing robes, tall and stately, and a Nubian as black as ebony from up country, with people of all shades between white and black, and in all colours; here and there a European tourist looking very much out of place in his unsightly garments, and a couple of Highland soldiers looking as if the whole place belonged to them. And if one desires to bathe in the life of the place, then he can spend a day drifting up and down the Mooskee, plunging down side alleys, attending native auctions, watching street dramas, bargaining in bazaars, and visiting mosques; but the wise man who is seeking for rest will not abide long in Cairo. Its air is close and not invigorating, its smells innumerable and overpowering, its social occupations wearisome and exacting, and its fleas larger, hungrier, more impudent, and more insinuating than those of any other place I have ever known. When the visitor has seen the citadel—and sunset from the citadel is worth the journey to Cairo—and half a dozen of the grander mosques, and the Pyramids and the great Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, then, although it may be difficult to resist the delightful hospitality of the English community, military and civil, the traveller had better start by the Nile for Upper Egypt.

Nothing surely can be so restful as life on a Nile boat, where one lies at his ease upon the deck with some book like *Pyramids in Progress* in his hand, and watches the procession along the banks of men, women, and children, donkeys, camels, cattle, and occasionally horses, which goes on from Cairo to Assouan, and, so far as I know, to Khartoum, and looking into the far distances of the desert, across the strip of green on either side of the river, and listening to the friendly sound of the water wheels which distribute the Nile through the parched ground, and then standing to see the blood-red sunset fade into orange and green and violet, while the river turns into that delicate and indescribable colour which, for want of some other word, is known as water-of-Nile. The river itself takes hold of the imagination, whose origin has been a historical mystery, on whose rise and fall the welfare of a country depends, which carries the fertility of Egypt in its bosom, and on which nations depend for their very life. No wonder it runs as a blue streak through the frescoes in the tombs, and is never away from the thoughts of the painters, for the Nile runs also through the life of the people. It is the great highway up which the native boats sail their skilful course driven by the north wind,

down which they drop laden with produce or pottery. It gives them the soil they till, which is rich enough to bear twelve harvests a year, if crops could be ripened in a month. Upon its banks the people sit as at their club; they bring down their cattle to water at it, they wash in the Nile, both themselves and their clothes, they swim and dive in the Nile as if they had been bom in it, and they drink its thick, brown, sweet water with such relish that a native Egyptian resents the idea of a filter because it takes away from him the very joy of taste, and laughs at the idea of danger from his loved Nile, which may give typhoid fever to Western tourists, but will never do any injury to its own children.

After sugar cane and doora, the chief product of the steaming, prolific Nile valley is the Fellaheen, who are not the descendants of the ancient Egyptians, a lineage justly claimed by the Copts, but who are the Egyptian people of to-day. The Fellah is the absolute creature of his environment, an offspring of Nile mud, and when he is working on his field, in the garments nature gave him, can hardly be distinguished from the soil. He is brown, well-built, enduring, with perfect teeth and excellent health. His home is a mud hut, with one room where he and his family eat, and another where they sleep, and a courtyard inhabited by the livestock of goats, donkeys, cocks and hens, pigeons, and a dog. It is thatched with palm branches or doora straw, and on the roof the dog will promenade in the daytime with great dignity, and from the roof, when the moon is shining, and thoughts occur to his mind, he will express himself to the other seventy-six dogs of the village who are on their roofs, and are also moved to speech, with the result that no European can sleep in the vicinity. Add a few vessels and mats by way of furniture to the inside of the hut, and build a mud jar on the top of the courtyard wall where the baby of the family can be put in safety, and the household equipment of the Fellah is complete. He is very ignorant, is not very keen about his religion, has no principles, except a habit of industry and a keen sense of property, and he has not one comfort or luxury of civilization, and not one political or national ambition. But he has all the clothes he needs, which certainly is not very much; he has plenty to eat, and for drink the endlessly delightful Nile water; he is very seldom cold, and he has sunshine from January to December, and from morning to night. Thanks to England, he is no longer dragged away to work upon canals and public enterprises without wages and without food, and to perish through toil and disease as his father did, but is now paid and cared for when working for the community. He is no longer in terror of the lash, and he is not robbed by his rulers; he gets justice at the courts, and is now being delivered from the hands of the money-lender, that terror of the East, by the excellent national bank which has been recently established, and which advances him money on reasonable terms. We pity him as we pass, toiling at his shadoof, or coming like a rabbit out of his burrow, because he works so hard and lives so plainly, and has no books and no vote, and no glass in his windows, and no cheap trips. But perhaps we had better reserve our pity for the home land. One does not see in the Arab village the ignoble squalor of a town slum, nor the dreary, hopeless poverty, nor the evil look of degraded people, nor the miserable intemperance. The Fellah does not stand very high in the evolution of society, and neither his wife nor his child is particularly fortunate; one would not wish to be a Fellah, but, at any rate, he does not know the pinch of want, he is on good terms with everybody, he has a ready joke, which perhaps it is better you do not understand, and a quick smile; he is a well-fed and contented animal.

The Fellah can be studied near at hand in your donkey boy, who is simply a Nile peasant quickened by contact with Europeans. Within five minutes he sizes you up with unerring judgment, and knows whether he can get baksheesh from you by annoyance, or will fare better by leaving you in peace; whether he can do as he pleases with you in the matter of speed, or whether it will be better to do as you tell him. Once you are on good terms with him—have learned the name of the donkey, approved the donkey's excellence and his own, and settled whether you are going to race or not—he settles down to make the journey agreeable both for himself and you. He will make jests about every little incident, join in the chorus of English songs, give information, such as he can, on antiquities, and delight to teach you Arabic. Suppose you have a long wait somewhere, and time is dragging, two of the junior donkey boys will improvise a play. They will get up a fight, and after cuffing one another in a way that would almost deceive you into the belief that they were serious, one will knock the other down, and the fallen hero will look as dead as Rames es the Great. A crowd will gather round him, lifting a leg or an arm, which falls heavily to the ground, raising his head, which rolls helplessly to the side. Horrified, they will then look at one another, and shake their heads; they will cover the dead man's face, and proceed to carry him home. By-and-by they will have a funeral, and convey the corpse to the cemetery with wailing and weeping, and after it has been solemnly laid to rest there will be a rapid and delightful resurrection. The mourners will turn a set of somersaults with extraordinary rapidity, the murderer and his victim will give a gymnastic exhibition, and then the whole company, having raised an enthusiastic hip, hip, hurrah! in applause for their own drama and as a genial tribute to the Anglo-Saxon race, will stand opposite you in a body with the most solemn countenance and demand baksheesh.

Like other folk, the donkey boys have their own trials, and I am still sorry for Hassan, who attended me for four days at Luxor, and with whom I became very friendly. His donkey was called Telephone, and was very strong, handsome, and well caparisoned, and had, indeed, only one vice, and that was that he would not go slowly, although the thermometer stood at 130 degrees in the sun, but insisted on leading the procession. Hassan had just married, and was never weary of describing the beauty and goodness of his sixteen-year-old bride, and he was greatly lifted when I sent home to her by his own hand a present of a silk headdress—I think at least that was what the silk would be used for—such as I was assured by a native friend the young women of that ilk greatly loved. Hassan parted with me in high spirits when I went up the river, and I promised that, on my third visit to Egypt, which will likely never take place, I would ride no other donkey but “Telephone,” and have no other footman but Hassan. And then tidings reached me at Assouan that the poor bridegroom had been drawn for the army. For thirteen years he would have to serve, partly in the regular forces, partly in the police, and for half the time he would be entirely separated from his wife, and perhaps for it all, and at the thought thereof and the terror of the army, and the unknown places and duties before him, there was great lamentation in Hassan's little home. So Hassan is by this time being drilled at Cairo, and soon will be a smart soldier in the Egyptian army; but up at Luxor his young wife will be mourning for him, and, alas! for an Eastern woman, she will be aged before Hassan returns. This is the shadow which hangs over the life of a Fellah.

XI.—THE RESTLESS AMERICAN

MANY Americans were good enough to call upon me before I had the pleasure of visiting their country, and many Americans have called since, and no American ever does me this honour without charging the very atmosphere of my study with oxygen, and leaving an impression of activity which quickens my slow pulses and almost reduces me to despair.

It is now several years ago that a tall, thin, alert man followed his card into my study with such rapidity that I had barely time to read it before my visitor was in the room.

“My name is Elijah K. Higgins, and I am a busy man. You are also busy and have no time to fool away. Four days is all I can give to the United Kingdom, and I wished to shake hands with you. Good-bye, I am off to Drumtochty.”

I calculate that Mr. Higgins spent thirty seconds in my study, and left the room so swiftly that I overtook him only at the front door. When I asked him if he knew where Drumtochty was, “Guess I do!” he said. “Got the route in my pocket, north-west from Perth, N.B.,” and in two seconds more he was whirling away in a fast hansom. As I returned to my study and imagined my visitor compassing Great Britain (I think he excluded Ireland, but I am not certain) in four days, I was for a moment roused from the state of comparative lethargy which we, in England, call work, and added six more engagements to my afternoon's programme. For days afterwards, and as often as I was tempted to rest in my chair, the remembrance of that whirlwind gave me a shock of new vigour. Sometimes a reaction would follow, and I humbly thanked Providence, although that was to write myself a weakling and a sluggard, that I was not bom in the country where Mr. Higgins lived and was at home.

Such lively experiences, which I often recall in jaded moments, prepare one for a visit or a re-visit to America, as a tonic gives a sluggish person an appetite for dinner, and it is bare justice to say that one's expectations of American energy in its own home have not been disappointed. If Americans, depressed by our heavy climate and our leisurely life, could yet maintain such a level of thought and motion, what might not be possible to them in their own country, where the atmosphere is charged with electricity, and every second man is a “hustler from way-back.” The stir of the New World affects the visitor and quickens his pulses as he goes up the Hudson and gets his first glimpse of New York. Your steamer had waited four hours at Queenstown for the mails, but the same mails were transferred to the United States tender as the steamer steams up the bay. Little tugs dart about on all sides with feverish speed, and larger steamers pass with their upper machinery indecently exposed, as if there had not been time, or it had not been worth while, to cover it. Buildings of incredible height line the shores, and suggest that the American nation, besides utilizing the ground, proposes also to employ the heavens for commercial purposes. It was, I think, a Texas paper which translated the austere saying, “*Per aspera ad astra*,” into “the hustler gets to heaven,” and certain New York builders seem now to be on the way. Whetted by this overture on the river, one is ready for the full music of the city; and I wish to pay the compliment with all honesty that New York, with the possible exception of Chicago, is the activest and noisiest place I have ever seen, or expect to see, in this present world. While an English merchant saunters down to his office between nine and ten, a New York man rises at half-past six in his suburb and is busy at work at eight o'clock. The Englishman takes off an hour during the day for luncheon at his club, while the American eats his meal in fifteen minutes. The Englishman spends more than another hour at afternoon tea, and gossip with friends, and sauntering about between his club and his office, while the American packs every minute with work. The very walk of an English merchant, slow, dignified, self-satisfied, and that of the American, rapid, eager, anxious—the one looking as if time were of no importance nor circumstances, and the other as if the loss of a minute might mean ruin—are the visible indices to the character of the nations. It is only yesterday that elevators were introduced into English city buildings, and there are many London offices to which you still have to make an Alpine ascent of four stairs; but a New Yorker regards a stair as a survival of barbarism, and hardly knows how to use it. The higher buildings have several sets of elevators, like the four tracks which railways lay down to work the swift and slow traffic.

“Don't go in there,” my friend said, with whom I was going to lunch at a club on the top floor of a many-storied New York building. “That's an accommodation elevator; stops, you know, at every station. This is the express for the top floor.”

“Would it have made much difference?” I said.

“Very nearly a minute,” as if the loss of the minute would have thrown us back for the rest of the day.

No man goes slow if he has the chance of going fast, no man stops to talk if he can talk walking, no man walks if he can ride in a trolley car, no one goes in a trolley car if he can get a convenient railway, and by-and-by no one will go by railway car if he can be shot through a pneumatic tube. No one writes with his own hand if he can dictate to a stenographer, no one dictates if he can telegraph, no one telegraphs if he can telephone, and by-and-by, when the spirit of American invention has brought wireless telegraphy into thorough condition, a man will simply sit with his mouth at one hole and his ear at another, and do business with the ends of the earth in a few seconds, which the same machine will copy and preserve in letter books and ledgers. It is the American's regret that at present he can do nothing with his feet while he is listening at the telephone, but doubtless some employment will be found for them in the coming age.

If a slow-witted and slow-moving Englishman desires a liberal education, let him take a journey of a month on the steam cars in the United States. No train in Europe travels as fast as certain American expresses, and if other trains go slower it is a matter of thankfulness, because they are less likely to kill passengers on level crossings, or in the main streets of the city along which they take their way, and cattle have more time to get

off the unprotected tracks. As trains have also a trick of jumping the rails, either through the rails spreading or the eccentricity of the engine, both being instances of exuberant national vitality, it is just as well that every express does not go at the rate of the Empire State Express on the New York Central. Nowhere in Europe can a traveller find stronger or handsomer cars, and they are marvels of adaptability and convenience. There is a dining car, in order that you may not lose time at a station, and also, which is not unimportant, in order that you may be able to occupy your time with something practical on the train. Of course, there is a smoking compartment, where men can compare notes upon politics and business, and be able to escape from idleness and themselves. The best expresses have a reading car, where the American can pick up such morsels of information from the magazines as he can contain between the interstices of business. There is a desk where he can read his letters, and a typewriter to answer them, for this train is the American's sleep-ing-place and dining-place, and his home and his office. One thing only he regrets; the train, as it flies along, is not connected with the telegraph and the telephone, so that, as an idea occurs to him or he obtains a hint from a man in the smoking car, he might be able to do business with his correspondents in Chicago or San Francisco. While an Englishman on a railway journey is generally dressed in roughly and loosely fitting tweeds, suggestive of a country life and of sport, the coat of his American cousin is of dark material and has not a superfluous inch of cloth. From his collar to his neat little boot the American is prim, spick-and-span, and looks as if he had come out of a band-box and were ready to appear in the principal room of any office. He is dressed in fact for business, and looks like business from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, while an Englishman's appearance suggests that he is going to see a cricket match or that he has retired to live upon a farm.

My countryman arrives at the station with two and a half minutes to spare, and laden with small baggage. A porter carries his rug and an ulster, very likely also a hat-box and a bag with books, papers, and such like in it, to say nothing of an umbrella and a mackintosh, and he secures his seat at the last moment. He fastens his hat above his head, puts on a travelling cap, changes into an ulster, if it be winter time, and throws a rug over his knee; he puts on travelling gloves, and gets out the Times, and he will sit without budging and read his *Times* without intermission for fifty minutes. Besides these trifles with him in the carriage, he has a portmanteau in the van, which he hopes has been addressed, and which the porter promised to see put in, and he will scramble for it at his terminus along with a hundred other passengers, who are all trying to identify and extricate their luggage from a huge heap on the platform.

