

VARIOUS

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HOW I STOOD FOR THE DREEPDAILY BURGHS

CHAPTER I

"My dear Dunshunner," said my friend Robert M'Corkindale as he entered my apartments one fine morning in June last, "do you happen to have seen the share-list? Things are looking in Liverpool as black as thunder. The bullion is all going out of the country, and the banks are refusing to discount."

Bob M'Corkindale might very safely have kept his information to himself. I was, to say the truth, most painfully aware of the facts which he unfeelingly obtruded upon my notice. Six weeks before, in the full confidence that the panic was subsiding, I had recklessly invested my whole capital in the shares of a certain railway company, which for the present shall be nameless; and each successive circular from my broker conveyed the doleful intelligence that the stock was going down to Erebus. Under these circumstances I certainly felt very far from being comfortable. I could not sell out except at a ruinous loss; and I could not well afford to hold on for any length of time, unless there was a reasonable prospect of a speedy amendment of the market. Let me confess it – I had of late come out rather too strong. When a man has made money easily, he is somewhat prone to launch into expense, and to presume too largely upon his credit. I had been idiot enough to make my *debut* in the sporting world – had started a couple of horses upon the verdant turf of Paisley – and, as a matter of course, was remorselessly sold by my advisers. These and some other minor amusements had preyed deleteriously upon my purse. In fact, I had not the ready; and as every tradesman throughout Glasgow was quaking in his shoes at the panic, and inconveniently eager to realise, I began to feel the reverse of comfortable, and was shy of showing myself in Buchanan Street. Several documents of a suspicious appearance – owing to the beastly practice of wafering, which is still adhered to by a certain class of correspondents – were lying upon my table at the moment when Bob entered. I could see that the villain comprehended their nature at a glance; but there was no use in attempting to mystify him. The Political Economist was, as I was well aware, in very much the same predicament as myself.

"To tell you the truth, M'Corkindale, I have not opened a share-list for a week. The faces of some of our friends are quite long enough to serve as a tolerable exponent of the market; and I saw Grabbie pass about five minutes ago with a yard of misery in his visage. But what's the news?"

"Every thing that is bad! Total stoppage expected in a week, and the mills already put upon short time."

"You don't say so!"

"It is a fact. Dunshunner, this infernal tampering with the currency will be the ruin of every mother's son of us!" – and here Bob, in a fit of indignant enthusiasm, commenced a vivid harangue upon the principles of contraction and expansion, bullion, the metallic standard, and the bank reserves, which no doubt was extremely sound, but which I shall not recapitulate to the reader.

"That's all very well, Bob," said I – "very good in theory, but we should confine ourselves at present to practice. The main question seems to me to be this. How are we to get out of our present fix? I presume you are not at present afflicted with a remarkable plethora of cash?"

"Every farthing I have in the world is locked up in a falling line."

"Any debts?"

"Not many; but quite enough to make me meditate a temporary retirement to Boulogne."

"I believe you are better off than I am. I not only owe money, but am terribly bothered about some bills."

"That's awkward. Would it not be advisable to bolt?"

"I don't think so. You used to tell me, Bob, that credit was the next best thing to capital. Now, I don't despair of redeeming my capital yet, if I can only keep up my credit."

"Right, undoubtedly, as you generally are. Do you know, Dunshunner, you deserve credit for your notions on political economy. But how is that to be done? Every body is realising; the banks won't discount; and when your bills become due, they will be, to a dead certainty, protested."

"Well – and what then?"

"*Squalor carceris*, etcetera."

"Hum – an unpleasant alternative, certainly. Come, Bob I put your wits to work. You used to be a capital hand for devices, and there must be some way or other of steering clear. Time is all we want."

"Ay, to be sure – time is the great thing. It would be very unpleasant to look out on the world through a grating during the summer months!"

"I perspire at the bare idea!"

"Not a soul in town – all your friends away in the Highlands boating, or fishing, or shooting grouse – and you pent up in a stifling apartment of eight feet square, with nobody to talk to save the turnkey, and no prospect from the window, except a deserted gooseberry stall!"

"O Bob, don't talk in that way! You make me perfectly miserable."

"And all this for a ministerial currency crotchet? 'Pon my soul, it's too bad! I wish those fellows in Parliament – "

"Well? Go on."

"By Jove! I've an idea at last!"

"You don't say so! My dear Bob – out with it!"

"Dunshunner, are you a man of pluck?"

"I should think I am."

"And ready to go the whole hog, if required?"

"The entire animal."

"Then I'll tell you what it is – the elections will be on immediately – and, by St Andrew, we'll put you up for Parliament!"

"Me!"

"You. Why not? There are hundreds of men there quite as hard up, and not half so clever as yourself."

"And what good would that do me?"

"Don't you see? You need not care a farthing about your debts then, for the personal liberty of a member of the House of Commons is sacred. You can fire away right and left at the currency; and who knows, if you play your cards well, but you may get a comfortable place?"

"Well, you *are* a genius, Bob! But then, what sort of principles should I profess?"

"That is a matter which requires consideration. What are your own feelings on the subject?"

"Perfect indifference. I am pledged to no party, and am free to exercise my independent judgment."

"Of course, of course! We shall take care to stick all that into the address; but you must positively come forward with some kind of tangible political views. The currency will do for one point, but as to the others I see a difficulty."

"Suppose I were to start as a Peelite?"

"Something may be said in favour of that view; but, on the whole, I should rather say not. That party may not look up for some little time, and then the currency is a stumbling-block in the way."

No, Dunshunner, I do not think, upon my honour, that it would be wise for you to commit yourself in that quarter at the present moment."

"Suppose I try the Protectionist dodge? One might come it very strong against the foreigners, and in favour of native industry. Eh, Bob? What do you say to that? It is an advantage to act with gentlemen."

"True; but at the same time, I see many objections. The principles of the country party are not yet thoroughly understood by the people, and I should like to have you start with at least popularity on your side."

"Radical, then? What do you think of Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, and separation of Church and State?"

"I am clear against that. These views are not popular with the Electors, and even the mob would entertain a strong suspicion that you were humbugging them."

"What, then, on earth am I to do?"

"I will tell you. Come out as a pure and transparent Whig. In the present position of parties, it is at least a safe course to pursue, and it is always the readiest step to the possession of the loaves and the fishes."

"Bob, I don't like the Whigs!"

"No more do I. They are a bad lot; but they are *in*, and that is every thing. Yes, Augustus," continued Bob solemnly, "there is nothing else for it. You must start as a pure Whig, upon the Revolution principles of sixteen hundred and eighty-eight."

"It would be a great relief to my mind, Bob, if you would tell me what those principles really are?"

"I have not the remotest idea; but we have plenty time to look them up."

"Then, I suppose I must swallow the Dutchman and the Massacre of Glencoe?"

"Yes, and the Darien business into the bargain. These are the principles of your party, and of course you are bound to subscribe."

"Well! you know best; but I'd rather do any thing else."

"Pooh! never fear; you and Whiggery will agree remarkably well. That matter, then, we may consider as settled. The next point to be thought of is the constituency."

"Ay, to be sure! what place am I to start for? I have got no interest, and if I had any, there are no nomination burghs in Scotland."

"Aren't there? That's all you know, my fine fellow! Hark ye, Dunshunner, more than half of the Scottish burghs are at this moment held by nominees!"

"You amaze me, Bob! The thing is impossible! The Reform Bill, that great charter of our liberties – "

"Bravo! There spoke the Whig! The Reform Bill, you think, put an end to nomination? It did nothing of the kind, it merely transferred it. Did you ever hear of such things as Cliques?"

"I have. But they are tremendously unpopular."

"Nevertheless, they hold the returning power. There is a Clique in almost every town throughout Scotland, which loads the electors as quietly, but as surely, as the blind man is conducted by his dog. These are modelled on the true Venetian principles of secrecy and terrorism. They control the whole constituency, put in the member, and in return monopolise the whole patronage of the place. If you have the Clique with you, you are almost sure of your election; if not, except in the larger towns, you have not a shadow of success. Now, what I want to impress upon you is this, that where-ever you go, be sure that you communicate with the Clique."

"But how am I to find it out?"

"That is not always an easy matter, for nobody will acknowledge that they belong to it. However, the thing is not impossible, and we shall certainly make the experiment. Come, then, I suppose you agree with me, that it is hopeless to attempt the larger towns?"

"Clearly. So far as I see, they are all provided already with candidates."

"And you may add, Cliques, Dunshunner. Well, then, let us search among the smaller places. What would you think of a dash at the Stirling District of Burghs?"

"Why, there are at least half-a-dozen candidates in the field."

"True, that would naturally lessen your chance. Depend upon it, some one of them has already found the key to the Clique. But there's the Dreepdaily District with nobody standing for it, except the Honourable Paul Pozzlethwaite; and I question whether he knows himself the nature or the texture of his politics. Really, Dunshunner, that's the very place for you; and if we look sharp after it, I bet the long odds that you will carry it in a canter."

"Do you really think so?"

"I do indeed; and the sooner you start the better. Let me see. I know Provost Binkie of Dreepdaily. He is a Railway bird, was an original Glenmutchkin shareholder, and fortunately sold out at a premium. He is a capital man to begin with, and I think will be favourable to you: besides, Dreepdaily is in old Whig burgh. I am not so sure of Kittleweem. It is a shade more respectable than Dreepdaily, and has always been rather Conservative. The third burgh, Drouthielaw, is a nest of Radicalism; but I think it may be won over, if we open the public-houses."

"But, about expenses, Bob – won't it be a serious matter?"

"Why, you must lay your account with spending some five or six hundred pounds upon the nail; and I advise you to sell stock to that amount at least. The remainder, should it cost you more, can stand over."

"Bob, five or six hundred pounds is a very serious sum!"

"Granted – but then look at the honour and the immunity you will enjoy. Recollect that yours is an awkward predicament. If you don't get into Parliament, I see nothing for it but a stoppage."

"That's true enough. Well – hang it, then, I will start!"

"There's a brave fellow! I should not in the least wonder to see you in the Cabinet yet. The sooner you set about preparing your address the better."

"What! without seeing Provost Binkie?"

"To be sure. What is the use of wading when you can plunge at once into deep water? Besides, let me, tell you that you are a great deal more likely to get credit when it is understood that you are an actual candidate."

"There is something in that too. But I say, Bob – you really must help me with the address. I am a bad hand at these things, and shall never be able to tickle up the electors without your assistance."

"I'll do all I can. Just ring for a little sherry and water, and we'll set to work. I make no doubt that, between us, we can polish off a plausible placard."

Two hours afterwards, I forwarded through the post-office, a missive addressed to the editor of the Dreepdaily Patriot, with the following document enclosed. I am rather proud of it, as a manifesto of my political principles.

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE UNITED DISTRICT OF BURGHS OF DREEPDAILY, DROUTHIELAW, AND KITTLEWEEM.

"Gentlemen, – I am induced, by a requisition, to which are appended the signatures of a large majority of your influential and patriotic body, to offer myself as a candidate for the high honour of your representation in the ensuing session of Parliament. Had I consulted my own inclination, I should have preferred the leisure of retirement and the pursuit of those studies so congenial to my taste, to the more stormy and agitating of politics. But a deep sense of public duty compels me to respond to your call.

"My views upon most subjects are so well known to many of you, that a lengthened explanation of them would probably be superfluous. Still, however, it may be right and proper for me to explain generally what they are.

"My principles are based upon the great and glorious Revolution settlement of 1688, which, by abolishing, or at least superseding, hereditary right, intrusted the guardianship of the crown to an enlightened oligarchy for the protection of an unparticipating people. That oligarchy is now most ably represented by her Majesty's present Ministers, to whom, unhesitatingly and uncompromisingly, except upon a very few matters, I give in my adhesion so long as they shall continue in office.

"Opposed to faction and an enemy to misrule, I am yet friendly to many changes of a sweeping and organic character. Without relaxing the ties which at present bind together church and state in harmonious coalition and union, I would gradually confiscate the revenues of the one for the increasing necessities of the other. I never would become a party to an attack upon the House of Peers, so long as it remains subservient to the will of the Commons; nor would I alter or extend the franchise, except from cause shown, and the declared and universal wish of the non-electors.

"I highly approve of the policy which has been pursued towards Ireland, and of further concessions to a deep-rooted system of agitation. I approve of increased endowments to that much neglected country; and I applaud that generosity which relieves it from all participation in the common burdens of the state. Such a line of policy cannot fail to elevate the moral tone, and to develop the internal resources of Ireland; and I never wish to see the day when the Scotsman and the Irishman may, in so far as taxation is concerned, be placed upon an equal footing. It appears to me a highly equitable adjustment that the savings of the first should be appropriated for the wants of the second.

"I am in favour of the centralising system, which, by drafting away the wealth and talent of the provinces, must augment the importance of London. I am strongly opposed to the maintenance of my local or Scottish institutions, which can merely serve to foster a spirit of decayed nationality; and I am of opinion that all boards and offices should be transferred to England, with the exception of those connected with the Dreepdaily district, which it is the bounden duty of the legislature to protect and preserve.

"I am a friend to the spread of education, but hostile to any system by means of which religion, especially Protestantism, may be taught.

"I am a supporter of free trade in all its branches. I cannot see any reason for the protection of native industry, and am ready to support any fundamental measure by means of which articles of foreign manufacture maybe brought to compete in the home market with our own, without restriction and without reciprocity. It has always appeared to me that our imports are of far greater importance than our exports. I think that any lowering of price which may be the result of such a commercial policy, will be more than adequately compensated by a coercive measure which shall compel the artisan to augment the period of his labour. I am against any short hours' bill, and am of opinion that infant labour should be stringently and universally enforced.

"With regard to the currency, I feel that I may safely leave that matter in the hands of her Majesty's present Ministers, who have never shown any indisposition to oppose themselves to the popular wish.

"These, gentlemen, are my sentiments; and I think that, upon consideration, you will find them such as may entitle me to your cordial support. I need not say how highly I shall value the trust, or how zealously I shall endeavour to promote your local interests. These, probably, can be best advanced by a cautious regard to my own.

"On any other topics I shall be happy to give you the fullest and most satisfactory explanation. I shall merely add, as a summary of my opinions, that while ready on the one hand to coerce labour, so as to stimulate internal industry to the utmost, and to add largely to the amount of our population; I am, upon the other, a friend to the liberty of the subject, and to the promotion of such genial and sanatory measures as suit the tendency of our enlightened age, the diffusion of universal philanthropy, and the spread of popular opinion. I remain, GENTLEMEN, with the deepest respect, your very obedient and humble servant,

"Augustus Reginald Dunshunner.

*"St Mirren's House,
"June, 1847."*

The editor of the Dreedaily Patriot, wisely considering that this advertisement was the mere prelude to many more, was kind enough to dedicate a leading article to an exposition of my past services. I am not a vain man; so that I shall not here reprint the panegyric passed upon myself, or the ovation which my friend foresaw. Indeed, I am so far from vain, that I really began to think, while perusing the columns of the Patriot, that I had somewhat foolishly shut my eyes hitherto to the greatness of that talent, and the brilliancy of those parts which were now proclaimed to the world. Yes; it was quite clear that I had hitherto been concealing my candle under a bushel – that I was cut out by nature for a legislator – and that I was the very man for the Dreedaily electors. Under this conviction, I started upon my canvass, munimented with letters of introduction from M'Corkindale, who, much against his inclination, was compelled to remain at home.

CHAPTER II

Dreepdaily is a beautiful little town, embosomed in an amphitheatre of hills which have such a winning way with the clouds that the summits are seldom visible. Dreepdaily, if situated in Arabia, would be deemed a Paradise. All round it the vegetation is long, and lithe, and luxuriant; the trees keep their verdure late; and the rush of the nettles is amazing.

How the inhabitants contrive to live, is to me a matter of mystery. There is no particular trade or calling exercised in the place – no busy hum of artisans, or clanking of hammer or machinery. Round the suburbs, indeed, there are rows of mean-looking cottages, each with its strapping lass in the national short gown at the door, from the interior of which resounds the boom of the weaver's shuttle. There is also one factory at a little distance; but when you reach the town itself, all is supereminently silent. In fine weather, crowds of urchins of both sexes are seen sunning themselves on the quaint-looking flights of steps by which the doors, usually on the second story, are approached; and as you survey the swarms of bare-legged and flaxen-haired infantry, you cannot help wondering in your heart what has become of the adult population. It is only towards evening that the seniors appear. Then you may find them either congregated on the bridge discussing politics and polemics, or lounging in the little square in affectionate vicinity to the public-house, or leaning over the windows in their shirt-sleeves, in the tranquil enjoyment of a pipe. In short, the cares and the bustle of the world, even in this railroad age, seem to have fallen lightly on the pacific burghers of Dreepdaily. According to their own account, the town was once a peculiar favourite of royalty. It boasts of a charter from King David the First, and there is an old ruin in the neighbourhood which is said to have been a palace of that redoubted monarch. It may be so, for there is no accounting for constitutions; but had I been King David, I certainly should have preferred, a place where the younger branches of the family would have been less liable to the accident of catarrh.

Dreepdaily, in the olden time, was among the closest of all the burghs. Its representation had a fixed price, which was always rigorously exacted and punctually paid; and for half a year thereafter, the corporation made merry thereon. The Reform Bill, therefore, was by no means popular in the council. A number of discontented Radicals and of small householders, who hitherto had been excluded from participation in the good things of the state, now got upon the roll, and seemed determined for a time to carry matters with a high hand, and to return a member of their own. And doubtless they would have succeeded, had not the same spirit been abroad in the sister burghs of Drouthielaw and Kittleweem, which, for some especial reason or other, known doubtless to Lord John Russell, but utterly unintelligible to the rest of mankind, were, though situated in different counties, associated with Dreepdaily in the return of their future member. Each of these places had a separate interest, and started a separate man; so that, amidst this conflict of Liberalism, the old member for Dreepdaily, a Conservative, again slipped into his place. The consequence was, that the three burghs were involved in a desperate feud.

In these days there lived in Dreepdaily one Laurence Linklater, more commonly known by the name of Tod Lowrie, who exercised the respectable functions of a writer and a messenger-at-arms. Lowrie was a remarkably acute individual, of the Gilbert Glossin school, by no means scrupulous in his dealings, but of singular plausibility and courage. He had started in life as a Radical, but finding that that line did not pay well, he had prudently subsided into a Whig, and in that capacity had acquired a sort of local notoriety. He had contrived, moreover, to gain a tolerable footing in Drouthielaw, and in the course of time became intimately acquainted with the circumstances of its inhabitants, and under the plea of agency had contrived to worm the greater part of their title-deeds into his keeping.

It then occurred to Lowrie, that, notwithstanding the discordant situation of the burghs, something might be done to effect a union under his own especial chieftainship. Not that he cared in his heart one farthing about the representation – Tyrian and Trojan were in reality the same to

him – but he saw that the gain of these burghs would be of immense advantage to his party, and he determined that the advantage should be balanced by a corresponding profit to himself. Accordingly, he began quietly to look to the state of the neglected register; lodged objections to all claims given in by parties upon whom he could not depend; smuggled a sufficient number of his own clients and adherents upon the roll, and in the course of three years, was able to intimate to an eminent Whig partisan, that he, Laurence Linklater, held in his own hands the representation of the Dreepdaily Burghs, could turn the election either way he pleased, and was open to reasonable terms.

The result was, that Mr Linklater was promoted to a very lucrative county office, and moreover, that the whole patronage of the district was thereafter observed to flow through the Laurentian channel. Of course all those who could claim kith or kindred with Lowrie were provided for in the first instance; but there were stray crumbs still going, and in no one case could even a gaugership be obtained without the adhesion of an additional vote. Either the applicant must be ready to sell his independence, or, if that were done already, to pervert the politics of a relative. A Whig member was returned at the next election by an immense majority; and for some time Linklater reigned supreme in the government of Dreepdaily and Drouthielaw.

But death, which spares no governors, knocked at the door of Linklater. A surfeit of partanpie, after the triumphant termination of a law-suit, threw the burghs into a state of anarchy. Lowrie was gathered unto his fathers, and there was no one to reign in his stead.

At least there was no apparent ruler. Every one observed, that the stream of patronage and of local jobbing still flowed on as copiously as before, but nobody could discover by what hands it was now directed. Suspicion fastened its eyes for some time upon Provost Binkie; but the vehement denials of that gentleman, though not in themselves conclusive, at last gained credence from the fact that a situation which he had solicited from Government for his nephew was given to another person. Awful rumours began to circulate of the existence of a secret junta. Each man regarded his neighbour with intense suspicion and distrust, because, for any thing he knew, that neighbour might be a member of the terrible tribunal, by means of which all the affairs of the community were regulated, and a single ill-timed word might absolutely prove his ruin. Such, indeed, in one instance was the case. In an evil hour for himself, an independent town-councillor thought fit to denounce the Clique, as an unconstitutional and tyrannical body, and to table a motion for an inquiry as to its nature, members, and proceedings. So strong was the general alarm that he could not even find a seconder. But the matter did not stop there. The rash meddler had drawn upon himself the vengeance of a remorseless foe. His business began to fall off; rumours of the most malignant description were circulated regarding his character; two of his relatives who held situations were dismissed without warning and without apology; his credit was assailed in every quarter; and in less than six months after he had made that most unfortunate, harangue, the name of Thomas Gritt, baker in Dreepdaily, was seen to figure in the Gazette. So fell Gritt a martyr, and if any one mourned for him, it was in secret, and the profoundest awe.

Such was the political state of matters, at the time when I rode down the principal street of Dreepdaily. I need hardly say that I did not know a single soul in the burgh; in that respect, indeed, there was entire reciprocity on both sides, for the requisition referred to in my address was a felicitous fiction by M'Corkindale. I stopped before a substantial bluff-looking house, the lower part of which was occupied as a shop, and a scroll above informed me that the proprietor was Walter Binkie, grocer.

A short squat man, with an oleaginous face and remarkably bushy eyebrows, was in the act of weighing out a pennyworth of "sweeties" to a little girl as I entered.

"Is the Provost of Dreepdaily within?" asked I.

"T'se warrant he's that," was the reply; "Hae, my dear, there's a sugar almond t'ye into the bargain. Gae your waus hame noo, and tell your mither that I've some grand new tea. Weel, sir, what was you wanting?"

"I wish particularly to speak to the Provost."

"Weel then, speak awa'," and he straightway squatted himself before his ledger.

"I beg your pardon, sir! Have I really the honour of addressing – ;"

"Walter Binkie, the Provost of this burgh. But if ye come on Council matters, ye're lang ahint the hour. I'm just steppin' up to denner, and I never do business after that."

"But perhaps you will allow me – "

"I will allow nae man, sir, to interrupt my leisure. If ye're wanting ony thing, gang to the Town Clerk."

"Permit me one moment – my name is Dunshunner."

"Eh, what!" cried the Provost, bounding from his stool, "speak lower or the lad will hear ye. Are ye the gentleman that's stannin' for the burrows?"

"The same."

"Lord-sake! what for did ye no say that afore? Jims! I say, Jims! Look after the shop! Come this way, sir, up the stair, and take care ye dinna stumble on that toom cask o' saut."

I followed the Provost up a kind of corkscrew stair, until we emerged upon a landing-place in his own proper domicile. We entered the dining room. It was showily furnished; with an enormous urn of paper roses in the grate, two stuffed parroquets upon the mantel-piece, a flamingo coloured carpet, enormous worsted bell-pulls, and a couple of portraits by some peripatetic follower of Vandyke, one of them representing the Provost in his civic costume, and the other bearing some likeness to a fat female in a turban, with a Cairngorm brooch about the size of a platter on her breast, and no want of carmine on the space dedicated to the cheeks.

The Provost locked the door, and then clapped his ear to the key-hole. He next approached the window, drew down the blinds so as effectually to prevent any opposite scrutiny, and motioned me to a seat.

"And so ye're Mr Dunshunner?" said he. "Oh man, but I've been wearyin' to see you!"

"Indeed! you flatter me very much."

"Nae flattery, Mr Dunshunner – name! I'm a plain honest man, that's a', and naebody can say that Wattie Binkie, has blawn in their lug. And sae ye're comin' forrard for the burrows? It's a bauld thing, sir – a bauld thing, and a great honour ye seek. No that I think ye winna do honour to it, but it's a great trust for sae young a man; a heavy responsibility, as a body may say, to hang upon a callant's shouthers."

"I hope, Mr Binkie, that my future conduct may show that I can at least act up to my professions."

"Nae doubt, sir – I'm no misdoubtin' ye, and to say the truth ye profess weel. I've read yer address, sir, and I like yer principles – they're the stench auld Whig anes – keep a' we can to ourselves, and haud a gude grup. But wha's bringing ye forrard? Wha signed yer requisition? No the Kittleweem folk, I hope? – That wad be a sair thing against ye."

"Why, no – certainly not. The fact is, Mr Binkie, that I have not seen the requisition. Its contents were communicated by a third party, on whom I have the most perfect reliance; and, as I understood there was some delicacy in the matter, I did not think it proper to insist upon a sight of the signatures."

The Provost gave a long whistle.

"I see it noo!" he said, "I see it! I ken't there was something gaun on forbye the common. Ye're a lucky man, Mr Dunshunner, and ye're election is as sure as won. Ye've been spoken to by them ye ken o'!"

"Upon my word – I do not understand – "

"Ay – ay! Ye're richt to be cautious. Weel I wat they are kittle cattle to ride the water on. But wha was't, sir, – wha was't? Ye needna be feared of me. I ken how to keep a secret."