The American reaches the dépôt by a trolley car ten minutes at least before the hour of departure, having sent his heavy luggage, if he has any—which is not likely—by baggage express. His only personal equipment is a slim and compact valise, which, in regard to opening and shutting, is a marvel of convenience. This he carries in his hand, and places beneath or beside the seat which he has secured two days before. He does not carry a rug because the cars are heated, nor an umbrella because it is not the rainy season. His top coat he hangs up beside his seat, as if he were in his own house; and his hat if he so please. He does not wear a travelling-cap any more than in his own drawing-room, nor gloves in the train any more than in his own office. Should his hands be soiled, he goes to the lavatory where there are large basins and an ample supply of water, and if his coat be dusty, there is a negro porter in every car to brush it. The immense repose of the English traveller is quite impossible for this mercurial man, whose blood and whose brain are ever on a stir. Very rarely will you see him reading a book, because he is not accustomed to read, and the demands of a book would lessen his time for business meditation. Boys with newspapers circulate through the cars, and he buys each new paper as it appears at the different towns. Whether it be Republican, or Democratic, or a family paper or a yellow journal, does not matter to him; he glances at the startling headings, takes an accident or a political scandal at a mouthful, skims over the business news, sees whether anything has happened at the Philippines, notes that the canard of the morning has been contradicted in the afternoon, and flings paper after paper on the floor. Three minutes or, in cases of extreme interest, five minutes suffice for each paper, and by-and-by this omnivorous reader, who consumes a paper even more quickly than his food, is knee deep in printed information or sensation. For two minutes he is almost quiet, and seems to be digesting some piece of commercial information. He then rises hurriedly, as if he had been called on the telephone, and makes for the smoking-car, where he will discuss “Expansion” with vivid, picturesque speech, and get through a cigar with incredible celerity. Within fifteen minutes he is in his place again; and, a little afterwards, wearying of idleness, he is chewing the end of a cigar, which is a substitute for smoking and saves him from being wearied with his own company. Half an hour before the train is due at his station, he is being brushed, and getting ready to alight. Before the train has reached the outskirts of the town, he has secured his place in a procession which stands in single file in the narrow exit passage from the Pullman. Each man is ready dressed for business and has his valise in his hand; he is counting the minutes before he can alight, and is envying the man at the head of the procession, who will have a start of about two seconds. This will give him a great advantage in business, and he may never be overtaken by his competitors till evening.

Suppose he lands at 6 a.m., he will find breakfast ready in a hotel, and half a dozen men eating as if their lives depended upon finishing by 6.15 a.m. Before seven he will have disposed of a pile of letters, dictating answers to a typist attached to the hotel, he will have telegraphed in all directions, and made half a dozen appointments in the town by telephone. Within the forenoon he will finish his business and depart for some neighbouring town, lunching on the cars. The second town he will dispose of in the afternoon, and that evening go on board the sleeper to travel 400 miles to a third town, where he is going to negotiate a contract at 8 o'clock next morning. If you sympathize with him, and wonder how flesh and blood can stand the speed, he accepts your sympathy as a compliment, and assures you that he never sleeps so well as on the cars. He never seems to be out of sorts or out of temper: he is always thoroughly alive and quite good-natured. Sometimes he may seem for a moment annoyed, when he cannot telegraph as often as he wants along the line, or when the train is not on time, that he may make a connection. Nothing would wound him so deeply as to “get left,” and he can only affect to be unconscious when some one declares that he is “no slouch, and that there are no flies on him.” If he is obliged to spend two hours doing nothing in a hotel, when business is over, then he rocks himself and smokes, and it is a wonderful spectacle for an indolent Englishman to look down from the gallery that commands the hall of the hotel, and to see fifty able-bodied fellow-men who have

worked already twelve hours, at least, and put eighteen hours' work into the time, all in motion. (One wonders why this motion is not utilized to drive something.) He discovers how unlike cousins may be, for an Englishman never moves unless he is obliged to or unless he wants to shoot something, and these remarkable men never rest unless when they are asleep. About that even, I am not sure, and I was often tempted to draw aside the curtain from a berth in a sleeping-car, and, had I done so, I should not have been at all surprised to find our friend wide awake with a cold cigar in his cheek, and rocking his knees for want of more extensive accommodation. He has always rebelled against the ancient custom of sleep, which he regards as a loss of time and an anachronism. All that he can do is to spend the night in a sleeping car, which, as he will tell you, annihilates time and space.

Foreigners travelling in the States in their innocence are amazed that a delicate-minded nation, like the Americans, should be willing to sleep after the fashion of the Pullman cars, and should not insist upon the Continental cabin-car. The reason for the Arcadian simplicity of the sections is not really economy, for no American would ever think twice of spending a dollar; it is simply their abounding and dominant energy. If you sleep in cabins at night, you must sit in cabins by day; and this would mean a seclusion and repose which are very distasteful to the high-strung American temperament. It would be like bottling up a volatile gas; and one imagines that it might lead to an explosion, which some day would break down the partitions and break up the car from end to end. The American must see everything in his car and hear everything, for which he depends upon the peculiar quality of the local voice; and he must be at liberty to prowl about his car, and to sit with his friends here and there. The car is his little world for the time, and he is not going to live in a backwater.

There seems no doubt that an American workman will do from twenty-five to thirty-three per cent, more than an Englishman in the same time, and that the higher wages of the American have their compensation for the capitalist in a workman's quickness of mind and sleight of hand. Everything goes at an accelerated speed, with wonderful inventions in labour-saving machinery and devices to economize time. If the great end of a nation be to do as much as possible in as short a time as possible, then the American climate has been practically arranged for that end. An Englishwoman living in the States becomes effervescent, and the native American is the brightest woman on the face of the earth. While the English atmosphere is heavy and soothing, and lends itself to thought and quietness, the American climate is exciting and exhilarating, and quickens both mind and body to the highest activity. It is an electric climate, and the electricity has passed into the people, who are simply vessels charged up to a certain number of volts. These vessels as sources of motive power can then be attached to pulpits, or offices, or workshops or politics. Of course, a day is apt to come when the vessels will have been completely discharged, and it arrives very frequently without warning. A little confusion in the head, and a slight numbness in the limbs, and the man has to go away a year to Colorado Springs or to Los Angeles. If he is fortunate, he can be recharged and run for another five or ten years; then nature does not give any warning, but simply stops the heart or darkens the brain, and you must get another man.

No one, unless he leaves the country or becomes a crank, can escape from this despotism of activity; he is part of the regiment and must march with his fellows. The idea of making a competency and then retiring, say, into the country, never crosses a man's mind. When you urge economy upon a man for this end, you have injured your case, and are pleading on the other side. With such a prospect before him, he is more than ever resolved to be a spendthrift. To seclude an active American in an old-fashioned country house, with ivy climbing round its Tudor windows, even although there should be a library of black oak inside and a rose garden outside, would be cruelty; it would be to imprison a squirrel in a golden cage. What greatly impresses the traveller in the United States is that the rich men work as hard and as long as the poor, and that they cannot even give attention to the affairs of their country, but are willing to leave them to the very doubtful management of the “Boss,” because it would not pay them to leave their business and go into politics. If the end of life be riches, then the clever American is a successful man, for in no country does a respectable man become so very rich, or rich so soon, and if not respectable he still may do fairly well. You cannot have everything, however, and one notes that the average rich man has paid a price for his dollars. He has read very little—his wife reads for him; he has travelled very little—his daughters travel for him. He has no voice in the State—professional politicians speak for him; he has no amusements, unless you include speculation; and he has no pleasant periods of rest, unless you accept as an equivalent comparatively early and sudden death, which often arises from acute indigestion. He has not time to stop and realize himself, unless, but this is a large exception, when he has dyspepsia. One reason, perhaps, why Americans do not rest is that given to me by a bright woman: “We are all so tired,” and the American is the victim of his own qualities.

One, of course, acknowledges the advantages of this amazing energy, and there are times when a stolid Englishman grows envious. A university in America is created in ten years and endowed to the extent of millions sterling, and equipped with chairs of which a European never dreamt, and laboratories which border upon palaces. Libraries and picture galleries are rising in every city, for which the treasuries of Europe have been ransacked; and, were it not for the restriction of governments, the Old Masters would have to be sought, not in Italy and England, but in New York and Chicago. New towns are designed upon a scale of magnificence, as if each were to be the capital of an empire, and are at least outlined in building within a few years. Should it be necessary, an army can be created within a few months, and in a couple of years a new trade can be established which will kill its European rivals. An English farmer with fifteen hundred acres is a considerable man, but an American can have fifteen thousand acres and his different farm buildings will be connected by telephone. A self-made man in England marries his daughter to a baronet and is much lifted; but the daughter of a self-made man in America will marry an English duke, and consider she has conferred a benefit. When you go to a Western town, you may be taken to see a university; if not, you are taken to a dry-goods store; each, in its own way, is the largest of its kind. Certainly, there are stores in America which have no rival in the Old World, and which you are expected to visit with the same appreciation as the Duomo of Florence.

There is almost nothing that the United States does not possess, except political purity, and nothing which an American cannot do, except rest; and in the conflict with foreign competition, he has almost discounted victory. Whether he be able, that is, patient and thorough in the discovery of principles, may be a question;

that he is clever, by which one means bright and ingenious in turning principles to account, is beyond all question. If America has not yet had time to produce a Lord Kelvin, it has given us telephones; and if Professor Dewar has astonished the world with his liquid air, an American trust is, it is said, being formed to handle it for commercial purposes. If we are thought to be dull and slow, as we travel among the most stimulating and hospitable people on the face of the earth, let some excuse be made for us and let our hosts share the blame. An Englishman in the United States is half dazed, like one moving amid the ceaseless din and whirling wheels of a huge manufactory, where the voice has to be raised to a shriek, and a sentence compressed into a single word. He goes home greatly humbled in his estimation of himself, and in low spirits about the commercial future of his country. He has no bitterness, however, within his heart, for are not these people of his own blood, and are not their triumphs his, even if they threaten to outrun his own nation in the race of productive commerce? And when he comes back to England, has he not his compensations, Stratford-on-Avon, and Westminster Abbey, and the greenery of the Home Counties, and the lights and shadows of the Scots Lochs, and the musical voices of the English women, and the quiet, contented, cultured English homes?

XII.—A SCOT INDEED

HE had demanded that afternoon to be told the truth, and the doctor, himself a young Scot, had told him plainly that he could not recover, and then he had asked, as one man speaking to another, both being brave and honest men, when he would die, and the doctor thought early next morning.

"Aboot daybreak," said the Scot, with much satisfaction, as if, on the whole, he were content to die, and much pleased it would be at the rising of the sun. He was a characteristic type of his nation, rugged in face and dry of manner, an old man, who had drifted somehow to this English city and was living there alone, and now he was about to die alone, without friends and in a strange land. The nurse was very kind to him, and her heart went out to the quiet, self-contained man. She asked him whether he would like to see a clergyman, and explained that the chaplain of the infirmary was a good man.

"A've nae doubt he is," said the Scot, "and that his meenistrations would be verra acceptable to English fouk, but a've never had ony dealin's wi' Episcopalians. He micht want to read a prayer, and I couldna abide that, and mebbe I couldna follow the texts in his English tongue."

The nurse still lingered by his bed. He looked up to her and assured her he was in no need of consolation. "Saxty year ago my mither made me learn the wale (choice portions) o' the Bible, and they're cornin' up ane by ane to my memory, but I thank ye kindly."

As the nurse went back and forward on her duties she heard her patient saying at intervals to himself, "I know whom I have believed."

"I am persuaded that neither life nor death." Once again she heard him, "Although the mountains depart and the hills be removed," but the rest she did not catch.

During the afternoon a lady came into the ward whose service to the Lord was the visitation of the sick, a woman after the type of Barnabas and Mary of Bethany. When she heard of the old man's illness and his loneliness, whom no friend came to see or comfort, she went to his bedside. "You are very ill," she said, "my friend."

"A'm deein'," he replied, with the exactness of his nation, which somewhat fails to understand the use of graceful circumlocution and gentle phrases.

"Is there anything I can do for you? Would you wish me to sing a few verses of a hymn? Some sick people feel much comforted and soothed by singing; you would like, I think, to hear 'Rock of Ages,'" and she sat down by his bedside and opened her book, while a patient beyond, who had caught what she said, raised his head to enjoy the singing.

"Ye're verra kind, mem, and a'm muckle obleeged to ye, but a'm a Scot and ye're English, and ye dinna understand. A' my days have I been protestin' against the use o' human hymns in the praise o' God; a've left three kirks on that account, and raised my testimony in public places, and noo would ye send me into eternity wi' the sough of a hymn in my ears?"

For a moment the visitor had no reply, for in the course of all her experiences, during which she had come across many kinds of men and women, she had never yet chanced upon this kind of Scot. The patients in the infirmary were not distinguished by their religious scruples, and if they had scruples of such a kind they turned on large and full-blooded distinctions between Protestant and Catholic, and never entered into subtleties of doctrine.

"You'll excuse me, mem, for a'm no ungratefu'," he continued, "and I would like to meet yir wishes when ye've been so kind to me. The doctor says I canna live long, and it's possible that my strength may sune give way, but a'll tell ye what a'm willin' to do."

The visitor waited anxiously to know what service he was going to render her and what comfort she might offer to him, but both were beyond her guessing.

"Sae lang as a've got strength and my reason continues clear, a'm prepared to argue with you concerning the lawfulness of using onything except the Psalms of David in the praise of God either in public or in private."

Dear old Scot, the heir of many a covenanting tradition and the worthy son of covenanting martyrs, it was a strange subject of discussion for a man's last hour, but the man who could be true to the jots and tittles of his

faith in pain of body and in face of death was the stuff out of which heroes and saints are made. He belonged to a nation who might sometimes be narrow and over-concerned with scruples, but which knew that a stand must be taken somewhere, and where it took a stand was prepared to die.

The visitor was a wise as well as gracious woman, and grasped the heart of the situation. “No, no,” she said, “we will not speak about the things wherein we differ, and I did not know the feeling of the Scots about the singing of the hymns. But I can understand how you love the Psalms and how dear to you is your metrical version. Do you know I have been in the Highlands of Scotland and have heard the Psalms sung, and the tears came into my eyes at the sound of the grave, sweet melody, for it was the music of a strong and pious people.”

As she spoke the hard old Scot's face began to soften, and one hand which was lying outside the bedclothes repeated the time of a Scots Psalm tune. He was again in the country church of his boyhood, and saw his father and mother going into the table seats, and heard them singing:

“O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord,
And all that in me is
Be stirred up His holy name
To magnify and bless.”

“More than that, I know some of your psalm tunes, and I have the words in my hymn book; perhaps I have one of the Psalms which you would like to hear.”

“Div ye think that ye could sing the Twenty-third Psalm—

'The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want'?

for I would count it verra comfortin'.”

“Yes,” she said, “I can, and it will please me very much to sing it, for I think I love that psalm more than any hymn.”

“It never runs dry,” murmured the Scot.

So she sang it from beginning to end in a low, sweet voice, slowly and reverently, as she had heard it sung in Scotland. He joined in no word, but ever he kept time with his hand and with his heart, while his eyes looked into the things which were far away.

After she ceased he repeated to himself the last two lines:

“And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling place shall be.”

“Thank ye, thank ye,” he said, after a little pause, and then both were silent for a few minutes, because she saw that he was in his own country, and did not wish to bring him back by her foreign accent.

“Mem, ye've dune me the greatest kindness ony Christian could do for anither as he stands on the banks of the Jordan.”

For a minute he was silent again, and then he said: “A'm gaein' to tell ye somethin', and I think ye'll understand. My wife and me wes married thirty-five years, and ilka nicht of oor married life we sang a psalm afore we gaed to rest. She took the air and I took the bass, and we sang the Psalms through frae beginning to end twal times. She was taken frae me ten year ago, and the nicht afore she dee'd we sang the Twenty-third Psalm. A've never sung the psalm since, and I didna join wi' ye when ye sang it, for a'm waitin' to sing it wi' her new in oor Father's hoose the momin's momin', where there'll be nae nicht nor partin' evermore.”

And this is how one Englishwoman found out that the Scot is at once the dourest and the tenderest of men.

XIII.—HIS CROWNING DAY

WE will leave the main road which runs through the Glen between oak trees which were planted fifty years ago, but are only now beginning to join their branches, and take our way up the hillside till we come to the purple sea of heather whose billows rise and fall, broken only here and there by an oasis of green or a running burm. Our goal is this little cottage which is so low that its roof merges into the hill behind, and upon whose thatch the wild flowers have encroached. Stoop, if you please, for it is not wise to have high doorways where the winter storm beats so fiercely, and being respectable people, we shall be taken into the inner room, where strangers of high degree are received and the treasures of the family are kept. It will not take long to give an inventory of the furniture, and the value will not run to two figures. A box bed, a small table, four ancient chairs, what they called a chest of drawers, and on the mantelpiece some peacocks' feathers by way of decoration, and certain china ornaments representing animals which never have been seen in this creation, and are never likely to emerge in any process of evolution. Were this all, I should not have troubled you to climb so far, or to leave even for five minutes the glory of the open moor. There is something else in the lowly room which you might well take a journey to see, for it is a rare sight in shepherds' cottages. Here is a bookshelf, and on it, I declare, some dozen volumes bound in full calf, and bearing on one side the arms of a University. You must revise your judgment of this house, and find another measure than the height of the walls and the cubic space in the rooms. It matters not although a house have thirty chambers, with lofty ceilings and soft carpets and carved furniture; if there be no books which belong to literature within its walls it is a poor and narrow home, and the souls therein are apt to be mean and

earthly.

While you are looking at the books the shepherd's wife is looking at you. From the moment you crossed the threshold she has been thinking of that bookshelf, and hoping you would take notice thereof, but not for the world would she have mentioned it by word or sign. We had our own code of manners in the Glen, and one of our cardinal sins was “blowing,” by which we meant boasting; and while a man though perhaps not a woman, could be forgiven for “tasting,” there was no mercy shown to the person who allowed himself to brag. When, for instance, old David Ross's son became a professor, his father and mother simply allowed the glorious fact to ooze out through Domsie, who certainly had no scruple in making the most of it, and neither the father nor mother ever said Professor in public, although we believe they called their son nothing else between themselves; but the Glen made up for their reticence by decorating every second sentence about him with the word. All the same, Mistress McPherson is watching us keenly, and she would be utterly disappointed if we had overlooked the shelf; and now, in answer to our inquiry, she will take us into the kitchen and place us by the fireside, that we may hear the story of her scholar son, which, indeed, is the one romance in the history of this humble family.

One morning John left the cottage to go to school, a shepherd's boy, and likely, as it appeared, to herd sheep and live in the Glen all the days of his life as his father had done before him. In the evening the schoolmaster, who is the judge of letters in the Glen, with the minister as a court of confirmation, came up and told the father and mother that in the purposes of the Eternal their son was evidently destined to be a scholar, and that upon them lay the duty of seeing that John made his calling and election sure. Had tidings come to those two people, whose wage in money would not amount to ten shillings a week, that they were heirs to a fortune, it would not have brought such pleasure to their souls as the good hope that their lowly stock would once at least in a generation produce the white flower of a scholar's life. The whole family, father and mother, with their grown-up sons and daughters in service, will now unite in one labour—to save and to sacrifice, that by hook or crook their brother may reach a university, and be sustained in his study there till he has reached its reward. Four years from that evening, had you been standing under the great arch by which students enter the quadrangle of Edinburgh University, you had seen the shepherd's son pass in, plainly dressed and shy in manner, but strong of body and brave in soul, and charged with all the knowledge that his schoolmaster and his minister could impart by patient, ungrudging labour. The lad before him is a noble's son, and the one following is a merchant's, and so sons of the rich and of the poor, of the high and of the low, they go together, into the one Republic on the face of the earth, the Republic of Letters, where money does not count, nor rank, nor influence, nor intrigue, but where every man stands equal and the best man wins.

Another four years and John has obtained his degree, a double first, and he writes to the cottage on the side of the hill that the two old people must come up to see him crowned. For six weeks before the day his mother has just one consuming anxiety, and that is what she should wear on the occasion, and it is only after fifteen long deliberations with her gossips in the Glen that the great affair is settled, while the father's mind is wholly taken up on Sundays with the effort to look as if he were not the father of a graduate.

When the shepherd and his wife enter the gates of the University, they are not to be thought of as two illiterate peasants who cannot distinguish between a University and a dry-goods store. Although they had never themselves expected to see so high a place, and had only cherished it as a secret hope that perhaps one of their boys might attain so far, they have learned by the tradition of their nation, and by the speech of Domsie in the kirk-yard on Sabbath, to enter into the greatness of a university. It is to them the home of the highest knowledge, and a sacred place to which reverend people might well go up as a pious Moslem to Mecca or a Jew to Jerusalem. As they cross the quadrangle, the shepherd touches his wife, and points to an elderly gentleman in the distance. They follow him with respectful attention as he shambles along, half a dozen books under his arm, his shabby cloak held by a single button, a hat as old as Jamie Soutar's resting on the back of his head.

“Keep's a', Jeems,” whispers Janet respectfully “Div ye really think that he's a professor?”

“We canna be sure, woman; he micht juist be a scholar, but I am judgin' that he's a professor—he hes a' the appearance.”

And the two old people stand still in the bit till he disappears, and then they go on their way much lifted. Outside religion there is no word in Scots speech so sacred as “professor.” It means a semi-heavenly body charged with Latin and Greek philosophy and mathematics. It was something to see such a man, and to be in his company was living in an atmosphere where you might catch the infection of his learning. When a glensman, to whom Domsie had spoken of professors with bated breath for more than a generation, learned that in southern parts the title was assumed by hairdressers and ventriloquists, and that they were not sent to gaol for profanity, then Drumtochty discovered another argument for its favourite doctrine of original sin.

As the two go down the half-lit passage to the hall of graduation, they are met by a majestic figure—a young man in evening dress, and over it the gown of an M.A., with its white silk hood, and on his head the Master's cap.

“Are you coming, may I ask,” said he, with quite a nice English accent, to the graduation ceremony, “and can I be of any service?”

“We are, sir; and as we are strangers frae the country, we would be muckle obleeged if ye could shew us the door. We dinna want to go where the gentry are sittin', but if ye would juist tak' us where we could see, we'd be content and terrible pleased. There's a... friend to get his degree to-day, and my man and me would like to see him.”

“Mither,” said the figure, “and ye dinna ken yir ain son,” for he had taken them in well, and played his little trick with much success. They had never seen him in evening dress, nor in his Master's robe, and the light was as darkness; besides, he had dropped the accent of the Glen. The father and the son laughed together joyfully at Janet, but she declared that she had known him all the time, and put it to them if a mother could be mistaken about her son. But she didn't know him all the same, and as long as she lived it was a pleasant jest between them when he came north to visit them, and she met him at the garden gate. “Well, mither,” he

would say, “div ye ken yir son the day?”

Janet was well pleased that one should tease her in after times about this ploy of John's, for it always gave her an opportunity of describing how handsome he looked in his black and white silk, and of stating that she. Mistress McPherson, wife of James McPherson, shepherd at Camashach, considered the dress of a Master of Arts the handsomest that a man could wear.

John took his father and mother into the hall, and placed them in the seats reserved for the friends of graduates, and while a man has various moments of pure joy in his life, there is none sweeter than when he brings his mother to see him crowned at the close of his university career. For in this matter he owes everything to two people—the schoolmaster who taught him and the mother who inspired him.

“Now, mither, you watch that door yonder, for through it the procession will come; and when ye see the men wi' the white silk hoods, ye'll ken that I'm there, and ye'll surely no mistake me again.”

He was so provoking, and he looked so handsome with the flush of the day upon his cheek, that, as he stooped over her, she was about to give him a little shove and tell him not to give “any more impi-dence to his auld mither,” when she remembered where she was sitting, and the grand folk round her, and so she only answered with a demure nod of intelligence.

She brought out her glasses, and the shepherd polished them carefully for her because her hands were trembling, and for that matter he had almost to put them on her nose, so shaken was she on this great day; and then she watched the door, as if there was nothing else in all the hall except that door. It seemed to her twelve hours before it opened and the procession streamed through with many a famous man and many a coloured garment. Janet had no eyes for the Chancellor in his purple and gold, nor for the robes of red and the hoods of lemon silk bordered with white fur, for there was nothing beautiful in her eyes that day except black gowns with white silk upon them. When at last the Masters of Arts appeared, she told me afterwards many and many a time in the Glen that they were a body of very respectable-looking young men, but that among them all there was only one outstanding and handsome man, and that, by a curious accident which mothers only can explain, happened to be her son. She followed him as he came down the passage, and was a little disappointed that he was now carrying his trencher in his hand instead of wearing it-on his head, and she saw him take his seat, and could hardly forgive some great lady in front of her, whose bonnet, coming in the line of vision, prevented her catching anything except a little bit of John's shoulder with the white silk upon it. A little later, and she watched him rise and go forward and kneel before the Chancellor, and then there was said over him Latin words so magical that after they were spoken a student was changed from a common man into a Master of Arts. We used to say in our jesting that the Latin could not be translated, it was so mysterious and awful, but the shepherd's wife and John's mother was an accomplished Latin scholar that day, and she heard the Chancellor say, as distinctly as ever man spoke—

“John McPherson, you are the tallest, strongest, handsomest, ablest, kindest-hearted son whom this University ever made Master of Arts.” That was a free translation, but it was true in spirit, and the letter killeth.

Standing behind the Chancellor, and looking down upon the hall, I saw the faces of the shepherd and his wife, and I knew that they would never taste such perfect joy again till they entered through the gates into the city, and then I longed to be lifted above all circumstances, and to have the power of the fairy world, where you do what you please. For I should have gone down into the hall, and held a special and unheard-of graduation ceremony, conferring a degree of a new kind altogether upon that shepherd and his wife, because without their unworldly ideals, and their hard sacrifices, and their holy prayers, John McPherson had never knelt there that day in his white silk glory, Master of Arts with the highest honours.

XIV.—“DINNA FORGET SPURGEON”

HIS varied charge was given to the good man on the morning of market day as he brought the mare out from the stable, as he harnessed her into the dogcart, as he packed the butter basket below the seat, as he wrestled into his top coat, worn for ceremony's sake, and as he made the start—line upon line and precept upon precept as he was able to receive it; but the conclusion of the matter and its crown was ever the same, “Dinna forget Spurgeon.”

“There's twal pund o' butter for the grocer, the best ever left this dairy, and he maun gie a shillin,' or it's the laist Andra Davie'ill get frae me; but begin by askin' fourteenpence, else it's eleven ye'll bring back. He's a lad, is Andra, an' terrible grippy.

“For ony sake tak' care o' the eggs, and mind they're no turnips ye're handlin'—it's a fair temptin' o' Providence to see the basket in yir hands—ninepence a dozen, mind, and tell him they're new laid an' no frae Ireland; there's a handfu' o' flowers for the wife, and a bit o' honey for their sick laddie, but say naethin' o' that till the bargain's made.

“The tea and sugar a've markit on a bit paper, for it's nae use bringin' a bag o' grass-seed, as ye did fower weeks ago; an' there's ae thing mair I micht mention, for ony sake dinna pit the paraffin oil in the same basket wi' the loaf sugar; they may fit fine, as ye said, but otherwise they're no gude neeburs. And, John, dinna forget Spurgeon.”

Again and again during the day, and in the midst of many practical operations, the good wife predicted to her handmaidens what would happen, and told them, as she had done weekly, that she had no hope.

“It's maist awfu' hoo the maister'ill gae wanderin' and dodderin' thro' the market a' day, pricing cattle he's

no gaein' tae buy, an' arguin' aboot the rent o' farms he's no gaein' to tak', an' never gie a thocht tae the errands till the laist meenut.

"He may bring hame some oil," she would continue, gloomily, as if that were the one necessity of life to which a male person might be expected to give attention; "but ye needna expect ony tea next week"—as if there was not a week's stock in the house—"and ye may tak' ma word for it there'ill be nae Spurgeon's sermon for Sabbath."

As the provident woman had written every requirement—except the oil, which was obtained at the ironmonger's, and the Spurgeon, which was sold at the draper's—on a sheet of paper, and pinned it on the topmost cabbage leaf which covered the butter, the risk was not great; but that week the discriminating prophecy of the good man's capabilities seemed to be justified, for the oil was there, but Spurgeon could not be found. It was not in the bottom of the dogcart, nor below the cushion, nor attached to a piece of saddlery, nor even in the good man's trouser-pocket—all familiar resting-places—and when it was at last extricated from the inner pocket of his top coat—a garment with which he had no intimate acquaintance—he received no credit, for it was pointed out with force that to have purchased the sermon and then to have mislaid it, was worse than forgetting it altogether.

"The Salvation of Manasseh," read the good wife; "it would have been a fine like business to have missed that; a'll warrant this 'ill be ane o' his sappiest, but they're a' gude": and then Manasseh was put in a prominent and honourable place, behind the basket of wax flowers in the best parlour till Sabbath.

It was the good custom in that kindly home to ask the "lads" from the bothie into the kitchen on the Sabbath evening, who came in their best clothes and in much confusion, sitting on the edge of chairs and refusing to speak on any consideration. They made an admirable meal, however, and were understood to express gratitude by an attempt at "gude nicht," while the foreman stated often with the weight of his authority that they were both "extraordinar' lifted" by the tea and "awfu' ta'en up" with the sermon. For after tea the "maister" came "but," and having seen that every person had a Bible, he gave out a Psalm, which was sung usually either to Coleshill or Martyrdom—the musical taste of the household being limited and conservative to a degree. The good man then read the chapter mentioned on the face of the sermon, and remarked by way of friendly introduction:

"Noo we'ill see what Mr. Spurgeon has to say the nicht."

Perhaps the glamour of the past is on me, perhaps a lad was but a poor judge, but it seemed to me good reading—slow, well pronounced, reverent, charged with tenderness and pathos. No one slept or moved, and the firelight falling on the serious faces of the stalwart men, and the shining of the lamp on the good grey heads, as the gospel came, sentence by sentence, to every heart, is a sacred memory, and I count that Mr. Spurgeon would have been mightily pleased to have been in such meetings of homely folk.

It was harvest-time, however, when Manasseh was read, and there being extra men with us, our little gathering was held in the loft, where they store the com which is to be threshed in the mill. It was full of wheat in heavy, rich, ripe, golden sheaves, save a wide space in front of the machinery, and the congregation seated themselves in a semi-circle on the sheaves. The door through which the com is forked into the loft was open and, with a skylight in the low dusty roof, gave us, that fine August evening, all the light we needed. Through that wide window we could look out on some stacks already safely built, and on fields, stretching for miles, of grain cut and ready for the gathering and, beyond, to woods and sloping hills towards which the sun was westering fast. That evening, I remember, we sang

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes."

and sang it to French, and it was laid on me as an honour to read "Manasseh." Whether the sermon is called by this name I do not know, and whether it be one of the greatest of Mr. Spurgeon's I do not know, nor have I a copy of it; but it was mighty unto salvation in that loft, and I make no doubt that good grain was garnered unto eternity. There is a passage in it when, after the mercy of God has rested on this chief sinner, an angel flies through the length and breadth of Heaven, crying, "Manasseh is saved, Manasseh is saved." Up to that point the lad read, and further he did not read. You know, because you have been told, how insensible and careless is a schoolboy, how destitute of all sentiment and emotion... and therefore I do not ask you to believe me. You know how dull and stupid is a plowman, because you have been told... and therefore I do not ask you to believe me.

It was the light which got into the lad's eyes, and the dust which choked his voice, and it must have been for the same reasons that a plowman passed the back of his hand across his eyes.

"Ye'ill be tired noo," said the good man; "let me feenish the sermon," but the sermon is not yet finished, and never shall be, for it has been unto life everlasting.

Who of all preachers you can mention of our day could have held such companies save Spurgeon? What is to take their place, when the last of those well-known sermons disappears from village shops and cottage shelves? Is there any other gospel which will ever be so understanded of the people, or so move human hearts as that which Spurgeon preached in the best words of our own tongue? The good man and his wife have entered into rest long ago, and of all that company I know not one now; but I see them as I write, against that setting of gold, and I hear the angel's voice, "Manasseh is saved," and for that evening and others very sacred to my heart I cannot forget Spurgeon.