"Really, Mr Binkie, except through a third party, as I have told you already I have had no communication with any one."

"Weel – they *are* close – there's nae denyin' that. But ye surely maun hae some inkling o' the men – Them that's ahint the screen, ye ken?"

"Indeed, I have not. But stay – if you allude to the Clique – "

"Wheest, sir, wheest!" cried the Provost in an agitated tone of voice. "Gudesake, tak care what ye say – ye dinna ken wha may hear ye. Ye hae spoken a word that I havena heard this mony a day without shaking in my shoon. Ay speak ceevily o' the dell – ye dinna ken how weel ye may be acquaint!"

"Surely, sir, there can be no harm in mentioning the – "

"No under that name, Mr Dunshunner – no under that name, and no here. I wadna ca' them that on the tap of Ben-Nevis without a grue. Ay – and sae They are wi' ye, are they? Weel, they are a queer set!"

"You know the parties then, Mr Binkie?"

"I ken nae mair about them than I ken whaur to find the caverns o' the east wind. Whether they are three or thretty or a hunder surpasses my knowledge, but they hae got the secret o' the fern seed and walk about invisible. It is a'thegether a great mystery, but doubtless ye will obtain a glimpse. In the mean time, since ye come from that quarter, I am bound to obey."

"You are very kind, I am sure, Mr Binkie. May I ask then your opinion of matters as they stand at present?"

"Our present member, Mr Whistlerigg, will no stand again. He's got some place or ither up in London; and, my certie, he's worked weel for it! There's naebody else stannin' forbye that man Pozzlethaite, and he disna verra weel ken what he is himsel'. If it's a' richt yonder," continued the Provost, jerking his thumb over his left shoulder, "ye're as gude as elected."

As it would have been extremely impolitic for me under present circumstances to have disclaimed all connection with a body which exercised an influence so marked and decided, I allowed Provost Binkie to remain under the illusion that I was the chosen candidate of the Clique. In fact I had made up my mind that I should become so at any cost, so soon as it vouchsafed to disclose itself and appear before my longing eyes. I therefore launched at once into practical details, in the discussion of which the Provost exhibited both shrewdness and good-will. He professed his readiness at once to become chairman of my committee, drew out a list of the most influential persons in the burgh to whom I ought immediately to apply, and gave me much information regarding the politics of the other places. From what he said, I gathered that, with the aid of the Clique, I was sure of Dreepdaily and Drouthielaw – as to the electors of Kittleweem, they were, in his opinion, "a when dirt," whom it would be useless to consult, and hopeless to conciliate. I certainly had no previous idea that the bulk of the electors had so little to say in the choice of their own representative. When I ventured to hint at the remote possibility of a revolt, the Provost indignantly exclaimed —

"They daurna, sir – they daurna for the lives of them do it! Set them up indeed! Let me see ony man that wad venture to vote against the Town Council and the – and *them*, and I'll make a clean sweep of him out of Dreepdaily!"

Nothing in short could have been more satisfactory than this statement.

Whilst we were conversing together, I heard of a sudden a jingling in the next apartment, as it some very aged and decrepid harpsichord were being exorcised into the unusual effort of a tune. I glanced inquiringly to the door, but the Provost took no notice of my look. In a little time, however, there was a short preliminary cough, and a female voice of considerable compass took up the following strain. I remember the words not more from their singularity, than from the introduction to which they were the prelude: —

"I heard a wee bird singing clear,
In the tight, tight month o' June —
'What garr'd ye buy when stocks were high,

And sell when shares were doun?

'Gin ye hae play'd me fause, my luve,
In simmer 'mang the rain;
When siller's scant and scarce at Yule
I'll pay ye back again!

'O bonny were the Midland Halves,
When credit was sae free! —
But wae betide the Southron loon
That sold thae Halves to me!"

I declare, upon the word of a Railway Director, that I was never more taken aback in my life. Attached as I have been from youth to the Scottish ballad poetry, I never yet had heard a ditty of this peculiar stamp, which struck me as a happy combination of tender fancy with the sterner realities of the Exchange. Provost Binkie smiled as he remarked my amazement.

"It's only my daughter Maggie, Mr Dunshunner," he said. "Puir thing! It's little she has here to amuse her, and sae she whiles writes thae kind o' sangs hersel'. She's weel up to the railroads, for ye ken I was an auld Glenmutchkin holder."

"Indeed! Was that song Miss Binkie's own composition?" asked I, with considerable interest.

"Atweel it is that, and mair too. Maggie, haud your skirling! – ye're interrupting me and the gentleman."

"I beg, on no account, Mr Binkie, that I may be allowed to interfere with your daughter's amusement. Indeed it is full time that I were betaking myself to the hotel, unless you will honour me so far as to introduce me to Miss Binkie."

"Deil a bit o' you gangs to the hotel to-night!" replied the hospitable Provost. "You bide where you are to denner and bed, and we'll hae a comfortable crack over matters in the evening. Maggie! come ben, lass, and speak to Mr Dunshunner."

Miss Binkie, who I am strongly of opinion was all the while conscious of the presence of a stranger, now entered from the adjoining room. She was really a pretty girl; tall, with lively sparkling eyes and a profusion of dark hair, which she wore in the somewhat exploded shape of ringlets. I was not prepared for such an apparition, and I daresay blushed as I paid my compliments.

Margaret Binkie, however, had no sort of *mauvaise honte* about her. She had received her final polish in a Glasgow boarding-school, and did decided credit to the seminary in which the operation had been performed. At all events she was the reverse of shy, for in less than a quarter of an hour we were rattling away as though we had been acquainted from childhood; and, to say the truth, I found myself getting into something like a strong flirtation. Old Binkie grinned a delighted smile, and went out to superintend the decanting of a bottle of port.

I need not, I think, expatiate upon the dinner which followed. The hotch-potch was unexceptionable, the salmon curdy, and the lamb roasted without a fault; and if the red-armed Hebe who attended was somewhat awkward in her motions, she was at least zealous to a degree. The Provost got into high feather, and kept plying me perpetually with wine. When the cloth was removed, he drank with all formality to my success; and, as Margaret Binkie, with a laugh, did due honour to the toast, I could not do less than indulge in a little flight of fancy as I proposed the ladies, and, in connexion with them, the Flower of Dreepdaily – a sentiment which was acknowledged with a blush.

After Miss Binkie retired, the Provost grew more and more convivial. He would not enter into business, but regaled me with numerous anecdotes of his past exploits, and of the lives and conversation of his compatriots in the Town Council – some of whom appeared, from his description, to be very facetious individuals indeed. More particularly, he dwelt upon the good qualities and

importance of a certain Mr Thomas Gills, better known to his friends and kinsfolk by the *sobriquet* of Toddy Tam, and recommended me by all means to cultivate the acquaintance of that personage. But, however otherwise loquacious, nothing would persuade the Provost to launch out upon the subject of the Clique. He really seemed to entertain as profound a terror of that body as ever Huguenot did of the Inquisition, and he cut me short at last by ejaculating —

"Sae nae mair on't, Mr Dunshunner – sae nae mair on't! It's ill talking on thae things. Ye dinna ken what the Clique is, nor whaur it is. But this I ken, that they are every where and a' about us; they hear every thing that passes in this house, and I whiles suspect that Mysie, the servant lass, is naething else than ane o' them in petticoats!"

More than this I could not elicit. After we had finished a considerable quantum of port, we adjourned to the drawing-room, and, tea over, Miss Binkie sang to me several of her own songs, whilst the Provost snored upon the sofa. Both the songs and the singer were clever, the situation was interesting, and, somehow or other, I found my fingers more than once in contact with Maggie's, as I turned over the leaves of the music.

At last the Provost rose, with a stertoracious grunt. I thought this might be the signal for retiring to rest; but such were not the habits of Dreepdaily. Salt herrings and finnan haddocks were produced along with the hot water and accompaniments; and I presume it was rather late before my host conducted me to my chamber. If I dreamed at all that night, it must have been of Margaret Binkie.

CHAPTER III

The next morning, whilst dressing, I heard a blithe voice carolling on the stair. It was the orison of Margaret Binkie as she descended to the breakfast-room. I listened and caught the following verses:

"O hand away frae me," she said,
"I pray you let me be!
Hae you the shares ye held, my lord,
What time ye courted me?"

"'Tis woman's weird to luv and pine,
And man's is to forget:
Hold you the shares, Lord James," she said,
"Or hae ye sold them yet?"

"My York Extensions, bought at par,
I sold at seven pund prem. —
And, O my heart is sair to think
I had nae mair of them!"

"That is really a remarkable girl!" thought I, as I stropped my razor. "Such genius, such animation, and such a thorough knowledge of the market! She would make a splendid wife for a railway-director."

"Come away, Mr Dunshunner," said the Provost, as I entered the parlour. "I hope ye are yaup, for ye have a lang day's wark before ye."

"I am sure it would be an agreeable one, sir, if accompanied with such sweet music as I heard this morning. Pardon me, Miss Binkie, but you really are a perfect Sappho."

"You are too good, I am sure, Mr Dunshunner. Will you take tea or coffee?"

"Maggie," said the Provost, "I maun put a stop to that skirling – it's well eneuch for the night, but the morning is the time for business. Mr Dunshunner, I've been thinking over this job of ours, and here is a bit listie of the maist influential persons in Dreepdaily, that you must positeevly see this day. They wad be affronted if they kened ye were here without calling on them. Noo, mark me, – I dinna just say that ony o' them is the folk ye ken o', but it's no ava unlikely; sae ye maun even use yer ain discretion. Tak an auld man's word for it, and aye put your best fit foremost."

I acquiesced in the justice of the suggestion, although I was really unconscious which foot deserved the precedence. The Provost continued —

"Just ae word mair. Promising is a cheap thing, and ye needna be vera sparing of it. If ony body speaks to ye about a gaugership, or a place in the Customs or the Post-office, just gie ye a bit wink, tak out your note-book, and make a mark wi' the keelavine pen. It aye looks weel, and gangs as far as a downright promise. Deny or refuse naebody. Let them think that ye can do every thing wi' the ministry; and if there should happen to be a whaup in the rape, let them even find it out theirsells. Tell them that ye stand up for Dreepdaily, and its auld charter, and the Whig constitution, and liberal principles. Maist feck o' them disna ken what liberal principles is, but they like the word. I whiles think that liberal principles means saying muckle and doing naething, but you needna tell them that. The Whigs are lang-headed chiells, and they hae had the sense to claim a' the liberality to themsells, ever since the days o' the Reform Bill."

Such and such-like were the valuable maxims which Provost Binkie instilled into my mind during the progress of breakfast. I must say they made a strong impression upon me; and any candidate who may hereafter come forward for the representation of a Scottish burgh, on principles similar to my own, would do well to peruse and remember them.

At length I rose to go.

"Do I carry your good wishes along with me, Miss Binkie, on my canvass?"

"Most cordially, Mr Dunshunner; I shall be perfectly miserable until I learn your success. I can assure you of my support, and earnestly wish I was an elector."

"Enviably would be the Member of Parliament who could represent so charming a constituency!"

"Oh, Mr Dunshunner!"

Directed by the Provost's list, I set forth in search of my constituency. The first elector whose shop I entered was a draper of the name of M'Auslan. I found him in the midst of his tartans.

"Mr M'Auslan, I presume?"

"Ay," was the curt response.

"Allow me to introduce myself, sir. My name is Dunshunner."

"Oh."

"You are probably aware, sir, that I am a candidate for the representation of these burghs?"

"Ay."

"I hope and trust, Mr M'Auslan, that my principles are such as meet with your approbation?"

"Maybe."

"I am a friend, sir, to civil and religious liberty, – to Dreepdaily and its charter, – to the old Whig constitution of 1688, – and to the true interests of the people."

"Weel?"

"Confound the fellow!" thought I, "was there ever such an insensate block? I must bring him to the point at once. Mr M'Auslan," I continued in a very, insinuating tone, "such being my sentiments, may I venture to calculate on your support?"

"There's twa words to that bargain," replied M'Auslan, departing from monosyllables.

"Any further explanation that may be required, I am sure, will readily – "

"It's nae use."

"How?" said I, a good deal alarmed. "Is it possible you are already pledged?"

"No."

"Then what objection – "

"I made nae. I see ye dinna ken us here. The pear's no ripe yet."

"What pear?" asked I, astonished at this horticultural allusion.

"Hark ye," said M'Auslan, looking stealthily around him, and for the first time exhibiting some marks of intelligence in his features – "Hark ye, – hae ye seen Toddy Tam yet?"

"Mr Gills? Not yet. I am just going to wait upon him; but Provost Binkie has promised me his support."

"Wha cares for Provost Binkie! Gang to Toddy Tam."