XV.—THEIR FULL RIGHTS

THE departure of a minister of the Scots Kirk from his congregation is, of course, a subject of regret if he has the heart of the people, but this regret is tempered by the satisfaction of knowing that there will be an election. While a free-born Scot is careful to exercise his political suffrage, he takes an even keener interest in his ecclesiastical vote, and the whole congregation now constitutes itself into a constituency. Every preacher is a candidate, and everything about him is criticised, from his appearance—in one district they would not have a red-headed man; and his dress—in another district they objected to grey trousers, up to his voice and to his doctrine; but, of course, the keenest criticism bears upon his doctrine, which is searched as with a microscope. As a rule there is no desire to close the poll early, for a year's vacancy is a year's enjoyment to the congregation giving endless opportunity for argument and debate for strategy and party management. One congregation had been ruled so firmly by the retiring pastor, who was a little man and therefore full of authority, that they hardly dared to call their souls their own.

If any one ventured to disagree with this ecclesiastical Napoleon he was ordered to the door and told to betake himself to some church where freedom of action was allowed. This magnificent autocracy might have emptied another church, but it secured a Scots kirk, because to tell a Scot to go is to make, him stay. As a matter of course, no person did leave, for that would have been giving in, and the consequence was that the whole congregation was knit together by the iron bonds of rebellion.

When Napoleon retired the congregation smacked its lips, for now at least every one had found his voice and could go his own way. There never was such a vacancy known in the district. They heard thirty candidates and rejected them all: they held a meeting every week, which lasted till midnight, and there were six motions proposed, and no one dreamed of agreement. It was like the emancipation of the slaves, and the whole of Scotch cantankerousness came to a height. Every obscure law was hunted up in order to be used against the other side, and every well-known law they endeavoured to break. Not because they did not know the law, but because they wanted to find out whether the presiding minister knew it. This poor man had the duty of conducting the meetings of the congregation, and was utterly unfitted for the position by his exceeding goodness. He was a pious and soft-hearted man, who used to address them as “dear brethren,” and appealed to them on the grounds of harmony and charity. “You will wish to be at one,” he used to say, when they all really wished to be at sixes and sevens, or, “I am sure,” he would say, “you didn't mean to oppose our dear brother who has just spoken,” when that had been the speaker's intention for twenty-four hours. One party was led by a tall, raw-boned Scot, with a voice like a handsaw, who opposed everything, and the other was really managed by the wife of one of the elders, who could be heard giving directions *sotto voce* how to meet the handsaw. They finally drew the wretched acting moderator to distraction, so that his head, which was never so good as his heart, gave way, and he required six months' rest in a hydropathic.

The Presbytery then sent down a minister of another kind, fairly equipped in law and with no bowels of mercy; a civil, courteous, determined, fighting man, and there was a royal evening. This minister explained that they had held many meetings, most of which were unnecessary, and that they had proposed fifty motions, all of which he believed were illegal. It was his own conviction he freely stated that they knew perfectly well that they had been wrong, and that they had simply been amusing themselves, and he concluded by intimating that they had met for business on this occasion, that a minister must be elected before departing, and it was his business to see that he was elected unanimously. He stood facing the congregation, who were now in a high state of delight, feeling that there was going to be a real battle, and that there would be some glory in contending with an able-bodied man, who would not speak about charity, and say “dear brethren”—words which always excite a secret feeling of disgust in a Scot. The minister stood up opposite the congregation, tall, square and alert. “Will you pay attention and I'll lay down the law; if any one breaks the law he must sit down at once, and if he does not, I shall not allow him to vote. You can propose any candidate who is legally qualified, and I will allow one man to propose him and another to second him, and I will give each five minutes in which to speak to the excellence of his candidate, and the moment any person refers to another candidate he must stop. When the candidates have been proposed we shall take the vote, and we shall go on voting until we settle upon the candidate who has the majority, and we will do all this in an hour, and then we will sing a Psalm and go home.”

During this address several stalwart fighters were seen to nod to one another, and one went the length of slapping his leg, and already the moderator had acquired the respect of his turbulent congregation. The handsaw arose and proposed his candidate, and almost immediately attacked the other party. “Sit down, sir,” said the moderator, “you're out of order,” and after a brief stare of amazement and a measuring of the force against him, the handsaw gave a glance around and collapsed. A candidate was proposed from the other side, but his name was hardly mentioned before the mover commenced to refer to the handsaw. “You are out of order,” said the moderator; “not another word,” and, although the female leader of that side nodded to him to go on, he thought better, and also collapsed. Then an astute old strategist at the back, who had embroiled many a meeting, and who was sitting with a law book in his hand, proposed that they should delay the election until another meeting. “That motion,” said the moderator, “I shall not receive. We have not met to delay; we have met to vote.” Whereupon another Scot arose and stated that he had risen to a point of order, which is always the excuse by which the proceedings can be interrupted. “What,” he said, “I want to know is this: Is it regular to vote when there was no notice given that the voting was to take place?” “There was notice given,” said the moderator; “sit down in your place.” “Can I not object?” he said. “No,” he said, “you can't.” He looked around the meeting. “What,” he said, “is the use of being a Presbyterian if I am not allowed to object? I might as well be an Episcopalian.” The moderator, still standing, eyed him, and said: “Are you going to sit down or are you not?” “Do you order me to sit down in your private or in your public capacity?” said the recalcitrant. “As a man or as a moderator?” For nothing delights a Scot more than to make this contrast between public and private capacity, like the Scotch magistrate, who said, “In my public capacity I fine you five shillings for the assault; in my private capacity I would have done the same myself.” “As moderator,” said the minister, “I command you to take your place.” “I consent—I consent,” said the Scot, with infinite relish, like a man who had had a wrestling match and had been fairly beaten, and he leant back to a friend behind, saying, “Sall, he's a lad, the moderator,” for this is the way in which a man wins respect from Scots. In a moment he had risen again. “Moderator,” he said, “ye commanded me in yir official capacity to sit

doon, and I obeyed, but"—and there was a silence through the church—"I'll no sit down for that woman," indicating the elder's wife. "She would turn round and order me to sit down as if I had been her husband, but, moderator," he said, "I thank the Almichty I'm not."

Greatly cheered by this episode, the congregation proceeded to vote, the leaders taking objections to different voters, which were all overruled by the moderator, who was now going from strength to strength. And then at last a minister was elected by a large majority. "Now," said the moderator, "you've had a fair fight and a year's argument, and there is not a privilege you have not used, and you have done a thousand things you had no right to do, and I appeal to the minority to agree with the majority, as Scots ought to do when they have had their rights." Whereupon the handsaw arose and declared that he was never prouder of the Scotch Church than he had been during the last year, and that in all his life he had never spent a happier time. "We've had a grand argument and richt stand up fecht, and now," he said, "I'm willing, for masel, and I speak for my friends, to accept the minister that's been elected, for I consider him to be a soond preacher and vary spiritual in the exercises. The fact is," he added, "I would have been content with him at ony time, but it would have been a peety to have had an immediate election and to have missed this year. When he comes he'll have my hearty support, and I'm willing to agree that he should have a proper stipend, and that the manse be papered and painted and put in order for his coming." As he sat down he could be heard over all the church saying to himself with immense satisfaction, "It's been a michty time, and the law's been well laid down this nicht." The minister gave out the Psalm—

"How good a thing it is, and
How becoming well,
To gather such as brethren are
In unity to dwell!"

Which was sung with immense spirit, and, after the benediction, every man whom the minister had ordered to sit down came up and shook hands with him, assuring him that they knew all the time that he was right, and that they respected him for his ability. They also entreated him to come and administer the sacrament before the new minister arrived, believing that a man who could rule with so firm a hand would be an acceptable preacher of the gospel.

XVI.—AN EXPERT IN HERESY

EVERY country has its own sports, and Scotland has golf, but golf only satisfies the lighter side of the Scots; the graver side of the Scot finds its exercise in the prosecution of a heretic. Nothing so delights this theological and argumentative people as a heresy hunt, and they have no more ill-will to a heretic than sportsmen have to a fox. It sometimes occurs to me that they dally with cases in order that they may be prolonged, and that the sportsmen may have a good run after the fox. I have even dared to think that they would be willing to preserve heretics as foxes are preserved in hunting counties in order that they might have a good time now and again. Every one throws himself into a heresy case, from the highest to the lowest, from the Duke in his castle to the shepherd on the hills, from the lawyer in his office to the railway guard in his van. They all read about it and form their opinion, and take sides and watch the event, and the issue of the case is a national incident. From the conflict of wits, in which the hardest heads have tried conclusions on the deepest subjects, the people return to business shrewder than ever, more confident and self-satisfied.

We had missed the connexion, and the North train had gone fifteen minutes ago, and how I was to reach the station of Pitrodie that night was a question beyond solution. The station master could give no help, and only suggested that I might sleep at the inn and take the morning train, but in that case I would have been too late for the funeral to which I was going. When he heard the nature of my errand he bestirred himself with much more zeal, for, although a Scot may not facilitate your journey for a marriage, which he regards as an event of very doubtful utility, and associated with little geniality, he is always ready to assist you to a funeral to which the heart of the Scotch people goes out with pathetic interest.

"Would you mind travelling in the guard's van of a luggage train and ye would be in fine time?"

On the contrary, I would be delighted, for I had never travelled in such circumstances, and the guard's van would be a pleasant variety upon a third-class carriage.

The guard received me with considerable cordiality and gave me his seat in the van, which was decorated with pictures of kirks and eminent divines. For a while he was engaged with various duties, shunting trucks and making up his train, but after we had started and were out upon the line he came and placed himself opposite.

"Now," he said, "we've a run of twenty miles, and it's not likely we'll be interrupted, for the rails are clear at this time of night, and we're an express goods. I regard it," he said, "as a providence that ye lost yer train, for if I'd been asked what I would like this very nicht I would ha said, 'Gie me a minister.'"

When I expressed my pleasure at his respect for the cloth, and my willingness to be of any service to him, he waved his hand as one does who has been misunderstood. "It's no," he said, "releegious conversation that I'm wantin', although I'm willing enough to have that at a time, but there's a point in the Robertson-Smith heresy case that I would like to have cleared up to my satisfaction."

A tall and grey-bearded man, about fifty years of age, with a keen eye and a shrewd face, he leant forward from his place, and, with the light of the lamp shining on his face, he began: "Now, ye see, the first article in the libel against Prof. Robertson-Smith has to do with the construction of the Book of Deuteronomy," but I

will not inflict what he said, for it took ten miles of the railway to open up his point. As we rattled along the birling of the heavy break van was like music to words of sonorous sound—“Pentateuch,” “Mosaic Authorship,” “Confession of Faith.”

For another ten miles we discussed the length and breadth of the eminent Hebrew scholar's views till we reached a crisis, which happened also to be a junction on the railway. “One minute,” he said, “and we maun stop, for we're coming to the junction.” The point we were at was the place of the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament. “Now, I contend,” he continued, “that it hes to be read spiritually, and I've given three reasons. I've three mair, but I maun shunt the trucks. I'll be back in ten minutes, and ye'll not forget that the discussion is no closed but just adjourned, and I've the richt to give the other three reasons before ye reply.” And then, after the three had been given and thirty more, we parted as the day was breaking. At Pitrodie station he crossed the platform with me, and shook hands till my bones were almost broken.

“It's been a very edifying nicht, and I'll gie fair consideration to all your arguments. Mind ye, I'm proud o' the Professor, for he's a michty scholar, and I wouldna like to see him put out o' the kirk, but I'm jalousing that he's a heretic.” I stood at a turn of the road and saw the train pass, and my friend waved his hand to me from the back of the van, but I could see him sadly shake his head. He was still jalousing (suspecting) that Prof. Robertson-Smith was a heretic.

XVII.—THE SCOT AT AN ARGUMENT

IT is difficult for one nation to perfectly understand another, and there is a certain quality of the Scots' intellect which is apt to try the patience of an Englishman. It is said that an Englishman was once so exasperated by the arguing by a Scot, who took the opposite side on every subject from the weather to politics, that at last he cried out in despair: “You will admit at least that two and two make four,” to which the delighted Scot replied with celerity, “I'll admit naething, but I'm willing to argue the proposition.” It is not recorded whether the Scot escaped alive, but it is hardly possible to believe that he was not assaulted. You may be the most conciliatory of people, and may even be cleansed from all positive opinions—one of those people who are said to be agreeable because they agree with everybody; and yet a thoroughbred Scot will in ten minutes or less have you into a tangle of prickly arguments, and hold you at his mercy, although afterwards you cannot remember how you were drawn from the main road into the bramble patch, and you are sure that the only result was the destruction of your peace of mind for an afternoon. But the Scot enjoyed himself immensely, and goes on with keen zest to ambush some other passenger. What evil spirit of logic has possessed this race? an English person cannot help complaining, and why should any person find his pleasure in wordy debate?

From his side of the Tweed and of human nature the Scot is puzzled and pained by the inconsequence and opportunism of the English mind. After a Scot, for instance, has proved to his Southern opponent that some institution is absolutely illogical, that it ought never to have existed, and ought at once to be abolished, and after the Scot pursuing his victorious way of pure reason, has almost persuaded himself that a thing so absurd never has existed, the Englishman, who has been very much bored by the elaborate argument, will ask with a monstrous callousness whether the institution does not work well, and put forward with brazen effrontery the plea that if an institution works well, it does not matter whether it be logical or not. Then it is that a Scot will look at an Englishman in mournful silence and wonder upon what principle he was created.

The traveller no sooner crosses the border from the genial and irresponsible South than he finds himself in a land where a nation forms one huge debating society, and there is a note of interrogation in the very accent of speech. When an English tourist asked his driver what was the reason of so many religious denominations in Scotland, and the driver, looking down upon a village with six different kirks, answered, “Juist bad temper, naething else,” he was indulging his cynicism and knew very well that he was misinforming the stranger.

While it is absolutely impossible to make plain to an average Englishman the difference between one kirk and another in Scotland, yet every one has its own logical basis, and indeed when one considers the subtlety and restlessness of the Scots intellect he wonders, not that there have been so many divisions, but that there have been so few in Scots religion. By preference a Scot discusses Theology, because it is the deepest subject and gives him the widest sphere for his dialectic powers, but in default of Theology he is ready to discuss anything else, from the Game Laws to the character of Mary, Queen of Scots. He is the guardian of correct speech and will not allow any inaccuracy to pass, and therefore you never know when in the hurry of life you may not be caught and rebuked. When I asked a porter in Stirling Station one afternoon at what hour the train for Aberfoyle left I made a mistake of which I speedily repented. *The* train for Aberfoyle—I had assumed there was only one train that afternoon, for this beautiful but remote little place. Very good, that was then the position I had taken up and must defend. The porter licked his lips with anticipation of victory, for he held another view. “*The* train for Aberfoyle,” he repeated triumphantly. “Whatna train div ye mean?”—then severely as one exposing a hasty assumption—“there's a train at 3.10, there's another at 3.60, there's another at 6.30” (or some such hours). He challenged me to reply or withdraw, and his voice was ringing with controversy. When I made an abject surrender he was not satisfied, but pursued me and gained another victory. “Very good,” I said, “then what train should I take?” He was now regarding me with something like contempt, an adversary whom it was hardly worth fighting with. That depended on circumstances he did not know and purposes which I had not told him. He could only pity me. “How can I tell,” he said, “what train ye should go by, ye can go by ony train that suits ye, but yir luggage, being booked through, will travel by the 3.10.” During our conversation my portmanteau which I had placed under his charge was twice removed from

its barrow in the shifting of the luggage, and as my friend watched its goings (without interfering) he relaxed from his intellectual severity and allowed himself a jest suitable to my capacity. “That's a lively portmanteau o' yours. I'm judging that if ye set it on the road it would go Aberfoyle itsel'.” When we parted on a basis of free silver he still implied a reproach, “so ye did conclude to go by the 3.10, but” (showing how poor were my reasoning faculties even after I had used them) “ye would have been as soon by the 3.50.” For a sustained and satisfying bout of argument one must visit a Scot in his home and have an evening to spare. Was it not Carlyle's father who wrote to Tom that a man had come to the village with a fine ability for argument, and that he only wished his son were with them and then he would set Tom on one side of the table and this man on the other place, and “a proposeetion” between them, and hear them argue for the night? But one may get pleasant glimpses of the national sport on railway journeys and by the roadside. A farmer came into the carriage one summer afternoon, as I was travelling through Ayrshire, who had been attending market and had evidently dined. He had attended to the lighter affairs of life in the sale of stock and the buying of a reaping machine, and now he was ready for the more serious business of theological discussion. He examined me curiously but did not judge me worthy, and after one or two remarks on the weather with which I hastened to agree, he fell into a regretful silence as of one losing his time. Next station a minister entered, and the moment my fellow-passenger saw the white tie his eyes glistened, and in about three minutes they were actively engaged, the farmer and the Minister, discussing the doctrine of justification. The Minister, as in duty bound, took the side of justification by faith, and the farmer, simply I suppose to make debate and certainly with a noble disregard of personal interests—for he had evidently dined—took the side of works. Perhaps it may seem as if it was an unequal match between the Minister and the farmer, since the one was a professional scholar and the other a rustic amateur. But the difference was not so great as a stranger might imagine, for if a minister be as it were a theological specialist every man in Scotland is a general practitioner. And if the latter had his own difficulties in pronouncing words he was always right in the text he intended. They conducted their controversy with much ability till we came to the farmer's station, and then he left still arguing, and with my last glimpse of that admirable Scot he was steadying himself against a post at the extremity of the platform, and this was his final fling: “I grant ye Paul and the Romans, but I take my stand on James.” Wonderful country where the farmers, even after they have dined, take to theology as a pastime. What could that man not have done before he dined.

In earlier days, the far back days of youth, I knew a rustic whose square and thick-set figure was a picture of his sturdy and indomitable mind. He was slow of speech and slow also of mind, but what he knew he held with the grip of a vice and he would yield nothing in conversation. If you said it was raining (when it might be pouring) he would reply that it was showery. If you declared a field of com to be fine he said that he had seen “waur” (worse), and if you praised a sermon he granted that it wasna bad; and in referring to a minister distinguished throughout the land for his saintliness he volunteered the judgment that there was “naething positively veecious in him.” Many a time did I try, sometimes to browbeat him, and sometimes to beguile him into a positive statement and to get him to take up a position from which he could not withdraw. I was always beaten, and yet once I was within an ace of success. We had bought a horse on the strength of a good character from a dealer, and were learning the vanity of speech in all horse transactions, for there was nothing that beast did not do of the things no horse ought to do, and one morning after it had tried to get at James with its hind legs, and then tried to bring him down with its fore legs, had done its best to bite him, and also manoeuvred to crush him against a wall, I hazarded the suggestion that our new purchase was a vicious brute. He caught the note of assurance in my voice, and saw that he had been trapped; he cast an almost pathetic look at me as if I was inviting him to deny his national character and betray a historic part of unbroken resistance. He hesitated and looked for a way of escape while he skilfully warded off another attack, this time with the teeth, and his face brightened. “Na!” he replied, “I'll no admit that the horse is veecious, we maun hae more experience o' him afore we can pass sic a judgment, but”—and now he just escaped a playful tap from the horse's fore-leg—“I'm prepared to admit that this momin' he is a wee thingie liteegious.” And so victory was snatched from my hand, and I was again worsted.

If the endless arguing of the Scot be wearisome to strangers and one would guess is a burden to himself, yet it has its advantages. It has been a discipline for the Scots mind, and the endless disputations on doctrine and kirks as well as more trifling matters like history and politics has toughened the Scots brain and brought it to a fine edge. When I hear a successful Scot speak lightly of the Shorter Catechism, then I am amazed and tempted to despise him, for it was by that means that he was sent forth so acute and enterprising a man, and any fortune he has made he owes to its training. He has been trained to think and to reason, to separate what is true from what is false, to use the principles of speech and test the subtlest meaning of words, and therefore, if he be in business, he is a banker by preference, because that is the science of commerce, and if he be an artizan, he becomes an engineer because that is the most skilful trade, and as a doctor he is spread all over the world. Wherever hard thinking and a determined will tell in the world's work this self-reliant and uncompromising man is sure to succeed, and if his mind has not the geniality and flexibility of the English, if it secretly hates the English principle of compromise, and suspects the English standard of commonsense, if it be too unbending and even unreasonably logical, this only proves that no one nation, not even the Scots, can possess the whole earth.

XVIII.—UPON THE LECTURE PLATFORM

THERE are four places where a man may lecture, exclusive of the open air, which is reserved for political demonstrations and religious meetings, and I arrange the four in order of demerit. The worst is, beyond question, a church, because ecclesiastical architects have no regard for acoustics, and a lecturer is apt to crack his voice yelling into the corners of churches.

People come to a church, also, in a chastened mood, and sit as if they were listening to a sermon, so that the unhappy lecturer receives little encouragement of applause or laughter, and, if he happens to be himself a clergyman, is hindered from doing anything to enliven the audience. Besides, the minister of the church will feel it his duty to introduce the leading members of his congregation after the lecture, and a reception of this kind in the vestry is the last straw on a weary lecturer's back. He cannot, however, refuse because he is a fellow professional, and knows that his discourtesy may be set to the debit of the minister. Next in badness is a public hall, because it is so bare and cheerless, and on account of its size is difficult to fill with an audience, and still more difficult with the voice. Drill halls, especially, are heart-breaking places, because they are constructed for the voices of commanding officers shouting “right wheel,” “march,” “fire,” and such like martial exhortations.

There is also another objection to halls from the lecturer's standpoint, and that is the accessibility of the platform. Usually there are two sets of steps, which the audience consider have been constructed in order that they may come on the platform in a body and shake hands with the lecturer. If a lecturer be a human being, he is always glad to see two or three of his fellow-creatures, especially if they say something encouraging, but just because he is a human being and has spoken for an hour and a half, he is apt to lose heart when he sees half of his large audience, say seven hundred people, processing in his direction.

It is on such an occasion that he is full of gratitude to a manager who will come in with his travelling coat and march the lecturer out at the back door, as a man in haste to catch his train or on any other pretence.

A lecturer may count himself fortunate, and need have no anxiety about circumstances, who speaks from the stage of a theatre, because he will have his whole audience within convenient compass, and focussed upon him, and although he comes down to a whisper he will still be heard. When you lecture at a theatre you are known as the “star,” and as you cross the dark and mysterious under-world behind the stage you hear some one crying: “This way to the star's room,” which generally turns out to be the room of the leading actress, where you may spend a quarter of an hour in seeing yourself in the innumerable mirrors, and examining the long array of toilet instruments on the table.

Theatrical people are most sympathetic and good-natured, and although they may not have the faintest idea who you are or what you are going to do, they always wish you well, and congratulate you if there is a good house. Their own house may not have been good last night, but they are glad if yours is good to-day.

The crowning advantage of a theatre to a nervous and hard-wrought lecturer is its seclusion. You get in and out by the stage door, and there is not one person in a hundred of your audience could find that door, and if he did he would not get admittance. From the floor to the stage there is no way, and when you pass behind the curtain you are beyond reach even of an interviewer.

When I become an impresario I shall never allow my “star” to be seen, except on the platform, and after he has done his work I will remove him swiftly in a closed conveyance. In this way I shall lay him under a debt of gratitude, and keep him in good humour, and get out of him a third more work. As I have no idea of entering on this business at present, I offer the hint to all impresarios everywhere, with my respectful compliments.

If a lecturer could always choose—which practically he never can do at all—he would prefer to lecture to a club of men and women in their club-room, or in the large drawing-room of a private house. He will then address a limited number of bright people who are at their best; he can talk as at a dinner-table and make his point easily; he can venture on an aside, or stop to tell an anecdote, and after an hour or so he will be as little fatigued as when he began. When the lecture is over he mixes with his audience and in a minute is a private individual. This is the very refinement and luxury of lecturing, which a lecturer enjoys only on rare occasions.

Local arrangements differ very much, and some of them are rather trying to a lecturer. There are places where a regular procession is formed and marches to the platform, headed by a local dignitary, and made up of clergymen, magistrates, little millionaires, and public characters of all kinds and degrees. In midst thereof the lecturer marches like a criminal being taken to the scaffold.

Once I discovered in the ante-room a magnificent embroidered robe, and the insane idea took possession of my mind that it was intended for the lecturer. Had it been put upon me there would have been no lecture, for I should have been smothered with its greatness and its grandeur. I was still regarding it with horror and perspiring freely when the chief magistrate of the city came in, and it was put on his shoulders by two liveried servants, who then decorated us all, from the chief magistrate down to myself, with flowers. The servants marched first into the hall, the great man followed, and I crept, following behind his majestic figure (which was received with frantic howls of applause), and this was the grandest entry I ever made upon the lecture platform.

In some places there is a chairman—I shall have something to say about chairmen—and votes of thanks, first to the lecturer, then to the chairman and to other people who have had some connexion or other with the matter, till a third of the time is taken up by local talk and the lecturer is put to confusion.

For votes of thanks I have personally an intense dislike, because the movers refer to one in terms which might suitably apply to William Shakespeare (one enthusiastic admirer preferred me to Shakespeare, because, although he classed us together as occupying a solitary position, I had the advantage of being more sentimental). As a lecturer on Scots subjects I have a horror of other speakers, because they feel it necessary to tell Scots stories without knowing the dialect, and generally without knowing the story.

Certain places are very business-like in their arrangements, and the smartest in this respect is, curious to say, not in America, but in England. You are brought to the place of operation five minutes before the hour, and at two minutes to eight placed upon the platform. When the hand of the clock points to eight you begin to speak, and when the hand stands at nine you close. If you are one minute late in beginning, the audience grows restless, and if you are five minutes late in closing, they leave. There are no preliminaries and no after-talk, and you do your best with one of the most intelligent audiences any lecturer could address in sixty

minutes.

The most risky audience in my experience is afforded by the free lectures given in an English city, which is made up by men who have dropped in from the streets because the hall is open and because something is going on. If they are interested they will listen eagerly and reward the lecturer with enthusiastic applause, besides giving an irrelevant cheer occasionally for Old Ireland or Lord Roberts. If the audience is not interested they leave in solid blocks of fifty, without any regard to the lecturer's feelings, or the disturbance of their neighbours.

The most sympathetic and encouraging audience a man can have are the students of an American ladies' college, because if he is nervous, as an Englishman is bound to be before three hundred bright American young women, they will catch his first point, and they will smile upon him and show that they believe there is something in him if he could only get it out, and create such a kindly atmosphere that he will rise to his height and do his best.

This was how the students of a delightful college not very far from Philadelphia treated myself when I was almost ready to sink through the floor from sheer terror of facing so many young women, being a sisterless and daughterless man, and I wish to thank one young lady who sat in the front and smiled encouragement upon me until I lifted up my head and took heart.

I have never utterly collapsed, and have never fled from the platform, but I was reduced to confusion and incoherence of speech when I opened a clubhouse for a company of women students at a certain American University, and my whole audience suddenly flopped down upon the floor as I began my little speech. As the floor had a beautiful carpet and there were no chairs, the young ladies no doubt did well for themselves, but as I looked down upon that fair flower-garden all my thoughts vanished, and I do not think that I uttered a grammatical sentence.

American young women do not know that an Englishman is the most bashful creature on the face of the earth, and that he would rather face an audience of two thousand men from the streets than address twenty young women, every one as sharp as a needle and as pretty as a flower.

My experience of chairmen is wide and varied, and I have lectured under the Presidency of some very distinguished and able men, but on the whole I would rather be without a chairman. There was one who introduced me in a single sentence of five minutes' length, in which he stated that as he would treasure every word I said more than pure gold he did not wish to curtail my time by a single minute. He then fell fast asleep, and I had the honour of wakening him at the close of the lecture. Had he slept anywhere else I should not have had the smallest objection, but his restful attitude in the high estate of the chair had an unedifying and discomposing effect on the audience.

On the whole, I preferred that chairman to another who introduced me to the extent of twenty-five minutes, and occupied the time in commending to the exasperated audience the claims of a foundling asylum with which he had some charitable connexion. This time it was the lecturer who fell asleep and had to be wakened when the audience drove the chairman to his seat.

A lecturer is also much refreshed amid his labour by the assurance of the chairman that he has simply lived upon his books for years, and has been looking forward to this evening for the last three months with high expectation, when after these flattering remarks he does not know your name, and can only put it before the audience after a hurried consultation with the secretary of the lecture course.

My memory returns also with delight to a chairman who insisted that one object had brought them together, and that I was no stranger in that town because the whole audience before him were my friends, and then having called me Doctor Maclaren and Ian Watson, besides having hinted more than once at Mr. Barrie, introduced me to an uproarious audience as Mr. Ian John Maclaren Watson.

It is, of course, my gain, and the loss of two more distinguished fellow-countrymen, that I should be hopelessly associated in the minds of many people with Mr. Crockett and Mr. Barrie. But when one speaker declared that I would be remembered by grateful posterity as the Stickit Minister, I was inclined to protest, for whatever have been my defects as a preacher, I still have succeeded in obtaining a church; and when another speaker explained he had gone three times to see my “Little Minister,” I felt obliged to deny myself the authorship of that delightful play.

Allusions on the part of the audience, when they shook hands with me afterwards, I allowed to paas because there was not time to put things right; merely smiling at the mention of “A Window in Thrums,” and looking modest at the adjectives heaped upon “The Raiders.” My cynical humour was greatly tickled with the chairman, who had been very cordial with me in private, and who was understood by the public to have been closely identified with my visit to his city, when he not only escaped from the stage after he had introduced me, but also immediately left the theatre and cheerfully betook himself to his office without hearing one word of the lecture. Perhaps he had discovered from some casual remark of mine that I was not Mr. Barrie, and was at a loss to make out who I could be.

With mayors and other public functionaries who have to speak six times a day on six different subjects, and who get a little confused as to which meeting they are attending, I have the utmost sympathy, and never have been discomposed by any reference to the management of hospitals or the fallacy of bimetallism, even though the references were very indifferently connected with the lecturer and his subjects.

The labour of shaking hands afterwards with a considerable proportion of your audience is not only lightened by their kindness, but also much cheered by their conversation. After a few evenings in the United States I arrived at the rooted conviction that the majority of the American people belonged to the Scots race, and that America was the real Scotland. It was not only that native-born Scots came forward to welcome a fellow-countryman with an accent which was beyond all dispute and could be heard six yards off, and with allusions to Auchterarder which warmed your heart, but that every person seemed to be connected with Scotland.

One belonged to a family which had emigrated from Scotland in the seventeenth century, and was anxious to know whether I could give him any information on the family tree. Another had married a Scots wife, and believed he owed his prosperity to her; a third was an admirer of Sir Walter Scott, and looked forward to

visiting Scotland as the ambition of his life. And one lady, full of despair as she heard the Scots claims of the people around her, came and confessed frankly: “I am not Scots, and I have no relative a Scot, and none of our family married a Scot, but my sister has a Scots nurse: will that do?” I assured her it would, and that I was glad at last to meet a genuine American, because I had come to see the American people.

I have a vivid recollection of one place where a clan had turned out to receive me, and I was escorted to the platform by a band of plaided warriors, who, headed by a piper, marched me in and ranged themselves round me on the platform. When the lecture was over, one clansman met me in the anteroom, and I hardly recognized him; he was about three inches taller and six inches bigger round the chest than before the lecture, and was as a man intoxicated, though not with strong drink.