Not one other word could I extract from the oracular M'Auslan; so, like a pilgrim, I turned my face towards Mecca, and sallied forth in quest of this all-important personage. On my way, however, I entered the house of another voter, one Shanks, a member of the Town Council, from whom I received equally unsatisfactory replies. He, like M'Auslan, pointed steadily towards Toddy Tam. Now, who and what was the individual who, by the common consent of his townsmen, had earned so honourable an epithet?

Mr Thomas Gills had at one time been a clerk in the office of the departed Linklater. His function was not strictly legal, nor confined to the copying of processes: it had a broader and wider scope, and was exercised in a more congenial manner. In short, Mr Gills was a kind of provider for

the establishment. His duties were to hunt out business; which he achieved to a miracle by frequenting every possible public-house, and wringing from them, amidst their cups, the stories of the wrongs of his compotators. Wo to the wight who sate down for an afternoon's conviviality with Toddy Tam! Before the mixing of the fourth tumbler, the ingenious Gills was sure to elicit some hardship or grievance, for which benignant Themis could give redress; and rare, indeed, was the occurrence of the evening on which he did not capture some additional clients. He would even go the length of treating his victim, when inordinately shy, until the fatal mandate was given, and retraction utterly impossible.

Such decided business talents, of course, were not overlooked by the sagacious Laurence Linklater. Gills enjoyed a large salary, the greater moiety of which he consumed in alcoholic experiments; and shortly before the decease of his patron, he was promoted to the lucrative and easy office of some county registrarship. He now began to cultivate conviviality for its own especial sake. It was no longer dangerous to drink with him; for though, from habit, he continued to poke into grievances, he never, on the following morning, pursued the subject further. But what was most remarkable about Toddy Tam was, his independence. He never truckled to dictation from any quarter; but, whilst Binkie and the rest were in fear and terror of the Clique, he openly defied that body, and dared them to do their worst. He was the only man in Dreepdaily who ventured to say that Tom Gritts was right in the motion he had made, and he further added, that if he, Thomas Gills, had been in the Town Council, the worthy and patriotic baker should not have wanted a seconder. This was considered a very daring speech, and one likely to draw down the vengeance of the unrelenting junta: but the thunder slept in the cloud, and Mr Gills enjoyed himself as before.

I found him in his back parlour, in company with a very rosy individual. Although it was not yet noon, a case-bottle and glasses were on the table, and the whole apartment stunk abominably with the fumes of whisky.

"Sit in, Mr Dunshunner, sit in!" said Toddy Tam, in a tone of great cordiality, after I had effected my introduction. "Ye'll no hae had your morning yet? Lass, bring in a clean glass for the gentleman."

"I hope you will excuse me, Mr Gills. I really never do –"

"Hoots – nonsense! Ye maun be neighbour-like, ye ken – we a' expect it at Dreepdaily." And so saying, Toddy Tam, poured me out a full glass of spirits. I had as lieve have swallowed ink, but I was forced to constrain myself and bolt it.

"Ay, and so ye are coming round to us as a candidate, are ye? What d'ye think o' that, Mr Thomson – hae ye read Mr Dunshunner's address?"

The rubicund individual chuckled, leered, and rose to go, but Toddy Tam laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"Sit ye down, man," he said; "I've naething to say to Mr Dunshunner that the hail world may not hear, nor him to me neither, I hope."

"Certainly not," said I; "and I really should feel it as a great obligation if Mr Thomson would be kind enough to remain."

"That's right, lad!" shouted Gills. "Nae hole-and-corner work for me! A' fair and abune board, and the deil fly away with the Clique!"

Had Thomson been an ordinary man, he probably would have grown pale at this daring objurgation: as it was, he fidgetted in his chair, and his face became a shade more crimson.

"Weel, now," continued Toddy Tam, "let us hear what Mr Dunshunner has got to say for himsel'. There's naething like hearing opinions before we put ony questions."

Thus adjured, I went through the whole of my political confession of faith, laying, of course, due stress upon the great and glorious Revolution of 1688, and my devotion to the cause of liberality. Toddy Tam and his companion heard me to the end without interruption.

"Gude – sae far gude, Mr Dunshunner," said Gills. "I see little to objeck to in your general principles; but for a' that I'm no going to pledge mysel until I ken mair o' ye. I hope, sir, that ye're using nae underhand influence – that there has been nae communings with the Clique, a body that

I perfectly abominate? Dreepdaily shall never be made a pocket burrow, so long as Thomas Gills has any influence in it."

I assured Mr Gills, what was the naked truth, that I had no knowledge whatever of the Clique.

"Ye see, Mr Dunshunner," continued Toddy Tam, "we are a gey and independent sort of people here, and we want to be independently represented. My gude friend, Mr Thamson here, can tell you that I have had a sair fecht against secret influence, and I am amaist feared that some men like the Provost owe me a grudge for it. He's a pawkie loon, the Provost, and kens brawly how to play his cards."

"He's a' that!" ejaculated Thomson.

"But I dinna care a snuff of tobacco for the haill of the Town Council, or the Clique. Give me a man of perfect independence, and I'll support him. I voted for the last member sair against my conscience, for he was put up by the Clique, and never came near us: but I hope better things frae you, Mr Dunshunner, if you should happen to be returned. Mind, I don't say that I am going to support ye – I maun think about it; but if ye are a good man and a true, and no a nominee, I dare say that both my gude freend Thamson, and mysell, will no object to lend you a helping-hand."

This was all I could extract from Toddy Tam, and, though favourable, it was far from being satisfactory. There was a want, from some cause or another, of that cordial support which I had been led to anticipate; and I almost felt half inclined to abandon the enterprise altogether. However, after having issued my address, this would have looked like cowardice. I therefore diligently prosecuted my canvass, and contrived, in the course of the day, to encounter a great portion of the electors. Very few pledged themselves. Some surly independents refused point-blank, alleging that they did not intend to vote at all: others declined to promise, until they should know how Toddy Tam and other magnates were likely to go. My only pledges were from the sworn retainers of the Provost.

"Well, Mr Dunshunner, what success?" cried Miss Margaret Binkie, as I returned rather jaded from my circuit. "I hope you have found all the Dreepdaily people quite favourable?"

"Why no, Miss Binkie, not quite so much so as I could desire. Your townsmen here seem uncommonly slow in making up their minds to any thing."

"Oh, that is always their way. I have heard Papa say that the same thing took place at last election, and that nobody declared for Mr Whistlerigg until the very evening before the nomination. So you see you must not lose heart."

"If my visit to Dreepdaily should have no other result, Miss Binkie, I shall always esteem it one of the most fortunate passages of my life, since it has given me the privilege of your acquaintance."

"Oh, Mr Dunshunner! How can you speak so? I am afraid you are a great flatterer!" replied Miss Binkie, pulling at the same time a sprig of geranium to pieces. "But you look tired – pray take a glass of wine."

"By no means, Miss Binkie. A word from you is a sufficient cordial. Happy geranium!" said I picking up the petals.

Now I know very well that all this sort of thing is wrong, and that a man has no business to begin flirtations if he cannot see his way to the end of them. At the same time I hold the individual who dislikes flirtations to be a fool, and sometimes they are utterly irresistible.

"Now, Mr Dunshunner, I do beg you won't! Pray sit down on the sofa, for I am sure you are tired, and if you like to listen I shall sing you a little ballad I have composed to-day."

"I would rather hear you sing than an angel," said I; "but pray do not debar me the privilege of standing by your side."

"Just as you please;" and Margaret began to rattle away on the harpsichord.

"O whaur hae ye been, Augustus, my son?

O whaur hae ye been, my winsome young man?

I hae been to the voters – mither, mak my bed soon,

For I'm weary wi' canvassing, and fain wad lay me doun.

"O whaur are your plumpers, Augustus, my son?
O whaur are your split votes, my winsome young man?
They are sold to the Clique – Mither, mak my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' canvassing, and fain wad lay me doun.

"O I fear ye are cheated, Augustus, my son,
O I fear ye are done for, my winsome young man!
'I hae been to my true love – "'

I could stand this no longer.

"Charming, cruel girl!" cried I dropping on one knee, – "why will you thus sport with my feelings? Where else should I seek for my true love but here?"

I don't know what might have been the sequel of the scene, had not my good genius, in the shape of Mysie the servant girl, at this moment burst into the apartment. Miss Binkie with great presence of mind dropped her handkerchief, which afforded me an excellent excuse for recovering my erect position.

Mysie was the bearer of a billet, addressed to myself, and marked "private and particular." I opened it and read as follows.

"Sir – Some of those who are well disposed towards you have arranged to meet this night, and are desirous of a private interview at which full and mutual explanations may be given. It may be right to mention to you that the question of *the currency* will form the basis of any political arrangement; and it is expected that you will then be prepared to state explicitly your views with regard to *bullion*. Something more than pledges upon this subject will be required.

"As this meeting will be a strictly private one, the utmost secrecy must be observed. Be on the bridge at eleven o'clock this night, and you will be conducted to the appointed place. Do not fail as you value your own interest. Yours, &c.

"Shell Out."

"Who brought this letter, Mysie?" said I, considerably flustered at its contents.

"A laddie. He said there was nae answer, and ran awa'."

"No bad news, I hope, Mr Dunshunner?" said Margaret timidly.

I looked at Miss Binkie. Her eye was still sparkling, and her cheek flushed. She evidently was annoyed at the interruption, and expected a renewal of the conversation. But I felt that I had gone quite far enough, if not a little beyond the line of prudence. It is easy to make a declaration, but remarkably difficult to back out of it; and I began to think that, upon the whole, I had been a little too precipitate. On the plea, therefore, of business, I emerged into the open air; and, during a walk of a couple of miles, held secret communing with myself.

"Here you are again, Dunshunner, my fine fellow, putting your foot into it as usual! If it had not been for the arrival of the servant, you would have been an engaged man at this moment, and saddled with a father-in-law in the shape of a vender of molasses. Besides, it is my private opinion that you don't care sixpence about the girl. But it is the old story. This is the third time since Christmas that you have been on the point of committing matrimony, and if you don't look sharp after yourself, you will be sold an especial bargain! Now, frankly and fairly, do you not acknowledge yourself to be an idiot?"

I did. Men are generally very candid and open in their confessions to themselves; and the glaring absurdity of my conduct was admitted without any hesitation. I resolved to mend my ways accordingly, and to eschew for the future all tête-à-têtes with the too fascinating Maggie Binkie. That point disposed of, I returned to the mysterious missive. To say the truth, I did not much like it. Had

these been the days of Burking, I should have entertained some slight personal apprehension; but as there was no such danger, I regarded it either as a hoax, or as some electioneering *ruse*, the purpose of which I could not fathom. However, as it is never wise to throw away any chance, I determined to keep the appointment; and, if a meeting really were held, to give the best explanations in my power to my correspondent, Mr Shell Out, and his friends. In this mood of mind I returned to the Provost's dwelling.

The dinner that day was not so joyous as before. Old Binkie questioned me very closely as to the result of my visits, and seemed chagrined that Toddy Tam had not been more definite in his promises of support.

"Ye maun hae Tam," said the Provost. "He disna like the Clique – I hope naeboddy's listening – nor the Clique him; but he stands weel wi' the Independents, and the Seceders will go wi' him to a man. We canna afford to lose Gills. I'll send ower for him, and see if we canna talk him into reason. Haith, though, we'll need mair whisky, for Tam requires an unco deal of slockening!"

Tam, however, proved to be from home, and therefore the Provost and I were left to our accustomed duet. He complained grievously of my abstemiousness, which for divers reasons I thought it prudent to observe. An extra tumbler might again have made Miss Binkie a cherub in my eyes.

I am afraid that the young lady thought me a very changeable person. When the Provost fell asleep, she allowed the conversation to languish, until it reached that awful degree of pause which usually precedes the popping of the question. But this time I was on my guard, and held out with heroic stubbornness. I did not even launch out upon the subject of poetry, which Maggie rather cleverly introduced; for there is a decided affinity between the gay science and the tender passion, and it is difficult to preserve indifference when quoting from the "Loves of the Angels." I thought it safer to try metaphysics. It is not easy to extract an amorous avowal, even by implication, from a discourse upon the theory of consciousness; and I flatter myself that Kant, if he could have heard me that evening, would have returned home with some novel lights upon the subject. Miss Binkie seemed to think that I might have selected a more congenial theme; for she presently exhibited symptoms of pettishness, took up a book, and applied herself diligently to the perusal of a popular treatise upon knitting.

Shortly afterwards, the Provost awoke, and his daughter took occasion to retire. She held out her hand to me with rather a reproachful look, but, though sorely tempted, I did not indulge in a squeeze.