“Mr. Maclaren,” he said to me, “eh, but we are a michty people,” and he slapped his chest vigorously. I hinted that we had one or two faults to modify our perfection, but he was not in a mood for such consideration. “No worth mentioning,” he said, and departed in glory. The national prayer of our people is understood to be: “Lord, give us a good conceit of ourselves,” and this prayer in my compatriot's case had been wonderfully fulfilled.

Audiences vary very much in excellence, and it is difficult to understand the reason, because you may have the most delightful and the most difficult from the same class of people. Audiences are like horses—some of them so hard in the mouth and spiritless that they almost pull your arm out of the socket, and others so bright and high-spirited that you hardly feel the reins in your hands, and driving—that is to say, speaking—is a delight.

The ideal audience is not one which accompanies you from beginning to end with applause and laughter, but one that takes every point and enjoys it with intelligent reserve, so that your illustrations may be condensed into allusions, and a word conveys your humour. One of my pleasures as a lecturer was to test every audience by a certain passage which divided the sheep from the goats, and I think my enjoyment was even greater when they were all goats.

It came into a reading from the *Briar-Bush* where the word “intoxication” occurs. My custom was to stop and apologise for the appearance of such a word in my book, and to explain that the word is not known in Scots speech. There are, I used to say, two reasons why a Scotsman does not employ the word. The first is that he is imperfectly acquainted with the painful circumstances to which this word is supposed to allude, and the second that a Scotsman considers that no one with a limited human intellect can know enough about the conditions of his fellow-creatures to make such a statement.

When an audience took in the situation at once, then one could rest for a moment, since they required that time to appreciate the rigid temperance and conscientious literary accuracy of the Scotch people. When they took the statement in perfect seriousness, and one or two solemn reformers nodded their heads in high approval, then I wanted to go behind the curtain and shake hands with myself. More than once it was with difficulty I could continue in face of this unbroken seriousness, and once I broke down utterly, although I hope the audience only supposed I was laughing at some poor humour of my own.

The cause of my collapse was not the faces of the audience, but the conduct of a brother Scot, whose head went down below the seat as he learned the two reasons why the word intoxicated is not used in Scotland. When he emerged from the depths he cast a glance of delight in my direction as to one who was true in all circumstances of his nation, and then he was composing himself to listen with fresh confidence to a lecturer who had given such pledges of patriotism, when he caught sight of the faces of the audience.

As it dawned upon him that the audience had taken the statement literally, he was again obliged to go into retirement. Twice he made a brave effort to regain possession of himself, but as often the sight of the audience shook him to his foundation. At last he rose and left the theatre, but at the door he lingered to take one look at the unconscious audience, and then shaking his head in my direction with patriotic joy, he departed from the building, and I was obliged to imagine an execution in order to continue my lecture.

The lecturer's nerves ought to be made of wire, for he never knows what may happen. There is one town in the United States where the express trains run down the main street, and you lecture there to an accompaniment of engine bells and the blowing-off of steam. When the music rises too high for the human voice, the lecturer in that town ought to abandon the contest and offer between the whistles a few remarks on the legislative power of American railways. These remarks will be vastly enjoyed by the audience.

Behind the platform of one large hall is the lift of the next building, which is used at regular intervals of a minute, and you have your sentences punctuated by the whoop of the unseen lift till at last you can calculate the time and know that you have spoken ninety whoops, and it is nearly time to stop.

One night I was arrested by the sound of steady snoring which could be heard over the larger part of the theatre, but although every one was in search for the offender, he could not be found. At last the sound was traced to the stage, and, as there was no one on the stage except myself, to be behind the curtain. One of the servants of the theatre had laid himself down there in order to enjoy the lecture, and that had proved of such a solid character that he had fallen into a fit of meditation, from which he was very rudely awakened.

One evening in a Canadian town a fox terrier came in, and owing to some difference of opinion with a gentleman in the stalls, expressed himself in public. As there was to be a dog story in the lecture, I thought it well to explain that the terrier had been engaged to take part, but had broken in too soon. For a while the dog behaved with much propriety, and then there was a second outbreak.

Six gentlemen combined to get that dog out of the theatre, but not without difficulty and danger. The terrier retired fighting.

The platform does many good things for a lecturer; for one thing, it strengthens his voice; it brings him into contact with large bodies of his fellow-men, and it inspires him with humanity. Upon the platform he learns to command himself; to take disappointments like a man; and, above all, he gains a new conviction of the kindness and goodwill of large bodies of people whom he has never seen before and may never see again, and of whom he will ever think with a grateful heart.

XIX.—FOR THE SAKE OF A HORSE

IN the days of long ago I used to live in the summer-time upon a farm in one of the rich plains of Scotland, where the soil was deep and we could grow everything, from the fragrant red clover to the strong, upstanding wheat. One reason why our farm bore such abundant crops was its situation; for it lay, in the shape of the letter V, between two rivers which met upon our ground. One of the rivers was broad and shallow, and its clear water ran over gravel, brawling and fretting when it came upon a large stone, and making here and there a pleasant little fall. This river in the winter-time could rise high and run with a strong current, and there were days and sometimes weeks when we could not send our men and horses across its ford. We never hated this river, because, although it could be angry and proud when the snow was melting on the distant hill or a big thunder-cloud burst in the glens above us, it was never treacherous and sullen; it had no unexpected depths into which a man and horse might fall, but was open as the day, and its water was as bright. Wherefore I have kindly thoughts of that stream, and when the sun is hot in the city, and there is no unused air to breathe, I wish I were again upon its banks and could see it gleaming underneath the bushes as it sings its way past my feet.

The other river was narrow, and ran in silence between its banks; or rather it did not run, but trailed itself along like a serpent, deep, black, and smooth. There was no end to its wicked cunning, for it pretended to be only three feet deep and it was twelve, and sometimes it hollowed out to itself a hole where a twenty-foot line would not touch the bottom. One of its worst tricks was to undermine the bank so that the green turf on which you stood became a trap, and, yielding beneath your feet, unless you were very dexterous, shot you into the river. Then unless you could swim, the river would drown you in its black water as if with fiendish delight.

Over this river, also, we required to have a ford; but in this case it was not natural, for the bottom of this river was far below the surface of the water, and it was soft, deep clay. Across the river, therefore, the ford had to be built up with stones; and it was made in the shape of a horseshoe, so that any one crossing must follow a rough half-circle from bank to bank, and he had to keep to the line of the ford, for below it the water poured into a depth of thirty feet. When the river was low one could easily trace the ford, and there was no excuse for getting into danger; but if the river had been fed by the upland rains, then every sign of the ford was lost, and a man had to be very careful how he picked his horse's way. And all the time the wicked water would be bringing its weight to bear on him, in the hope of carrying him and his horse and everything else that was with him over the edge.

This river we loathed, and at the thought of its wickedness and its tragedies—for twice I nearly lost my life in it—I still shudder, here in my study.

One afternoon I went down to the ford in order to warn a plowman that he must not cross. That morning he had taken a load of grain to the railway-, station, and now he was coming back with the empty cart and two horses. During the day there had been rain upon the mountains, and the river was swollen so that every sign of the ford was lost.

I stood high up upon the bank, and when he came down the road on the other side I shouted across the river—which was rising every minute—that he must not on any account attempt it, but must turn back and go round by the bridge. Of course he ought to have obeyed this order, and I am not going to say that he was wise in what he did; but safety would mean a détour of ten miles, and he knew not fear. It was from his breed that our Highland regiment got their recruits and more than one of our men had gone into the “Black Watch.”

“I'll risk it,” he cried from the other side; and he made his preparations for the daring enterprise, while I, on my side, could say and do nothing more. All that remained for me was to watch, and, if it were possible, in case of things coming to the worst, to give such help as I could from the bank.

It was a heavy two-wheeled cart he had, with one horse in the shafts and another before, tandem-wise, and this kind of team could not be driven from the cart. The driver must walk, holding the reins of the tandem horse in his right hand, and, if necessary, guiding the horse in the shafts with his left; and so they entered the stream.

After the horses had gone a few yards into the water they wished to stop; for they had an instinct of danger, all the more because they were not free, but were strapped and chained, so that it would be almost impossible for them to save their lives by swimming. Jock chided and encouraged them, calling them by name, and they went in without any more hesitation; for horses are full of faith, and trust their driver absolutely if they know his voice and love him. Each of our men had a pair of horses under his charge; and so close was the tie between the men and their horses that the pair would come to their driver in the field when he called them by name, and would allow another plowman to handle them only under protest.

Very carefully did Jock guide his team round the farther bend of the horseshoe, but when they reached the middle of the stream the water reached his waist and was lapping round his chest. Of course he could not have stood had it not been that he was on the upper side, and had the support of the shaft, to which he clung, still holding the reins of the foremost horse and the bridle of the other.

“Take care, Jock! for any sake, take care, man!” I yelled from my bank. It was poor advice, but one had to say something as he looked on the man and the horses, more than half covered by the stream, so lonely and helpless. “You are at the turn now”; for we knew that the bend of the shoe was at the middle of the stream.

“It's a' richt,” came back the brave, honest voice. “We'll win through”; and now Jock turned the leader's head up-stream, and the cart began to move round on the nearer turn of the horseshoe. Yes, they would win

through, for surely the worst was past, and I jumped upon the bank for very joy, but ever watched the slightest movement, while every inch seemed a mile and every moment an hour.

Alas! there was no end to the deceit and wickedness of that river; for, owing to some slight bend at a little distance higher up on the opposite bank, the current ran with its main strength, not in the middle of the channel, but toward the place where I was standing, and into a black deep just at my feet. It beat upon the cart, and as I looked I could see the cart begin to yield, and to be carried sidewise off the track of the ford. I shouted—I know not what now; I think the plowman's name—but Jock already had felt himself going with the cart as it turned round. He called upon his horses: “Pull up, Star! Steady, lass!”—this to the mare in his hand.

The intelligent creatures answered to his voice and made a valiant effort, Star plunging forward, and the mare—a wise old beast—straining herself to recover the cart. For an instant the cart's further wheel was pulled on to the track, and I saw the cart once more level in the water; and again I shouted, calling both man and horses by their names. Then the river, afraid that she was to be spoiled of her prey, put out all her strength. The cart yields and sinks on the lower side and begins to turn over. It is off the ford now, and will pull the horses after it, and all that can be done is for Jock to let go the horses, who are now struggling in desperation, and to save his own life. He could swim, and was a powerful man, forty inches and more round the chest, and a fellow, if you please, to toss the hammer on a summer evening.

“For God's sake, let go the horses, Jock, and make for the bank!” And I went to the edge where he was likely to come, and lying down upon my chest, I twisted one arm round a sturdy bush, and was ready with the other hand to catch Jock if he should be fighting his way through the current and come within reach of shore.

By this time the horse in the shaft was fighting on the edge of the abyss, and only the top of one side-board of the cart could be seen, and the upper shaft, which was standing straight out of the water. Star was screaming with terror—and a horse's scream is a fearful sound—for if only he could be free of the two chains that fastened him to the shaft, he, a powerful young horse, would soon reach safety where the road came out from the ford through the banks, up the slope, to dry land. And Jock, forgetful of himself, was determined to give Star his chance for life—Star, whom he had broken in as a colt, and taught to take an oatmeal cake out of his pocket, of whom he boasted in the markets, and for whom he had bought little brass ornaments to wear on his forehead and chest. The mare was beyond redemption, and must perish with the cart; she was old, and had done her work. But Star must not be drowned. Already he has loosened the near chain and on one side Star is free, and now, in the midst of that wild hurly-burly of plunging horses, Jock, holding on to the projecting shaft with one hand, is reaching with the other underneath the neck of the mare, to free the other chain from the farther shaft.

He succeeded, as I took it, at the very last moment; for Star, now on the brink, made a desperate effort, and, shaking himself free of all entanglement, swam into the quieter water, just above where I had hoped to meet his driver.

In another minute Star was standing on the road, shaking in every limb, and hanging his head between his fore legs, with all the strength and bravery taken out of him.

Before he reached the bank, the cart and the mare, and poor Jock with them, had been swept over the edge of the unseen ford into the deep water below. Had Jock been free of the cart and horse he might have made some fight for his life, even in that caldron; but, from the marks upon his body, we judged that he had been struck, just when he loosed the chain, by the iron hoofs of the mare in her agony, and had been rendered unconscious.

Within a second, horse and cart and man had disappeared, and the cruel river had triumphed and was satisfied.

Three days afterward we rescued his body from her grasp; and when we carried it up to the bothy where he and his mates had lived together, the roughest of them felt that this man had been a hero.

No doubt he ought not to have dared so much; but having dared, he did not flinch. His duty was that of every driver—to stick to the last by his horses—and he did it to the uttermost.

He was a rough man, Jock, who never read anything except the stories in the weekly newspaper which used to circulate in the bothies. There were times when Jock took a glass too much on a fair-day at Muirtown, and then he was inclined to fight. His language, also, was not suited for polite society, and his temper was not always under perfect control.

Let me say it plainly: Jock was nothing but a Scots plowman, and all he did that day was to save the life, not of a child or of a man, but of a cart-horse worth about £50. It was, however, his bit of duty as Jock understood it; all he had to give was his life, and he gave it without hesitation and without fear.

XX.—NO RELEVANT OBJECTION

NEXT to the election of a minister nothing stirred the parish of Thomgreen like an election of elders, and it may be truthfully said that the people were far more concerned about the men whom they appointed to this sacred office than about the man whom they sent to represent them in Parliament. The people had also a keen sense of the kind of man who was fit to be an elder, and there was many a farmer whom they would have cheerfully elected to any board, and in whose hands they would have trusted any amount of money, but whom they would never have dreamt of making an elder. Persons who were by no means careful about their own life, and one would not have supposed had any great concern about the character of the officers of the Christian Church, had yet a fixed idea, and a very sound one, about the

qualifications for an elder; and if one of themselves had been proposed would have regarded the idea as an insult, not to them but to the Church. “Me an elder,” he would have said; “for ony sake be quiet; there maun be nae jokin' on sich subjects. When you and me are made elders the kirk had better be closed.” For the word elder was synonymous in Thorngreen, and, indeed, in every right-thinking parish, not only with morality and integrity, but with gravity and spirituality.

No parish could expect to have many men who filled the conditions, and Thorngreen had a standing grievance that one man who was evidently an elder by arrangement of providence would not accept the office. Andrew Harris, of Rochally, as he was commonly called, after the name of his farm, was of ancient Thorngreen blood, since his forbears had worked land in the parish for many generations, and he himself had succeeded his father, who was also an elder for thirty years. There was no sounder farmer than Rochally, and what he had done by draining, limeing, and skilful seeding was known unto all men; no straighter man in a bargain, for the character of a young horse from Rochally was better than a written document; no friendlier man in the kirkyard on a Sunday or at Muirtown markets, and no more regular and attentive hearer in kirk. Beyond all that, the parish knew, although it never said such things, that Rochally was a religious man, who not only had worship in his house, with his men servants and his women servants present, but also worshipped God in all Christian living from year to year. He was also a man of substance, and if that could be got with other things, the parish preferred it in an elder, and he gave liberally to the Free Kirk, of which, indeed, he was the mainstay. If he was not married, and was never likely now to marry, it could not be helped, but there was nothing else wanting to make him the perfect model of an elder.

As regularly as there was a meeting for the election of elders, which happened about every five years, the name of Mr. Andrew Harris, farmer of Rochally, was proposed and seconded, and about to be placed on the nomination form, when Rochally himself rose, and quietly but very firmly requested that his name be dropped, “for reasons which are sufficient to my own conscience.” And although three ministers in succession, and a generation of elders, had pleaded privately with Rochally, and had used every kind of argument, they could not move him from his position. His nomination was felt on each occasion to be a debt due to his character and to the spiritual judgment of the congregation; but the people had long ago despaired of his consent. Had they consulted his wishes they would never have mentioned his name; but, at any rate, he made a point of attending, and at once withdrawing. They were obstinate, and he was obstinate, and the event had become a custom at the election of elders in the Free Kirk.

No one could even guess why Rochally refused office, and every one in the Free Kirk was a little sore that the best and most respected member on their roll should sit in his back seat Sunday after Sunday, and attend every week meeting, and give the largest subscriptions, and also gamer the utmost respect from without, and yet not be an elder. It was also felt that if his name could only be printed on the nomination paper and placed before the people, and the people unanimously elected him, as they would do, then it would be hard for him to refuse, and if he did refuse he would have to do what he had not done yet—give his reasons. If they could only hold the meeting without his being present, or if, by any innocent ruse, he could be kept from the meeting, then half the battle would be won; and that is how it came to pass that the minister and elders of Thomgreen Free Kirk stole a march upon Rochally. They had been thinking for some time of adding to the eldership, for Essendy, the father of the Session, had “won awa'” at eighty-seven, and Wester Mains could only sit on sunny days in the garden; and while they were turning the matter over in their minds—for nothing was done hurriedly in Thomgreen—it spread abroad that Rochally was going away for the unprecedented period of four weeks, partly to visit a sister's son who had risen to high position in England, and partly to try some baths for the mild rheumatism which was his only illness. It seemed a providential arrangement, and one which they must use wisely, and if anything could have been read on the severe countenances of Thomgreen, Rochally might have guessed that some conspiracy was afoot when he bade his brethren good-bye after Kirk one Sabbath.

As soon as it was known that he had fairly departed, and as it was perfectly certain there could be no communication with him from his home except a weekly report of the briefest and most prosaic kind by the foreman, the Session (that is, the Court of Elders) was called together, and on two successive Sundays the people were summoned to a meeting for the nomination of elders. It was held on the Monday following the second Sunday, and was attended by almost the whole congregation. Six names were proposed for three vacancies, but, of course, the climax of the proceedings was the nomination of Mr. Andrew Harris, farmer at Rochally, and the insertion of his name on the paper of nomination. The nomination papers were given out on the following Sunday, and on the fourth and last Sunday of Rochally's absence were returned into the hands of the Session. Before he came home the Session had met, and as every single communicant, without exception, had voted for Mr. Andrew Harris, farmer at Rochally, the Session declared him elected, and when he sat in his pew on the following Sunday he heard the edict for the ordination of three elders on that day fortnight, and the first name was his own.

It was creditable to the good manners of the people that though they held their breath at the critical moment, none of them looked even sideways to the pew where Rochally sat alone; but the minister's eye fell on him from the pulpit, and as he noticed Rochally start and flush, and grow pale, while a look of pain came over his face, the minister became anxious, and began to regret their well-intentioned plot. And when, according to the custom of the kirk, he announced that the aforesaid persons would be ordained this day fortnight, unless “some valid objection to their life and doctrine be stated to the Kirk Session at a meeting to be held for that purpose before the service on Wednesday evening,” and when, even at that distance, he could see Rochally's hand tighten upon the door of his pew and his head fall forward upon his breast for an instant, as if he were in pain, he almost wished that they had not meddled with the secret affairs of a man's life. The minister was not surprised when Rochally did not call at the manse on Monday or Tuesday to say that he could not accept the election, although that was within his power, and he was not surprised, although much grieved, when he saw Rochally standing in the shadow of the trees not far from the vestry where the Kirk Session met. Although he had not the faintest idea of the reason, he was now afraid of what was going to happen, and the elders, as they came in one by one, having passed Rochally, who stood apart among the trees, and gave no sign of recognition, were uneasy, and had a sense of calamity. They knew nothing either, and were not able even to imagine anything; but they also, having seen Rochally and caught a faint glimpse of

his face, would fain have burned the nomination papers, and cancelled the whole election.

The court was opened with prayer, in which the minister was very earnest that they should be all guided by the Spirit of God and know His will. And then the minutes were read, wherein the names of those elected were mentioned, after which the minister declared the time had arrived for receiving objections to the life and doctrine of the aforesaid persons, and the beadle, being summoned from the dark kirk where he had been sitting, was commanded to do his duty. Thereupon, having opened the outer door of the vestry, as being a public place, he looked into the darkness, and called upon any persons who could make valid objection to the life or doctrine of Andrew Harris, farmer at Rochally, that he should not be ordained an elder, to come forward and declare the same. Many a time had the beadle made this challenge, and never before had it been answered, but now, out from the darkness, came Rochally himself, and entered the vestry. For a moment he was dazzled by the light of the lamp, though it was never very bright, and as he stood before the Session he passed his hand over his face. Then he stepped forward to the table, and, leaning heavily on it with one hand, Rochally unveiled his secret.

“Moderator and Elders of the Kirk, I stand here in answer to your commandment, and in obedience to my own conscience, to give you strong reasons why Andrew Harris should never be ordained an elder in Christ's Kirk, and why he is not worthy even to take the sacrament.

“I ken well that my brethren have often wondered why I wouldna allow my name to be mentioned for the eldership, and I have often feared that they judged me as one who despised the call of the kirk, and wouldna put his hand to the plough. If they did so, they were wrang, for God knows how I have honoured and loved the Church, and He knows how glad and proud a man I would have been to carry the vessels of the Lord. But I dauma, I dauma.

“It micht have been better if I had told the reason years ago, and saved mysel' and the brethren much trouble; but it is hard for the Scots heart to open itsel', and a man is jealous of his secret.' Maybe I sinned in not confessing to the kirk in this place as I did elsewhere, and as I confessed to my God. Gin it be so, I have suffered, and now the Lord's hand is heavy upon me.

“Lang years ago,” and the strong man trembled, but no elder so much as lifted his eyes, “I lived for a year, although none here will mind of it, in another parish, where my father had a farm, and there, when I was a young man, though no one here knows of it, being careless in my walk and conversation, and resisting the Grace of God, I fell, and sinned against the law of Moses and of Christ.

“What the sin was it matters not now; but it was a great sin, such as nothing but the blude o' Christ can cleanse away, and the guilt of it was heavy upon my soul. God was merciful unto me, and His Spirit moved me to that repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Sic reparation as I could make I made, and them that were injured I satisfied; but I have never been satisfied. They're all dead now that had to do with it, long before they died they had forgotten it; but I have never forgotten it, and the long years have never wiped it from my memory.

“There's ae man I envy every day, and mair the nicht than ever; no the man who is rich and powerful, na, na, it is the man whose life is clean and white fra his boyhood until this hour, who can turn over the pages and let every man look on. One chapter o' my life I read alone every day, and it canna be blotted out from before my eyes. Their hands maun be dean which bear the vessels of the Lord, and my hands arena clean; wherefore I take objection, being a true witness against the life of Andrew Harris, and declare he is not fit to be an elder of the kirk.”

While Rochally was still standing, the minister knelt down, and the elders with him; but Rochally stood, and the minister began to pray. First of all, he confessed the sins of their youth and of later years till every man's soul lay bare before his own eyes and the eyes of God, then he carried them all, their lives and their sins, unto the Cross of Calvary, and magnified before God the sacrifice for sin and the dying love of the Saviour, and then he lifted up their souls in supplication unto God upon His Throne, and besought the Judge of all, for Christ's sake, to cast their transgressions behind His back and into the depths of the sea; and, finally, he besought God to grant unto them all the assurance of His mercy and the peace which passeth all understanding to possess their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. But he made no mention of Rochally or Rochally's sin, so that one would have supposed it was the minister and the elders, and not Andrew Harris, who were at the Bar.

When they rose from their knees more than one elder was weeping, and every man's face was white and serious, and still Rochally stood as if he desired to go, but was not able till the minister gave the decision of the court. The Spirit of the Holy Ministry, which is the most awful office upon earth, and the most solemn, descended in special measure upon the minister, a man still young and inexperienced, but who was now coming out from the holy place of the Most High.

“Andrew Harris, I ask you, in the name of the Kirk whom the Lord loved and washed from her sins in His own blood, lovest thou the Lord Jesus Christ?” Then the minister and the elders faded from before Rochally's eyes, and the faithful, honest man who had sinned so long ago, and wept so bitterly, stood face to face with the Master.

“Lord,” said he, for the first time lifting up his head, “Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

It was after midnight when the minister wrote out the minute of that meeting, and it states that an objection was taken to the life of Andrew Harris; but the Session ruled that it was not relevant, in which ruling the objector acquiesced, and the Session therefore appointed that Andrew Harris, farmer at Rochally, be ordained on the day appointed to the office of elder in the Free Kirk of Thomgreen.

XXI.—WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

WHEN Carmichael was Free Kirk minister of Dramtochty, and in the days of his youth, he had casual ways, and went at his own free will. He never came across the moor behind his manse on a summer day, and entered the cool pine wood which separated it from the ploughed land, without sitting down beside a certain pool of a burn which ran through the fringe of the wood. Because the water broke over a little rock and then gathered in a cup of gravel, and there was a heather bank where he could he as comfortably as in his favourite study chair, which had seen the Rebellion, but had changed its covering as well as its creed more than once since then; because the Highland cattle came to drink at that pool if you were not fussy and suspicious; and because all the sounds of the moor—the bleating of the sheep, the cry of the grouse, and the wail of the whaup and the drone of the bees—mingled in one music, and fell pleasantly upon your ear. "For five minutes only," he said to himself, and then some Highland cows, with their absurd little calves, arrived, and would have considered it ill-mannered for him to rise; and he fell a-thinking while time flew. He rose with a start and hurried down to the main road, and made for the bridge over the Tochty, fearful lest he should be too late when the messenger came with momentous tidings from the telegraph office at Kildrummie.

For two years the Glen had been in the most delightful state of intellectual ferment, and it was freely said by those who could remember that conversation had not risen to such a high level for fifty years, not even during '43. It goes without saying that the subject which exercised the minds and tongues of the Glen had to do, not with markets, but with Kirks; and while many had feared that the golden age of the Disruption would never be repeated in Drumtochty, when children were taught the doctrine of spiritual independence as they were supping their porridge, and women spoke freely about the principle of "Coordinate Jurisdiction with Mutual Subordination" as they hoed turnips in the fields, even Jamie Soutar was compelled to allow that the present debate had points of excellence altogether its own. While the spirit of disruption had wonderfully sharpened the edge of the intellect, the new spirit of concord which was abroad had still more powerfully quickened the feelings of the heart. By the fireside, where the guidwife darned the stockings and the guidman read the *Muirtown Advertiser* from the first word of the advertisements to the last word of the printer's name, out at work where they were planting potatoes or reaping the com, on the way to market as they walked down to Kildrummie station on Friday morning or crammed themselves by fives and sixes into Hillocks' dog-cart, but most of all in the kirkyard or at the Free Kirk door, men and women had been discussing with unswerving honesty and amazing subtlety, but with great goodwill and eager longing, how the differences between the Free Kirk and the Established could be reconciled, and upon what terms of honour and self-respect they could be united so that there should be again one Kirk in Scotland, as in the former days. According to the light which Providence had been pleased to give to other parishes, which was as twilight to the sunlight of Drum-tochty, they also argued this great affair, till even Kildrummie had pronounced ideas on the subject; and Rabbi Saunderson, the minister of Kilbogie, had announced a course of twenty-five sermons on the "Principle of Unity in the Christian Church, considered biblically, theologically, historically, and experimentally." The ecclesiastics on both sides had not regarded the movement with conspicuous favour, and, while stating that the end in view was not only admirable but one they had always desired, they felt it their duty to point out difficulties. They mentioned so many, indeed, and expounded them so faithfully, that it would not have been wonderful if the people had lost heart and abandoned a hopeless enterprise; for as a rule it had been the ecclesiastics who spoke and the people who kept silence; the ecclesiastics who passed measures and the people who paid for them. This time, however, the younger ministers had taken the matter into their own hands, and refused to serve themselves heirs to past controversies or to bind themselves to perpetuate ancient divisions; they were men of another age, and intended to face the new situation. There had been enough dividing in Scotland since the days of the Covenanters; it was time there should be some uniting, and when they were at it they wanted thorough-going and final union. And the people, who in every country parish had, Sabbath after Sabbath for more than a generation, passed one another in opposite directions going to their kirks, began to inquire why they should not all go in one direction and meet under one roof as their fathers had done; and when people began to ask that question, both with their heads and with their hearts, it was bound to be answered in one way.

The ecclesiastics had yielded under pressure, and as Carmichael went down to the bridge he recalled, with a keen sense of humour, their marvellous proceedings and the masterly game which had been played by the diplomatists of the Kirks, their suave expressions of brotherly love, their shrewd foresight of every move, their sleepless watchfulness of one another, their adroit concessions which yielded nothing, their childlike proposals which would have gained everything, and their cheerful acquiescence in every delay. But the temper of the people was not to be trifled with, and if the young party among the clergy were not skilled in the wiles of Church Courts, they had considerable vigour of speech, and the managers of affairs were given to understand that they must bring things quickly to a head. Early last spring the leader of the Free Kirk had submitted his terms, which the Established Kirk men studied together for three days and then read in seven different ways, and they in turn submitted their proposals, which were so simple and direct that the great Free Kirk man was genuinely disappointed, and wished that it had been his lot to negotiate with a Roman cardinal. But the people were getting impatient, and when the Assemblies met in the end of May, the pleasant spring-time, the terms had been adjusted, and Carmichael ran over them as he came down the near road through Hillocks' farm and pronounced them good. That the Free Church and the Established should unite together; that its legal title should be the Church of Scotland; that it should retain the ancient endowments and all the accumulated funds of both the former Churches; that the newly-constituted Church of Scotland should cease its legal connexion with the State, but maintain the old parochial system; that the new Church should re-arrange its resources so as to meet every religious and moral want in Scotland, and work with the State for the well-being of the Scots Commonwealth. The motions were proposed about the same time in the two Assemblies, in speeches worthy of the occasion: in the Established Kirk by a Scots noble; in the Free Kirk by the ablest ecclesiastical statesman of his day; Carmichael was thankful that he was in the Free Kirk Assembly when the motion was carried, with tears and cheers, none objecting, and that he was in time, with a

fearful struggle, to get his head within the door of the Tolbooth, when the ministers and elders of the Established Kirk stood up as one man at the bidding of their moderator, and before Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner, and declared for union; and thankful that he was one of the crowd that poured out of both Assemblies in the High Street of Edinburgh and heard the bells of St. Giles, which had been the witness of many a fierce conflict, ringing out the news of peace and concord through the grey capital of the nation.

There was still one risk to be run and one barrier to be surmounted, for the concordat of the Church required the sanction of Parliament. Through the summer days the battle had been fought in the lobbies and committee rooms of the House of Commons, and that afternoon it was to be decided; and up to the last there was a chance that the bill might be thrown out, and the heart's desire of Scotland once more refused at Westminster. For there were cross-currents which no man could calculate; there were stiff old Tories who hated the idea of the Church being disestablished; keen Radicals who were determined that the Church should be also disendowed; Episcopalians who were eager that the title of the Church of Scotland should be left open to be claimed by that respectable, though limited, dissenting community, which traces its descent through Archbishop Sharpe and John Graham of Claverhouse; and a balance of men who disliked all Churches equally, and were always ready to hinder religion, when they could get an opportunity. If the bill were thrown out it would be a sad calamity, and Lord Kilspindie had promised to telegraph to Dr. Davidson the moment the bill passed the Commons; for it had been taken first in the Lords (and carried with a brisk fight), and Carmichael proposed to meet the messenger at Tochty bridge, and escort him to the manse.

It did not, however, surprise Carmichael to find the minister of the parish of Drumtochty walking to and fro on the level ground from which the wonderful arch of the ancient bridge sprang, and talking affably with Hillocks on the prospects of harvest, but keeping all the time a watchful eye on the distant point on the other side of the Glen where the road emerged from the pine woods and the Kildrummie messenger would first be seen.