"That's a fine lassie – a very fine lassie!" remarked the Provost, as he severed a Welch rabbit into twain. "Ye are no a family man yet, Mr Dunshunner, and ye maybe canna comprehend what a comfort she has been to me. I'm auld now, and a thocht failing; but it is a great relief to me to ken that, when I am in my grave, Maggie winna be tocherless. I've laid up a braw nest-egg for her ower at the bank yonder."

I of course coincided in the praise of Miss Binkie, but showed so little curiosity as to the contents of the indicated egg, that the Provost thought proper to enlighten me, and hinted at eight thousand pounds. It is my positive belief that the worthy man expected an immediate proposal: if so, he was pretty egregiously mistaken. I could not, however, afford, at this particular crisis, to offend him, and accordingly stuck to generals. As the hour of meeting was approaching, I thought it necessary to acquaint him with the message I had received, in order to account for my exit at so unseasonable a time.

"It's verra odd," – said the Provost, – "very odd! A' Dreepdaily should be in their beds by this time; and I canna think there could be a meeting without me hearing of it. It's just the reverse o' constitutional to keep folk trailing about the toun at this time o' nicht, and the brig is a queer place for a tryst."

"You do not surely apprehend, Mr Binkie, that there is any danger?"

"No just that, but you'll no be the waur o' a rung. Ony gait, I'll send to Saunders Caup, the toun-officer, to be on the look-out. If any body offers to harm ye, be sure ye cry out, and Saunders will be up in a crack. He's as stieve as steel, and an auld Waterloo man."

As a considerable number of years has elapsed since the last great European conflict, I confess that my confidence in the capabilities of Mr Caup, as an ally, was inferior to my belief in his prowess. I therefore declined the proposal, but accepted the weapon; and, after a valedictory tumbler with my host, emerged into the darkened street.

CHAPTER IV

Francis Osbaldistone, when he encountered the famous Rob Roy by night, was in all probability, notwithstanding Sir Walter's assertion to the contrary, in a very tolerable state of trepidation. At least I know that I was, as I neared the bridge of Dreepdaily. It was a nasty night of wind rain, and not a soul was stirring in the street – the surface of which did little credit to the industry of the paving department, judging from the number of dubs in which I found involuntary accommodation. As I floundered through the mire, I breathed any thing but benedictions on the mysterious Shell Out, who was the cause of my midnight wandering.

Just as I reached the bridge, beneath which the river was roaring rather uncomfortably, a ragged-looking figure started out from an entry. A solitary lamp, suspended from above, gave me a full view of this personage, who resembled an animated scarecrow.

He stared me full in the face, and then muttered, with a wink and a leer, —

"Was ye seekin' for ony body the nicht? Eh wow, man, but it's cauld!"

"Who may you be, my friend?" said I, edging off from my unpromising acquaintance.

"Wha may I be?" replied the other: "that's a gude one! Gosh, d'ye no ken me? Aum Geordie Dowie, the town bauldy, that's as weel kent as the Provost hissell."

To say the truth, Geordie was a very truculent-looking character to be an innocent. However, bauldies are usually harmless.

"And what have you got to say to me, Geordie?"

"If ye're the man I think ye are,
And ye're name begins wi' a D,
Just tak ye tae yer soople shanks,
And tramp alang wi' me,"

quavered the idiot, who, like many others, had a natural turn for poetry.

"And where are we going to, Geordie, my man?" said I in a soothing voice.

"Ye'll find that when we get there," replied the bauldy.

"Hey the bonnie gill-stoup!
Ho the bonnie gill-stoup!
Gie me walth o' barley bree,
And leeze me on the gill-stoup!"

"But you can at least tell me who sent you here, Geordie?" said I, anxious for further information before intrusting myself to such erratic guidance.

He of the gill-stoups lifted up his voice and sang —

"Cam' ye by Tweedside,
Or cam' ye by Flodden?
Met ye the deil
On the braes o' Culloden?"

"Three imps o' darkness
I saw in a neuk,
Riving the red-coats,
And roasting the Deuk.

"Quo' ane o' them – 'Geordie,
Gae down to the brig,
I'm yaup for my supper,
And fetch us a Whig."

"Ha! ha! ha! Hoo d'ye like that, my man? Queer freends ye've gotten noo, and ye'll need a lang spune to sup kail wi' them. But come awa'. I canna stand here the haill nicht listening to your havers."

Although the hint conveyed by Mr Dowie's ingenious verses was rather of an alarming nature, I made up my mind at once to run all risks and follow him. Geordie strode on, selecting apparently the most unfrequented lanes, and making, as I anxiously observed, for a remote part of the suburbs. Nor was his voice silent during our progress, for he kept regaling me with a series of snatches, which, being for the most part of a supernatural and diabolical tendency, did not much contribute towards the restoration of my equanimity. At length he paused before a small house, the access to which was by a downward flight of steps.

"Ay – this is the place!" he muttered. "I ken it weel. It's no just bad the whusky that they sell, but they needna put sae muckle water intil't."

So saying, he descended the stair. I followed. There was no light in the passage, but the bauldy went forward, stumbling and groping in the dark. I saw a bright ray streaming through a crevice, and three distinct knocks were given.

"Come in, whaever ye are!" said a bluff voice; and I entered a low apartment, in which the candles looked yellow through a fog of tobacco-smoke. Three men were seated at a deal table, covered with the implements of national conviviality: and to my intense astonishment none of the three were strangers to me. I at once recognised the features of the taciturn M'Auslan, the wary Shanks, and the independent Mr Thomas Gills.

"There's the man ye wanted," said Geordie Dowie, slapping me familiarly on the shoulder. – "Whaur's the dram ye promised me?"

"In Campbelltown my love was born;
Her mither in Glen Turril!
But Ferintosh is the place for me.
For that's the strangest speerit!"

"Hand yer clavering tongue, ye common village!" said Toddy Tam. "Wad ye bring in the neebourhood on us? M'Auslan, gi'e the body his dram, and then see him out of the door. We manna be interfered wi' in our cracks."

M'Auslan obeyed. A large glass of alcohol was given to my guide, who swallowed it with a sigh of pleasure.

"Eh, man! that's gude and strang! It's no ilka whusky that'll mak Geordie Dowie pech. Fair fa' yer face, my bonny M'Auslan! could you no just gi'e us anither?"

"Pit him out!" said the remorseless Gills. "It's just extraordinar how fond the creature is o' drink!" and Geordie was forcibly ejected, after an ineffectual clutch at the bottle.

"Sit ye down, Mr Dunshunner," said Toddy Tam, addressing himself to me; "sit ye down, and mix yoursel' a tumbler. I daresay now ye was a little surprised at the note ye got this morning, eh?"

"Why, certainly, Mr Gills, I did not anticipate the pleasure – "

"Ay, I kenned ye wad wonder at it. But ilka place has it's ain way o' doing business, and this is ours – quiet and cozy, ye see. Ise warrant, too, ye thocht M'Auslan a queer ane because he wadna speak out?"

I laughed dubiously towards M'Auslan, who responded with the austerest of possible grins.

"And Shanks, too," continued Toddy Tam; "Shanks wadna speak out neither. They're auld-farrant hands baith o' them, Mr Dunshunner, and they didna like to promise ony thing without me. We three aye gang thegither."

"I hope, then, Mr Gills, that I may calculate upon your support and that of your friends. My views upon the currency – "

"Ay! that's speaking out at ance. Hoo muckle?"

"Ay! hoo muckle?" interposed M'Auslan, with a glistening eye.

"I really do not understand you, gentlemen."

"Troth, then, ye're slow at the uptak," remarked Gills, after a meaning pause. "I see we maun be clear and conceese. Hark ye, Mr Dunshunner, – wha do ye think we are?"

"Three most respectable gentlemen, for whom I have the highest possible regard."

"Hoots! – nonsense! D'ye no ken?"

"No," was my puzzled response.

"Weel, then," said Toddy Tam, advancing his lips to my ear, and pouring forth an alcoholic whisper – "we three can do mair than ye think o'. – It's huz that is the Clique!"

I recoiled in perfect amazement, and gazed in succession upon the countenances of the three compatriots. Yes – there could be no doubt about it – I was in the presence of the tremendous junta of Dleepdaily; the veil of Isis had been lifted up, and the principal figure upon the pedestal was the magnanimous and independent Gills. Always a worshipper of genius, I began to entertain a feeling little short of veneration towards Toddy Tam. The admirable manner in which he had contrived to conceal his real power from the public – his assumed indignation and horror of the Clique – and his hold over all classes of the electors, demonstrated him at once to be a consummate master of the political art. Machiavelli could not have devised a subtler stratagem than Gills.

"That's just the plain truth o' the matter," observed Shanks, who had hitherto remained silent. "We three is the Clique, and we hae the representation o' the burrow in our hands. Now, to speak to the point, if we put our names down on your Committee, you carry the election, and we're ready to come to an understanding upon fair and liberal grounds."

And we did come to an understanding upon grounds which might be justly characterised as fair on the one side, and certainly liberal on the other. There was of course some little discussion as to the lengths I was expected to go in financial matters; and it was even hinted that, with regard to bullion, the Honourable Mr Pozzlethwaite might possibly entertain as enlarged views as myself. However, we fortunately succeeded in adjusting all our differences. I not only promised to give the weight of my name to a bill, but exhibited, upon the spot, a draft which met with the cordial approbation of my friends, and which indeed was so satisfactory, that they did not offer to return it.

"That's a' right then," said Toddy Tam, inserting the last-mentioned document in a greasy pocket-book. "Our names go down on your Committy, and the election is as gude as won!"

An eldritch laugh at a little window, which communicated with the street, at this moment electrified the speaker. There was a glimpse of a human face seen through the dingy pane.

A loud oath burst from the lips of Toddy Thomas.

"Some deevil has been watching us!" he cried. "Rin, M'Auslan, rin for your life, and grip him afore he can turn the corner! I wad not for a thousand pund that this nicht's wark were to get wind!"

M'Auslan rushed, as desired; but all his efforts were ineffectual. The fugitive, whoever he was, had very prudently dived into the darkness, and the draper returned without his victim.

"What is to be done?" said I. "It strikes me, gentlemen, that this may turn out to be a very unpleasant business."

"Nae fears – nae fears!" said Toddy Tam, looking, however, the reverse of comfortable. "It will hae been some callant trying to fley us, that's a'. But, mind ye – no a word o' this to ony living human being, and aboon a' to Provost Binkie. I've keepit him for four years in the dark, and it never wad do to show the cat the road to the kirn!"

I acquiesced in the precautionary arrangement, and we parted; Toddy Tam and his friends having, by this time, disposed of all the surplus fluid. It was very late before I reached the Provost's dwelling.

I suppose that next morning I had overslept myself; for, when I awoke, I heard Miss Binkie in full operation at the piano. This time, however, she was not singing alone, for a male voice was audible in conjunction with hers.

"It would be in amazing consolation to me if somebody would carry off that girl!" thought I, as I proceeded with my toilet. "I made a deuced fool of myself to her yesterday; and, to say the truth, I don't very well know how to look her in the face!"

However, there was no help for it, so I proceeded down stairs. The first individual I recognised in the breakfast parlour was M'Corkindale. He was engaged in singing, along with Miss Binkie, some idiotical catch about a couple of albino mice.

"Bob!" cried I. "my dear Bob, I am delighted to see you; – what on earth has brought you here?"

"A gig and a foundered mare," replied the matter-of-fact M'Corkindale. "The fact is, that I was anxious to hear about your canvass; and, as there was nothing to do in Glasgow – by the way, Dunshunner, the banks have put on the screw again – I resolved to satisfy my own curiosity in person. I arrived this morning, and Miss Binkie has been kind enough to ask me to stay breakfast."

"I am sure both papa and I are always happy to see Mr M'Corkindale," said Margaret, impressively.

"I am afraid," said I, "that I have interrupted your music: I did not know, M'Corkindale, that you were so eminent a performer."

"I hold with Aristotle," replied Bob modestly, "that music and political economy are at the head of all the sciences. But it is very seldom that one can meet with so accomplished a partner as Miss Binkie."

"Oh, ho!" thought I. But here the entrance of the Provost diverted the conversation, and we all sat down to breakfast. Old Binkie was evidently dying to know the result of my interview on the previous evening, but I was determined to keep him in the dark. Bob fed like an ogre, and made prodigious efforts to be polite.

After breakfast, on the pretext of business we went out for a walk. The economist lighted his cigar.

"Snug quarters these, Dunshunner, at the Provost's."

"Very. But, Bob, things are looking rather well here. I had a negotiation last night which has as good as settled the business."

"I am very glad to hear it – Nice girl, Miss Binkie; very pretty eyes, and a good foot and ankle."

"An unexceptionable instep. What do you think! – I have actually discovered the Clique at last."

"You don't say so! Do you think old Binkie has saved money?"

"I am sure he has. I look upon Dreepdaily as pretty safe now; and I propose going over this afternoon to Drouthielaw. What would you recommend?"

"I think you are quite right; but somebody should stay here to look after your interests. There is no depending upon these fellows. I'll tell you what – while you are at Drouthielaw I shall remain here, and occupy your quarters. The Committee will require some man of business to drill them in, and I don't care if I spare you the time."

I highly applauded this generous resolution; at the same time I was not altogether blind to the motive. Bob, though an excellent fellow in the main, did not usually sacrifice himself to his friends; and I began to suspect that Maggie Binkie – with whom, by the way, he had some previous acquaintance – was somehow or other connected with his enthusiasm. As matters stood, I of course entertained no objection: on the contrary, I thought it no breach of confidence to repeat the history of the nest-egg.

Bob pricked up his ears.

"Indeed!" said he; "that is a fair figure as times go; and, to judge from appearances, the stock in trade must be valuable."

"Cargoes of sugar," said I, "oceans of rum, and no end whatever of molasses!"

"A very creditable chairman, indeed, for your Committee, Dunshunner," replied Bob. "Then I presume you agree that I should stay here, whilst you prosecute your canvass?"

I assented, and we returned to the house. In the course of the forenoon the list of my Committee was published, and, to the great joy of the Provost, the names of Thomas Gill, Alexander M'Auslan, and Simon Shanks appeared. He could not, for the life of him, understand how they had all come forward so readily. A meeting of my friends was afterwards held, at which I delivered a short harangue upon the constitution of 1688, which seemed to give general satisfaction; and before I left the room, I had the pleasure of seeing the Committee organised, with Bob officiating as secretary. It was the opinion of every one that Pozzlethwaite had not a chance. I then partook of a light luncheon, and after bidding farewell to Miss Binkie, who, on the whole, seemed to take matters very coolly, I drove off for Drouthielaw. I need not relate my adventures in that respectable burgh. They were devoid of any thing like interest, and not quite so satisfactory in their result as I could have wished. However, the name of Gills was known even at that distance, and his views had considerable weight with some of the religious denominations. So far as I was concerned, I had no sinecure of it. It cost me three nights' hard drinking to conciliate the leaders of the Anabaptists, and at least three more before the chiefs of the Antinomians would surrender. As to the Old Light gentry, I gave them up in despair, for I could not hope to have survived the consequences of so serious a conflict.

CHAPTER V

Parliament was at length dissolved; the new writs were issued, and the day of nomination fixed for the Dreepdaily burghs. For a time it appeared to myself, and indeed to almost every one else, that my return was perfectly secure. Provost Binkie was in great glory, and the faces of the unknown Clique were positively radiant with satisfaction. But a storm was brewing in another quarter, upon which we had not previously calculated.

The Honourable Mr Pozzlethwaite, my opponent, had fixed his head-quarters in Drouthielaw, and to all appearance was making very little progress in Dreepdaily. Indeed, in no sense of the word could Pozzlethwaite be said to be popular. He was a middle-aged man, as blind as a bat, and, in order to cure the defect, he ornamented his visage with an immense pair of green spectacles, which, it may be easily conceived, did not add to the beauty of his appearance. In speech he was slow and verbose, in manner awkward, in matter almost wholly unintelligible. He professed principles which he said were precisely the same as those advocated by the late Jeremy Bentham; and certainly, if he was correct in this, I do not regret that my parents omitted to bring me up at the feet of the utilitarian Gamaliel. In short, Paul was prosy to a degree, had not an atom of animation in his whole composition, and could no more have carried a crowd along with him than he could have supported Atlas upon his shoulders. A portion, however, of philosophic weavers, and a certain section of the Seceders had declared in his favour; and, moreover, it was just possible that he might gain the suffrages of some of the Conservatives. Kittleweem, the Tory burgh, had hitherto preserved the appearance of strict neutrality. I had attempted to address the electors of that place, but I found that the hatred of Dreepdaily and of its Clique was more powerful than my eloquence; and, somehow or other, the benighted savages did not comprehend the merits of the Revolution Settlement of 1688, and were as violently national as the Celtic race before the invention of trows. Kittleweem had equipped half a regiment for Prince Charles in the Forty-five, and still piqued itself on its staunch Episcopacy. A Whig, therefore, could hardly expect to be popular in such a den of prejudice. By the advice of M'Corkindale, I abstained from any further efforts, which might possibly have tended to exasperate the electors, and left Kittleweem to itself, in the hope that it would maintain an armed neutrality.

And so it probably might have done, but for an unexpected occurrence. Two days before the nomination, a new candidate appeared on the field. Sholto Douglas was the representative of one of the oldest branches of his distinguished name, and the race to which he more immediately belonged had ever been foremost in the ranks of Scottish chivalry and patriotism. In fact, no family had suffered more from their attachment to the cause of legitimacy than the Douglasses of Inveriachan. Forfeiture after forfeiture had cut down their broad lands to a narrow estate, and but for an unexpected Indian legacy, the present heir would have been marching as a subaltern in a foot regiment. But a large importation of rupees had infused new life and spirit into the bosom of Sholto Douglas. Young, eager, and enthusiastic, he determined to rescue himself from obscurity; and the present state of the Dreepdaily burghs appeared to offer a most tempting opportunity. Douglas was, of course, Conservative to the backbone; but, more than that, he openly proclaimed himself a friend of the people, and a supporter of the rights of labour.

"Confound the fellow!" said Bob M'Corkindale to me, the morning after Sholto's address had been placarded through the burghs, "who would have thought of an attack of this kind from such a quarter. Have you seen his manifesto, Dunshunner?"

"Yes – here it is in the Patriot. The editor, however, gives him it soundly in the leading article. I like his dogmatic style and wholesale denunciation of the Tories."

"I'll tell you what it is, though – I look upon this as any thing but a joke. Douglas is evidently not a man to stand upon old aristocratic pretensions. He has got the right sow by the ear this time, and, had he started a little earlier, might have roused the national spirit to a very unpleasant pitch.

You observe what he says about Scotland, the neglect of her local interests, and the manner in which she has been treated, with reference to Ireland?"

"I do. And you will be pleased to recollect that but for yourself, something of the same kind would have appeared in my address."

"If you mean that as a reproach, Dunshunner, you are wrong. How was it possible to have started you as a Whig upon patriotic principles?"

"Well – that's true enough. At the same time, I cannot help wishing that we had said a word or two about the interests to the north of the Tweed."

"What is done cannot be undone. We must now stick by the Revolution Settlement."

"Do you know, Bob, I think we have given them quite enough of that same settlement already. Those fellows at Kittleweem laughed in my face the last time that I talked about it, and I am rather afraid that it won't go down on the hustings."

"Try the sanitary condition of the towns, then, and universal conciliation to Ireland," replied the Economist. "I have given orders to hire two hundred Paddies, who have come over for the harvest, at a shilling a-head, and of course you may depend upon their voices, and also their shillelahs, if needful. I think we should have a row. It would be a great matter to make Douglas unpopular; and, with a movement of my little finger, I could turn out a whole legion of navigators."

"No, Bob, you had better not. It is just possible they might make a mistake, and shy brickbats at the wrong candidate. It will be safer, I think, to leave the mob to itself: at the same time, we shall not be the worse for the Tipperary demonstration. And how looks the canvass?"

"Tolerably well, but not perfectly secure. The Clique has done its very best, but at the same, time there is undeniably a growing feeling against it. Many people grumble about its dominion, and are fools enough to say that they have a right to think for themselves."

"Could you not circulate a report that Pozzlethwaite is the man of the Clique?"

"The idea is ingenious, but I fear it would hardly work. Dreepdaily is well known to be the head-quarters of the confederation, and the name of Provost Binkie is inseparably connected with it."

"By the way, M'Corkindale, it struck me that you looked rather sweet upon Miss Binkie last evening."

"I did. In fact I popped the question," replied Robert calmly.

"Indeed! Were you accepted?"

"Conditionally. If we gain the election she becomes Mrs M'Corkindale – if we lose, I suppose I shall have to return to Glasgow in a state of celibacy."

"A curious contract, certainly! Well, Bob, since your success is involved in mine, we must fight a desperate battle."

"I wish, though, that Mr Sholto Douglas had been kind enough to keep out of the way," observed M'Corkindale.

The morning of the day appointed for the nomination dawned upon the people of Dreepdaily with more than usual splendour. For once, there was no mist upon the surrounding hills, and the sky was clear as sapphire. I rose early to study my speech, which had received the finishing touches from M'Corkindale on the evening before; and I flatter myself it was as pretty a piece of Whig rhetoric as ever was spouted from a hustings. Toddy Tam, indeed, had objected, upon seeing a draft, that "there was nae banes intil it;" but the political economist was considered by the committee a superior authority on such subjects to Gills. After having carefully conned it over, I went down stairs, where the whole party were already assembled. A large blue and yellow flag, with the inscription, "Dunshunner and the Good Cause!" was hung out from the window, to the intense delight of a gang of urchins, who testified to the popularity of the candidate by ceaseless vociferation to "poor out." The wall opposite, however, bore some memoranda of an opposite tendency, for I could see some large placards, newly pasted up, on which the words, "Electors of Dreepdaily! you are sold by the

Clique!" were conspicuous in enormous capitals. I heard, too, something like a ballad chanted, in which my name seemed to be coupled, irreverently, with that of the independent Gills.

Provost Binkie – who, in common with the rest of the company, wore upon his bosom an enormous blue and buff cockade, prepared by the fair hands of his daughter – saluted me with great cordiality. I ought to observe that the Provost had been kept as much as possible in the dark regarding the actual results of the canvass. He was to propose me, and it was thought that his nerves would be more steady if he came forward under the positive conviction of success.

"This is a great day, Mr Dunshunner – a grand day for Dreepdaily," he said. "A day, if I may sae speak, o' triumph and rejoicing! The news o' this will rin frae one end o' the land to the ither – for the e'en o' a' Scotland is fixed on Dreepdaily, and the stench auld Whig principles is sure to prevail, even like a mighty river that rins down in spate to the sea!"

I justly concluded that this figure of speech formed part of the address to the electors which for the two last days had been simmering in the brain of the worthy magistrate, along with the fumes of the potations he had imbibed, as incentives to the extraordinary effort. Of course I took care to appear to participate in his enthusiasm. My mind, however, was very far from being thoroughly at ease.

As twelve o'clock, which was the hour of nomination, drew near, there was a great muster at my committee-room. The band of the Independent Tee-totalers, who to a man were in my interest, was in attendance. They had been well primed with ginger cordial, and were obstreperous to a gratifying degree.

Toddy Tam came up to me with a face of the colour of carnation.

"I think it richt to tell ye, Mr Dunshunner, that there will be a bit o' a bleeze ower yonder at the hustings. The Kittleweem folk hae come through in squads, and Lord Hartside's tenantry have marched in a body, wi' Sholto Douglas's colours flying."

"And the Drouthielaw fellows – what has become of them?"

"Od, they're no wi' us either – they're just savage at the Clique! Gudesake, Mr Dunshunner, tak tent, and dinna say a word about huz. I intend mysell to denounce the body, and may be that will do us gude."

I highly approved of Mr Gills' determination, and as the time had now come, we formed in column, and marched towards the hustings with the tee-total band in front, playing a very lugubrious imitation of "Glorious Apollo."

The other candidates had already taken their places. The moment I was visible to the audience, I was assailed by a volley of yells, among which, cries of "Doun wi' the Clique!" – "Wha bought them?" – "Nae nominee!" – "We've had eneuch o' the Whigs!" etcetera, were distinctly audible. This was not at all the kind of reception I had bargained for; – however, there was nothing for it but to put on a smiling face, and I reciprocated courtesies as well as I could with both of my honourable opponents.

During the reading of the writ and the Bribery Act, there was a deal of joking, which I presume was intended to be good-humoured. At the same time there could be no doubt that it was distinctly personal. I heard my name associated with epithets of any thing but an endearing description, and, to say the truth, if choice had been granted, I would far rather have been at Jericho than in the front of the hustings at Dreepdaily. A man must be, indeed, intrepid, and conscious of a good cause, who can oppose himself without blenching to the objurgation of an excited mob.

The Honourable Paul Pozzlethwaite, on account of his having been the earliest candidate in the field, was first proposed by a town-councillor of Drouthielaw. This part of the ceremony appeared to excite but little interest, the hooting and cheering being pretty equally distributed.

It was now our turn.

"Gang forrard, Provost, and be sure ye speak oot!" said Toddy Tam; and Mr Binkie advanced accordingly.

Thereupon such a row commenced as I never had witnessed before. Yelling is a faint word to express the sounds of that storm of extraordinary wrath which descended upon the head of the

devoted Provost. "Clique! Clique!" resounded on every side, and myriads of eyes, ferocious as those of the wild-cat, were bent scowlingly on my worthy proposer. In vain did he gesticulate – in vain implore. The voice of Demosthenes – nay, the deep bass of Stentor himself – could not have been heard amidst that infernal uproar; so that, after working his arms for a time like the limbs of a telegraph, and exerting himself until he became absolutely swart in the face, Binkie was fain to give it up, and retired amidst a whirlwind of abuse.