“Glad to see you, Carmichael,” said the doctor, with just the faintest suggestion of excitement in his manner; “I left a message at the manse that if you called they were to send you down to the bridge, but I rather suspected you would be here. For myself, I frankly confess I could neither sit nor read, so I just turned out to wait for the messenger. It's a historical day, Carmichael, charged with great issues for Scotland.”

They climbed the stiff ascent, and stood on the arch through which the Tochty ran, clear and sparkling, that summer evening.

“More than a century of Scots history has run since this bridge was built, some of it sad enough; but, please God, we shall see good days before they build the new bridge. What hinders the messenger? Kilspindie expected to telegraph by five at latest, and now it's six o'clock.” The doctor snuffed uneasily and wiped his eye-glasses. “I wish I had gone down to Kildrummie. What's that, Carmichael, on the crest of the hill? Your eyes are quicker than mine.”

“It's a man on horseback, and we'll soon know who he is, for he's riding hard. I should recognize that horse. Why, it's Macfarlane's chestnut that brings me up from the station in forty minutes and something to spare, and Macfarlane's riding her himself. If the old chap hasn't saddled a horse and ridden up to bring us the news post-haste! Isn't he going! He would never come that speed if it were bad news. They've let it out at the post office, as sure as we're standing here; and, look, Macfarlane has seen us. He's waving his hat, doctor; the bill has passed, and the Kirks are one.” They went down the other side of the bridge, and Carmichael did not look at Dr. Davidson, for the doctor's stately step was broken, and he was again polishing his eyeglasses. The chestnut was covered with dust, and so was Macfarlane, and the mare herself seemed to be triumphant when Macfarlane reined her in on the other side of the bridge.

“Half expeckit to see you here, gentlemen,” for even Macfarlane, dealer in horses, in coals, in manure, and hirer of carriages, was discomposed. “Message came in at 6.48; had the mare ready; left at 6.60; done the three miles in thirteen and a half minutes”—all this in one breath; then, jumping off his horse and taking off his hat, “A telegram for you, Dr. Davidson.”

He patted the chestnut on the neck for her good going, and tried to look as if he did not know what was in the envelope. Dr. Davidson handed the envelope to Carmichael, who understood the reason, and, stripping it off, handed him the message.

“Quiet, lass, quiet!” said Macfarlane. Carmichael straightened himself, and raised his hand to that weather-beaten soft hat of his, which was the scandal of the Presbytery; the doctor unfolded the paper with a shaking hand, a flush passed over his face, the tears—which already were in his eyes—broke and rolled down his face, and he read out with a trembling voice—“Bill carried by a majority of two hundred and thirty-three. God bless the Kirk of Scotland, one again and for ever!—Kilspindie.”

“Hip, hip, hurrah!” Carmichael was very young, but Macfarlane might have known better, who was waving his cap with one hand and holding the dancing mare with the other; while Hillocks was a spectacle of glory, standing on the summit of the bridge and throwing in a hoarse shout. Dr. Davidson took no part in the cheer, for he had turned aside and was looking to the hill where the Parish Kirk peeped out from the trees, and there were many thoughts in his mind.

“Dr. Davidson,” said Carmichael, still holding his hat in his hand, and tuning his voice to affectionate respect, “you are minister this day unto every man in the parish of Drumtochty, and you will add to all your past kindnesses by letting me be your faithful assistant.”

The old man took Carmichael's hand in both his own, but for once he could find no words.

“Ye saw them gang oot, doctor, and ye'll see them come back,” said Hillocks, descending from the top of the bridge.

“I honoured them when they went out,” replied the doctor, finding speech again, “and I love them coming back to their old Kirk.” It was agreed between Carmichael and the doctor that half an hour from that time the bells of the two kirks should be rung, and though neither bell dominated more than the distance of three fields, Dr. Davidson declared that the Free Church bell was distinctly audible in the kirkyard; while a group of Free Kirk men gathered round their door remarked to one another that they had never noticed before how sweet was the sound of the Old Kirk bell. And they were speaking true, for the bells were ringing in their

hearts. While Parliament had been deliberating on the bill, the two Kirks had been making their arrangements in faith for the uniting of congregations, and it had already been determined that Dr. Davidson and Carmichael should be joint ministers of the parish of Drumtochty, and that the congregations should worship in the Parish Kirk. When there was a will in Drumtochty there was always a way, and arrangements were quickly made that the parish should gather again on the following Sabbath into the kirk where their fathers had worshipped, and round which the dust of generations lay. At eleven o'clock the Free Church congregation met for the last time as a separate flock, in the building which they had erected with great sacrifice, and which was sanctified by many sacred memories; and then, after Carmichael had conducted a short service, and Donald Menzies, one of the elders, had offered up a prayer of thanksgiving wherein he carried the congregation with him to the Mercy Seat, and moved even the stiffest, they sang the second Paraphrase, “O God of Bethel! by whose hand,” and Carmichael pronounced the benediction, with more than one pause between the words. Then they went out through the door by which, more than a generation ago, the congregation had entered, obeying their conscience, and testifying for the freedom of Christ's Kirk. Without any marshalling or vain ceremony they fell into a procession, and this was the order in which they went. First came Carmichael in his gown and bands, his M.A. hood and college cap, carrying in his hand his mother's Bible, and beside him Bumbrae, Donald Menzies, Lauchlan Campbell, and the other elders, all dressed as for the Sacrament. Behind them followed the choir, and then the people as they pleased, family by family, parents and children together. Thrice on the road they broke into singing, and these were the Psalms they sang—the xcviii.—

“O sing a new song to the Lord,
For wonders He hath done:
His right hand and His holy arm
Him victory hath won”;

and the lxxxiv.—

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

and the cxxxiii.—

“Behold, how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell!”

They began to sing this Psalm as they were ascending the height on which the Parish Kirk stood, and when they reached the top of the hill the sound of the Psalm was still in the air. Then Carmichael and the elders beheld a heartening spectacle. Dr. Davidson and, his people had also met for worship in their kirk, and, being told by a swift messenger that their brethren were at hand, they had come out through the kirkyard and ranged themselves in two rows along the roadside; while in the centre of the high road, and in front of his people, stood the parish minister, with his ruling elder, Drum-sheugh, by his side. The two ministers faced one another, and the people stood perfectly still; the glorious sunshine poured down upon their heads, and on either side the fields were golden unto the harvest. Clear but tender was Dr. Davidson's voice. “Reverend and dearly-beloved brother, I greet you, your elders, and your congregation in the name of the Lord, and, as senior minister of this parish, I bid you welcome to the Kirk of Drumtochty.”

And then Carmichael—“Reverend and honoured father in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, my people and I thank God that there is now one congregation in Drumtochty, and that you are our minister.”

Drumsheugh grasped Bumbrae's hand, but what passed between those two worthy men no one heard, and then Dr. Davidson and Carmichael headed the united procession, with the elders behind them; and as they moved down the sideway between the hedges, the Old Kirk folk fell in with the Free Kirk, so that they passed through the kirkyard one united company, and as they went they sang the Psalm cxxii.—

“I joy'd when to the house of God,
Go up, they said to me.
Jerusalem, within thy gates
Our feet shall standing be.”

And by a happy coincidence they were singing the last words as the ministers and elders went in through the door—

“Now, for my friends' and brethren's sakes,
Peace be in thee, I'll say.
And for the house of God our Lord,
I'll seek thy good alway.”

It had been arranged between them, who were indeed as father and son, that Dr. Davidson should take the service and Carmichael should preach the sermon, and when the people were all seated, neither Established nor Free now, but all Scots Kirk men with one heart, one faith, one love, Dr. Davidson gave out another of the glorious Psalms, whose ancient traditions and wealth of spiritual emotion had served the people so well that day.

“Let us worship God this day, and sing unto the praise of His glorious name Psalm cxxvi.”

“When Sion's bondage God turn'd back,
As men that dream'd were we.”

But he was not able to read further, and the congregation, who understood, and whose own hearts were full, broke into the singing; and at the noise thereof Carmichael awoke, for it was only a dream.

“What might have been,” he said to himself, with wistful regret, as he descended the hill, and then his heart lifted, “and, please God, what is going to be before my day is done.”

XXII.—THE VISION OF THE SOUL

THERE were many modest homes in the Glen, but the humblest of them all was that of Bell Robb, where she lived with Jean, her sister, and blind Marjorie. It had only one room, and that had only one window. A tall man could stand upright only in the centre, and the hearth was so near the top of the chimney that it was a fight in the winter time between the fire and the snow, and the snow used to win the battle before morning. There was a box bed at the back of the room where Bell and Jean slept, and the lowliest of little beds just below the window had been Marjorie's home night and day for many a long year, because she had not only been blind from her birth, but since middle age had also been paralyzed. There was a table and two chairs, and a dresser on which the humble stock of crockery was carefully displayed. From above the fireplace the humblest of oil lamps, called a cruizie, projected, but the cottage had two brass candlesticks which were never used, but were polished like unto fine gold and were the glory of the home.

If providence had been unkind to any person in the Glen it was to Marjorie, for her birth had been a tragedy, and the helpless child, blind and feeble, had been flung upon the world. She had never known father or mother, she had never seen the primroses in the Tochty woods when spring made her first visit, nor the purple of the heather in autumn time, nor the golden com in the field before her door, nor the sunshine upon the Burn down below. She had no kinsfolk to take charge of her, she had no claim upon any one except the poor law authorities, and had she been bom into a parish like Kilbogie the workhouse had been her only asylum. But it was a kindly little world into which this poor waif and stray had come—a world which had not many words nor much money, whose ways were curious and whose manner was austere, but whose heart was big and warm. Drumtochty had its laws of public policy which Government itself was never able to over-ride, which every man and woman in the Glen set themselves to enforce. And one was that no native of the Glen should ever be sent to the coldness and bondage of a workhouse; that however poor he might be and however long he lived, he must be kept in the shelter of our pine woods where he could see the Tochty run. As a matter of fact, this was not so great a burden on the neighbours, for Drumtochty folk had a rooted objection, which not even the modern spirit creeping up into the Glen could overcome, against being paupers or depending on any person save on themselves and God. Drumtochty had no pity for wastrels and very little sympathy with shiftless people, but Marjorie, poor Marjorie, she had the spirit to work—we judged she had about the highest spirit in the Glen—but what could she do without sight and with her trembling hands? So the Glen adopted Marjorie, and declared in wayside talk and many a kirkyard conference that she had given them more than they had ever given to her.

Bell Robb and Jean, her sister, earned their living by hoeing turnips, lifting potatoes, binding at harvest and gathering the stones off the field—which were ever coming up to the surface in our poor thin soil—and they made between them on an average from January to December nearly twelve shillings a week. They declared that being two solitary women providence had intended they should have Marjorie, and now for thirty years she had been with them, and they spent upon her twice as much as they received in grants from the parish inspector, and declared with brazen effrontery that they were making a little fortune out of her. They also gave sixpence a month to the sustentation fund of the Free Kirk, and a shilling at a great collection, and if there was any little presentation in the Glen they had a shilling for that also. How they did those things was only known to God. Their faces were lined by labour and burned brown by the sun, but they looked well in the light of the Sacrament, for they were partakers of the Lord's Cross; their hands were rough and hard with field labour, but very gentle and kindly when they waited upon Marjorie. And when Marjorie began to relate the catalogue of her blessings, she always put next to her Saviour Bell and her sister Jean. The two sisters have had their humble funeral years ago, and their tired bodies with Marjorie's body of humiliation were laid to rest in the old kirkyard, and theirs was then the reward of Him who said, “I was a stranger and ye took me in.” Drumsheugh, returning from Muirtown market one afternoon by road, dropped in to pass the time o' day with Marjorie—leaving half a pound of tea upon the dresser—and was arrested by the humility of her bed. He was overheard saying “Sall” to himself as he returned to the main road with the tone of a man who had come to a resolution, and next Friday he drove up from Muirtown with a small iron bedstead, arranged in parts over his dogcart, while he sat with dignity upon the mattress. The installation of Marjorie into her new couch was the event of her life, and for weeks the Glen dropped in, partly to see Drumsheugh's amazing gift, but chiefly to hear Marjorie on his unparalleled kindness and its unparalleled splendour. She had felt it over inch by inch, and knew the pattern to a turn, but she was chiefly concerned that her visitors should observe and rightly appreciate the brass knobs at the four corners.

“Drumsheugh micht have got an ordinary bed for half the money, but naething wud sateesfy him but brass knobs. Ye may say that I canna see them, but I can feel them, and I ken that they're there, and the neighbours see them, and to think o't that I'm lying here like a queen on a spring bed with four brass knobs. And me that has no claim on Drumsheugh or ony other body, juist crowned wi' loving kindness. I'll need to ask grace to be kept humble.”

According to Marjorie indeed her whole life had been arranged on the principle of Drumsheugh's giving: instead of iron she had received brass, yea, much fine gold, and all things had worked together for her good.

When her minister Carmichael forgot himself one day and pitied her for her afflictions she was amazed, and had to remind herself that he had only come to the Glen. For was it not her helplessness that had won her so much love, so that from high Glen Urtarch down to the borders of Kilbogie every man, woman and child was her friend, dropping in to see her, bringing her all the news, and making her so many little presents that she was "fair ashamed"? And she reminded John Carmichael that if she, Marjorie, had been an able-bodied woman, he would not have paid her so many visits, nor told her so many "bonny stories."

"Mr. Carmichael, I'll have much to answer for, for I've been greatly blessed. I judge masel' the maist priveeleged woman in Drumtochty." And then Carmichael, who had his own troubles and discontentments, used to go away a wiser and a better man.

Marjorie saw the hand of an all,-wise and all-loving Providence in the arrangements of her home. For one thing it faced south, and she got the warmth and the shining of the sun through her little window, and there was an advantage in the door opening straight from the garden into the room, for the scent of the flowers came in to her bed, and she knew when the wallflowers had begun to bloom and when the first rosebud above the doorway had opened. She would have liked very well to have gone to the Kirk with a goodly company, but lying alone on her bed through the hours of service she had time for prayer, and I have heard her declare that the time was too short for her petitions. "For, ye see, I have sae mony friends to remember, and my plan is to begin at the top of the Glen and tak' them family by family till I come to the end of the parish. And wud ye believe it, I judge that it takes me four complete days to bring a' the fowk I love before the Throne of Grace."

As for her darkness of earthly sight, this, she insisted, was the chief good which God had bestowed upon her, and she made out her case with the ingenuity of a faithful and contented heart.

"If I dinna see"—and she spoke as if this was a matter of doubt and she were making a concession for argument's sake—"there's naebody in the Glen can hear like me. There's no a footstep of a Drum-tochty man comes to the door but I ken his name, and there's no a voice oot on the road that I canna tell. The birds sing sweeter to me than to onybody else, and I can hear them cheeping to one another in the bushes before they go to sleep. And the flowers smell sweeter to me—the roses and the carnations and the bonny moss rose—and I judge that the oatcake and milk taste the richer because I dinna see them. Na, na, ye're no to think that I've been ill treated by my God, for if He didna give me ae thing, He gave me mony things instead.

"And mind ye, it's no as if I'd seen once and lost my sight; that micht ha' been a trial, and my faith micht have failed. I've lost naething; my life has been all getting."

And she said confidentially one day to her elder, Donald Menzies—

"There's a mercy waitin' for me that'll crown a' His goodness, and I'm feared when I think o't, for I'm no worthy."

"What iss that that you will be meaning, Marjorie," said the elder.

"He has covered my face with His hand as a father plays with his bairn, but some day sune He will lift His hand, and the first thing that Marjorie sees in a' her life will be His ain face."

And Donald Menzies declared to Bumbrae on the way home that he would gladly go blind all the days of his life if he were as sure of that sight when the day broke and the shadows fled away.

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