"May the deil fly awa' wi' the hail pack o' them!" said he, almost blubbering with excitement and indignation. "Wha wad ever hae thocht to have seen the like o' this? and huz, too, that gied them the Reform Bill! Try your hand at them, Tam, for my heart's amaist broken!"

The bluff independent character of Mr Gills, and his reputed purity from all taint of the Clique, operated considerably in his favour. He advanced amidst general cheering, and cries of "Noo for Toddy Tam!" "Let's hear Mr Gills!" and the like; and as he tossed his hat aside and clenched his brawny fist, he really looked the incarnation of a sturdy and independent elector. His style, too, was decidedly popular —

"Listen tae me!" he said, "and let thae brawlin', braggin', bletherin' idiwits frae Drouthielaw haud their lang claverin' tongues, and no keep rowtin' like a herd o' senseless nowte! (Great cheering from Dreepdaily and Kittleweem – considerable disapprobation from Drouthielaw.) I ken them weel, the auld haverils! (cheers.) But you, my freends, that I have dwalt wi' for twenty years, is it possible that ye can believe for one moment that I wad submit to be dictated to by a Clique? (Cries of "no! no!" "It's no you, Tam!" and confusion.) No me? I dinna thank ye for that! Wull ony man daur to say to my face, that I ever collegued wi' a pack that wad buy and sell the hail of us as readily as ye can deal wi' sheep's-heads in the public market? (Laughter.) Div ye think that if Mr Dunshunner was ony way mixed up wi' that gang, I wad be here this day tae second him? Div ye think – "

Here Mr Gills met with a singular interruption. A remarkable figure attired in a red coat and cocked-hat, at one time probably the property of a civic officer, and who had been observed for some time bobbing about in front of the hustings, was now elevated upon the shoulders of a yeoman, and displayed to the delighted spectators the features of Geordie Dowie.

"Ay, Toddy Tam, are ye there, man?" cried Geordie with a malignant grin. "What was you and the Clique doin' at Nanse Finlayson's on Friday nicht?"

"What was it, Geordie? What was it?" cried a hundred voices.

"Am I to be interrupted by a natural?" cried Gills, looking, however, considerably flushed in the face.

"What hae ye dune wi' the notes, Tam, that the lang chield up by there gied ye? And whaur's your freends, Shanks and M'Auslan? See that ye steek to the window neist time, ma man!" cried Geordie with demoniac ferocity.

This was quite enough for the mob, who seldom require any excuse for a display of their hereditary privileges. A perfect hurricane of hissing, and of yelling arose, and Gills, though he fought like a hero, was at last forced to retire from the contest. Had Geordie Dowie's windpipe been within his grasp at that moment, I would not have insured for any amount the life of the perfidious spy.

Sholto Douglas was proposed and seconded amidst great cheering, and then Pozzlethwaite rose to speak. I do not very well recollect what he said, for I had quite enough to do in thinking about, myself, and the Honourable Paul would have conferred a material obligation upon me, if he had talked for an hour longer. At length my turn came.

"Electors of Dreepdaily!" —

That was the whole of my speech, at least the whole of it that was audible to any one human being. Humboldt, if I recollect right, talks in one of his travels of having somewhere encountered a mountain composed of millions of entangled snakes, whose hissing might have equalled that of the transformed legions of Pandemonium. I wish Humboldt, for the sake of scientific comparison, could have been upon the hustings that day! Certain I am, that the sibilation did not leave my ears for a

fortnight afterwards, and even now, in my slumbers, I am haunted by a wilderness of asps! However, at the urgent entreaty of M'Corkindale, I went on for about ten minutes, though I was quivering in every limb, and as pale as a ghost; and in order that the public might not lose the benefit of my sentiments, I concluded by handing a copy of my speech, interlarded with fictitious cheers, to the reporter for the Dreepdaily Patriot. That document may still be seen by the curious in the columns of that impartial newspaper.

I will state this for Sholto Douglas, that he behaved like a perfect gentleman. There was in his speech no triumph over the discomfiture which the other candidates had received; on the contrary, he rather rebuked the audience for not having listened to us with greater patience. He then went on with his oration. I need hardly say it was a national one, and it was most enthusiastically cheered.

All that I need mention about the show of hands is, that it was not by any means hollow in my favour.

That afternoon we were not quite so lively in the Committee-room as usual. The serenity of Messrs Gills, M'Auslan, and Shanks, – and, perhaps, I may add of myself – was a good deal shaken by the intelligence that a broadside with the tempting title of "*Full and Particular Account of an interview between the Clique and Mr Dunshunner, held at Nanse Finlayson's Tavern, on Friday last, and how they came to terms. By an Eyewitness,*" was circulating like wildfire through the streets. To have been beaten by a Douglas was nothing, but to have been so artfully entrapped by a bauldy!

Provost Binkie, too, was dull and dissatisfied. The reception he had met with in his native town was no doubt a severe mortification, but the feeling that he had been used as a catspaw and implement of the Clique, was, I suspected, uppermost in his mind. Poor man! We had great difficulty that evening in bringing him to his sixth tumbler.

Even M'Corkindale was hipped. I own I was surprised at this, for I knew of old the indefatigable spirit and keen energy of my friend, and I thought that with such a stake as he had in the contest, he would even have redoubled his exertions. Such, however, was not the case.

I pass over the proceedings at the poll. From a very early hour it became perfectly evident that my chance was utterly gone; and, indeed, had it been possible, I should have left Dreepdaily before the close. At four o'clock the numbers stood thus: —

	DREEPDAILY.	DROUTHIELAW.	KITTLEWEEM.
Douglas,	94	63	192
Pozzletwaite,	59	73	21
Dunshunner,	72	19	7
Majority for Douglas, 196.			

We had an awful scene in the Committee-room. Gills, who had been drinking all day, shed copious floods of tears; Shanks was disconsolate; and M'Auslan refused to be comforted. Of course I gave the usual pledge, that on the very first opportunity I should come forward again to reassert the independence of the burghs, now infamously sacrificed to a Conservative; but the cheering at this announcement was of the very faintest description, and I doubt whether any one believed me. Two hours afterwards I was miles away from Dreepdaily.

I have since had letters from that place, which inform me that the Clique is utterly discomfited; that for some days the component members of it might be seen wandering through the streets, and pouring their husky sorrows into the ears of every stray listener whom they could find, until they became a positive nuisance. My best champion, however, was the Editor of the Patriot. That noble and dauntless individual continued for weeks afterwards to pour forth Jeremiads upon my defeat, and stigmatised my opponents and their supporters as knaves, miscreants, and nincompoops. I was, he maintained, the victim of a base conspiracy, and the degraded town of Dreepdaily would never be able thereafter to rear its polluted head in the Royal Convention of Burghs.

Whilst these things were going on in Dreepdaily, I was closeted with M'Corkindale in Glasgow.

"So, then, you have lost your election," said he.

"And you have lost your wife."

"Neither of the two accidents appear to be irreparable," replied Robert.

"How so? Do you still think of Miss Binkie?"

"By no means. I made some little inquiry the day before the election, and discovered that a certain nest-egg was enormously exaggerated, if not altogether fictitious."

"Well, Bob, there is certainly nobody like yourself for getting information."

"I do my best. May I inquire into the nature of your future movements?"

"I have not yet made up my mind. These election matters put every thing else out of one's head. Let me see – August is approaching, and I half promised the Captain of M'Alcohol to spend a few weeks with him at his shooting-quarters."

"Are you aware, Dunshunner, that one of your bills falls due at the Gorbals Bank upon Tuesday next?"

"Mercy upon me, Bob! I had forgotten all about it."

I did not go to the Highlands after all. The fatigue and exertion we had undergone rendered it quite indispensable that my friend Robert and I should relax a little. Accordingly we have both embarked for a short run upon the Continent.

Boulogne-sur-Mer.

12th August 1847.

THE CRUSADE OF THE CHILDREN

Some years ago, while the pastoral charge of the little Saxon village of Grönstetten, from some neglect in the proper authorities, remained vacant, that neighborhood was visited by a strange religious epidemic. It had formerly, indeed, been one of the most cheerful places; standing together, house by house, in the midst of a large, well cultivated plain, on which the fields, scarcely marked out from one another save by neighbourly tokens, stretched with their green level to the side, of the woods, only varied by the different colours of the several crops. The little old church, surrounded by a few spreading trees, stood at the end of the village on some higher ground, raising its gilded steeple into the blue air, so that it always seemed to be touched by an evening sun. Neither wall nor fence was to be seen, and the surrounding level looked like the single farm of a brotherhood; the peasants, noticing of a fine Sunday afternoon how the season had advanced their wheat or flax, appeared to a stranger almost as much interested in one patch as in another. Various games and exercises went on amongst the young men and boys after work and school hours, on the piece of common near the churchyard, while the young maidens and the old people with their children stood by. Nowhere were holidays, occasions of marriage, and old festival traditions more fondly kept; in every house at Christmas, while snow was on the ground and on the bare woods, the window shone so brightly against the icicles hanging from the roof, as the Christmas-tree, with its prettily-adorned branches, was lighted-up; and the whole united family surprised each other with carefully prepared gifts. Then at Easter time, when spring was bursting out of trees and earth, and the birds beginning to sing again, you might have seen with what joy the children rolled their coloured paschal eggs along the grass, parents entering into their feelings with smiles. It was a serious business for them to dress and water the graves under the church wall, wreathing the small head-stones with garlands of fresh wild-flowers, gathered about the ruins of the old castle, which rose on a neighbouring height. Nor did many evenings ever pass that there was not some meeting of the young people in one of the village houses, where the girls brought their spindles, or pieces of cloth to make a bedcover for the dame; while the youths stood by to seize the opportunity for sundry advances of rustic courtship. All this gaiety was by no means inconsistent with the industry in which this resembled other villages of the district; and as little did it result from any want of earnestness and serious thought in matters of religion, or in the attendance upon those services to which the church in due season called every one. For it was while the venerable old pastor lived, that this state of things lasted at Grönstetten. The good man himself diffused by his presence among them, as well as by his precepts, a spirit not only of devotion, but of cheerfulness; nor would he have failed, in case of any causeless absence from church, or on occasion of a breach of morality, to visit, and faithfully reprove the offender. Even after his death, when the services were only occasionally performed by strangers, the change of feeling in the village would not have occurred, but for some other circumstances; doubtless the people themselves possessed sufficient independence and ground of faith to pursue their lives according, to the true temper of rational men, had none interfered with them.

But, about this time, there came frequently to Grönstetten several preachers of a new and almost unknown sect, and of a cast altogether different from what the people had been accustomed to. These persons considered that in time past at Grönstetten all had been in a manner spiritually dead; that men there, indeed, were as good as asleep to all eternal realities, or were at best dreamers of false peace. Not only did they, in their fervid addresses, exaggerate the vileness of human nature, and set it against itself, but the idea of goodness placed by them before the mind, seemed one wholly different from its own direction of progress, if not altogether unattainable. Many simple natural affections were by them almost represented as sinful, while they looked upon the customary diversions in the light of unholy levities, and upon the old holiday practices as traditions quite heathenish. In short, the heaven to which they pointed so mystically, appeared to consist in an utter contrast to all conceptions

which were ever formed on earth, to every joy which had been felt by men, even in their moments of purest contact with each other and nature; the reward of some great sacrifice and toil, which were to be undergone. There was much talk of strange, unutterable changes to take place on the earth, for which preparation was to be made; and the new preachers exulted in the interpretation of prophecies, which they fancied could be understood beforehand, in making men uneasy at thought of all outward coming of the Lord, of wars, and destruction, which would make the world worse than ever it had been. Their meeting-house, opened in an old barn, was at first frequented chiefly by women, since the men and older people had a natural dislike to innovation; but eventually the very newness of the doctrine began to gain ground for it, and the fact of its being so distinct from that of the late pastor, only tended to reflect upon his memory. There is, certainly, something in our nature, by which those things most opposed to it, as in a kind of fascination at times lay hold of it; so in hateful dreams or ghost-fears. Especially if the soul be not regularly furnished with supplies of healthy and cheerful enlightenment; and thus it was that this kind of unearth-like religion, imported by men of zeal for the most part sincere and also assisted by sympathy with other places in the neighbourhood, exerted so much influence at the village of Grönstetten. The first symptom of this was exhibited in a certain secret discomfort at home, a sense of division between persons of the same household, which made them look strangely and wonderingly on each other. It seemed, indeed, to be a principal and favourite object of the new-comers to gain over the female members; they aimed their chief blow at the family sacredness, alleging the words, "I am come to set the husband against the wife, the son against the father, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." People came to feel nature also as discordant with themselves; the very grass and trees, and the quietness of the air, seemed to many not so good as before; the mute, inanimate things appeared almost as so many tempting wiles of a hidden power which was below, working through all, and meaning man evil. One would have thought, as they stood listlessly at their doors of an evening, looking beyond into the distance, that they would have taken up staff or scrip and set out on pilgrimage, had they but known where to go, or what to do. After all, however, this state of matters wore itself out, and gradually returned to something like the former; nor would any one have been the worse, rather, in truth, a little wiser, upon the eventual settlement of a new pastor at Grönstetten. Only, indeed, that a few who had not joined in the late feeling, and who had previously been united to their neighbours by intercourse, had for the time seemed to be excluded from their better sympathies, became more worldly, and were inclined to scoff at holy things. As in all cases of extremes, the bad had grown more addicted to vice, none stretching out to them a better hand; and it was long ere a reviving sense of brotherhood did much to raise them higher.

Still the most peculiar feature of this excitement was, that, as if its impulse must extend through every class, the younger people latterly showed signs of a religious emotion, yet stronger and more remarkable than in those less subject to impressions from their years. What they saw and heard in others had sunk into the children's minds, which brooded upon it as if upon the sense of some dispeace, and contradiction at the heart of domestic forms; as if to their clearer instinct various inconsistencies in the practice of life, nay in the parental relations, had been revealed; yet for which the true remedy had been by them misconceived. This appeared with many of them partly in the shape of impatience to go forth into the world, a weariness when the sun light, shining into the cottage, stole from chair to chair, and the clock ticked monotonously against the wall. Something that was to be done and suffered seemed to lie far without; the object of their lives and souls, from which friends, parents, with their daily earth-customs, were tyrannically withholding them. But chiefly, perhaps, from ill-judged, dealing with this vague desire, was it frequently betrayed in enthusiastic words, in a sort of unaccountable, ecstasy in trances, which some reckoned prophetic. Instead of the life-like, careless, childish games, and little quaint devices, which formerly enlivened the house or open air, they gathered together praying, as if for the fulfilment of an unspeakable distant longing; they went up the street, or across the fields, singing devout hymns. One or another at home would stand up by the table,

unabashed by the presence of elder people, and speak from the seeming influence of some internal communication, mystical, half-articulate words, and piously-sounding reproofs or exhortations. It was in vain to chide or chastise them; trustful obedience, humility, content with home, simple duties, cheerful playfulness, were during this interval gone. Parents expected every day to see the childish train assemble and depart from the village on some rapture-wandering; and they were careful every night to lock the doors, and see their family in bed.

None had watched throughout the course of this remarkable visitation, more unaffected by its power than the steadfast, intelligent old Wendel, schoolmaster of Grönstetten; but, especially, he observed its effect upon his own peculiar charge with no small measure of careful anxiety. One fine afternoon, towards the end of school-time, he dismissed the children from their tasks, and gathering them around his seat near the open casements, intimated his intention of relating to them a story from true history, as was occasionally his custom. The old dame his wife, and his daughter, were seated behind him with their work; and the venerable gray-haired man looked cheerfully on the crowd of sober young faces in front, as if he would have diffused somewhat of the spirit of childhood again from his own experience into their innocence. A book from which he had been reading at mid-day lay upon his little desk. Far beyond, out in the upper air shown through the window, a golden sunlight came over the cool green woods, and fell upon the gray towers of the old ruined castle of Grönstetten.

"Children," said he, "yonder old castle takes us back in thought to the time of which I would speak. You must know, that in the old time things were very different from what they are now, although the same green earth and blue air enclosed between them men and children who were at heart the same as ourselves. However, the world was then in great darkness and ignorance: there were no books for children, nor picture's such as you have here to show you what is in other countries; nor were there any schools except for churchmen. The good Heavenly Father, who is always teaching men, doth it by degrees; and for a long time it was only the priests and learned clerks who knew any thing of what God had been doing with the world. This knowledge remained chiefly in their heads; but when the help of strong arms against unbelievers was needed, the time came in which warriors and people also were partly let into the secret. The heart of all Christendom was stirred with the thought that pilgrims were denied access to the place where such great matters had been transacted, and that the holy ground of our Saviour's burial was in the keeping of infidels, as if once more the stone which had been rolled away was put back, and Christ were buried again. Warriors and workmen, having now a part, as it were, in the Church, set out in multitudes to rescue Jerusalem. It was then, too, that the Lord of Grönstetten left his castle, seeking to expiate many a crime he had committed by travelling so many leagues, and striking so many blows. All this was, no doubt, calculated to teach those who went, and those to whom they afterwards returned, not to place their heaven on earth, nor to make up for concerns of the soul by bodily things; when they found, *there* also, enemies of flesh and blood, and after all the sepulchre empty. Long after this, when the enthusiasm of men about the Holy Land was beginning to fail, and they were looking for the road to Heaven in other ways, the lingering spirit which had once led them forth, seemed to descend in a simpler and purer way into the hearts of children. You may be sure that to Them at home, where all lessons and thoughts were learnt out of the shape of visible things, the sight of those brilliant pageants ever passing towards the East – the tales of pilgrims who came from thence – had been to them as a longing dream. The natural feeling of the young is like that of a heaven near to them – of a holy delight to be at once gained, and without conception of the long, difficult way between, or even of the real entrance to it. The firmament which lies overhead appears to descend upon the very earth at a distance, and all visions and radiant things to issue from an everlasting morning source that is attainable. They know not how, in reality, the natural world is rounded upon itself, so that over every particular spot a continual morn, noon, evening, and night are indeed breaking, and that only in this same station should the life of each individual be best carried out, not leaving it, but accepting there every quiet degree of heaven. At this period of which I speak it became more and more the fashion of the Church, and of those

who made pictures or images for shrines, to represent the Saviour as a young child in the arms of Mary his mother. For priests and grown men, the patron was Madonna; whereas Jesus seemed to have himself become again a little Child, appealing finally to the hearts of children. When the Holy City and its land were relapsing once more into the hands of Moslems, many beheld visions and dreams of the Virgin, who, with a sad and pleading face, held out her son, or appeared to be vainly attempting to approach his grave. In France, Italy, and the south of our own German land, children and young people, as if without conference between each other, began very generally to imitate that desire which was already passing away from older persons. They took vows, and banded themselves together to deliver the Holy Land from bondage; nor were there wanting monks and priests who encouraged this emotion, proclaiming that God had chosen the weak things of this earth to confound the strong; and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings would perfect praise. Sometimes you might have seen parents, who in their ignorance partook of this enthusiasm, yoking their oxen to rude carts, and, with their children seated on their household goods, leaving home to find out the Holy Land; and at every city which they came in sight of, the children would shout joyfully, asking if that were Jerusalem. But in one part of Germany at least those vague wishes were drawn out at last into action by the mysterious visits of one, attired like a palmer, with staff and scallop-shell, who passed from house to house, declaring the Divine call. At his voice, the group playing merrily by the wayside was changed into a throng of serious figures: fathers and mothers who returned from church or market found that this strange wayfarer, during their absence, had stood at their hearth. In their longing to be concerned in some behest more pure and worthy than those which were enjoined by earthly friends, the young regarded all common tasks as trivial; they forgot their own childhood in this phantom-Christ who seemed to call them away. The trees and roofs of home! – what were they to the spires and palms of that Jerusalem? And they looked upon the old people as foolish utterly. To the parents, truly this loss of love between them and those they had nourished was very dreadful – this Heaven, that would alienate and draw away their offspring into it, yet had no reference to their own hopes and wishes! In our times, the wise father knows how better to deal with such inexperienced dreams, which indeed are now rather more apt to represent this living world too brightly than to scorn it for spiritual objects; he suffers the boy to take time and find out the reality. But in those days heaven and earth were confounded; they knew not with what words or means to disprove these fancies; there was no world of books wherein the young soul might spend its superfluous thought and distinguish facts from ideas. Thus had they recourse only to outward watchfulness; to locking doors, and separating the children from their companions, whereby the more proud and wilful were but more confirmed. They waited for escape, and got away even by making holes in the walls; issuing forth from home as to a festival procession, which, swelling by degrees to many thousands, was heard passing by the villages, and on toward the East. The eldest was not more than eighteen, while numbers there were of far tenderer years, who, singing as they went, travelled under guidance only of the sky, as each morning it lightened up with radiance, and marked some especial valley or mountain-path as the last verge of a golden Orient. From towns or castles they held apart, sustained merely by the fruits of the earth, or by the gifts of solitary peasants, who rejoiced to offer food to the holy pilgrimage, while at the same time they carefully shut in their own children until it was long out of sight. But as the country grew around them more waste and desert, as they traversed wide, lonely, and barren plains, deep forests, or toilsome hills, the case became different. Some, scattered from the rest, lost their way; others, from weariness and hunger alone, dropped down and died – boys and girls, who in that hour only remembered the bitterness of their mothers' hearts for their loss. Still the main body continued to press forward, encouraged by some bolder spirits amongst them, or by the steadfast, confiding faith of others; for it was the youngest often who seemed to be filled with such patient constancy, so ineffable a sense of Divine aid, that they would scarce have hesitated to cross the deep river on foot, or to throw themselves from the loftiest precipices. Ever and anon, beyond some rude ascent, the broad level of the earth would stretch before them to the silvery horizon, so bright, so green,

so beautiful, that methought it was the border of a holier country. Or when the rainbow suddenly spanned the distance with its vivid arch, those who were foremost appeared to the last already to be entering through its gate of triumph into a land of glorious colours, of celestial transfiguration. Then would the stragglers press on in haste to make up with them, but only in time to mix with the crowd which now stood shivering and confused in the shadow of that cloud from which the meteor had passed away. Nevertheless, who could doubt but that the land which they sought, which had been attained by so many multitudes before, truly existed? Were not all these things but signs of its being – tokens that beckoned onward, or difficulties they were to conquer? And when at length the hearts of the children, hitherto sustained by fellow-feeling and the deep excitement of their imagination, did sink down utterly before these hardships, in ignorance of their way – when they had begun to think wistfully each of his own home, with its little daily tasks – then there appeared mysteriously, to guide them, the form of that unknown palmer who had first called them forth. It boots not to follow, step by step, their after wanderings – the further evils which befel them – by what weary ways, by what disappointments, and what incitements they were encountered, until – still led by that strange messenger, whether man, or fiend, or angel – they reached the coasts of the sea. For there, indeed, was the dream of those children bitterly dispelled; there they found a city where men spoke and thought only of buying and selling – where they lived to get gold. Thither, in truth, there came many barks from the East – from that region which had appeared to the children full only of thoughts and sacred mysteries; but the vessels were laden with silks and spices for the rich and noble at home. And, alas! lamentable was the fate of the young pilgrims, falling into the avaricious hands of those, who perchance had heard of their childish visions to draw them thus forth into their power. Because they had nothing else but their beloved gold to exchange for the costly products of the East, those merchants did not scruple even to send to Moors and Saracens for slaves these poor youthful victims who had so delivered themselves up. The Ships were filled with many Christian children, who were thus borne by the wind and sea, as it were, into a region of utter doubt and evil – having cause almost to regard all old beliefs as falsehood, and all men as pitiless and unfriendly. It is sad, my children, to think how true these things were; that so many fair young maidens, who had been their fathers' and mothers' pride, were forced to brook the will of Turkish lords, growing up forgetful of that faith, which became to them as an early, foolish vision; that so many once happy boys should wear away their lives in bondage beneath that very air which they had fancied holier than their own. Yet these had all issued forth in joyous expectation, filled with the hope of heaven. For so it is always on this earth, that happiness and goodness are really to be derived for us human beings through the commonest things. Not far away, nor in any thing which we cannot easily do, but nearer and nearer every day to home, and what we are concerned with, is the Joy, the Peace which glimmers out of every living thing. When you hear of God and heaven, you ought not to think of these as having any meaning separated from direct, unhesitating, simple life – since God is in every growing leaf about us, no less than in the sky; and there is a part of heaven revealed in each right action of this day, in each smile of approval from your parents, and in all temperate earthly joys. Had these unhappy children continued but at home, believing like children that what was good for those older than they was good for themselves also, – looking through their parents at life and death, the necessities of home would have ever drawn round them a line of certainty, sufficient even amidst that unfavourable ancient time. But as it was, they were plunged all at once into a state of complete helplessness, where yesterday had no connexion with today's work, where there was nothing to remind them of their former selves, only that their wish to wander forth to fairer scenes now exchanged for a sick heart-longing after Home, in which many pined away. However, there was One of the captive youths at Tunis to whom this Thought of the spot he had so foolishly left became gradually a sort of nourishment and support, as it grew more clear and fond. Even after his religious belief, for want of the due confirmation, had almost died away, or yielded to his Moorish master's commands, yet the recollection of childish years came in its place, growing and strengthening the more the longer his captivity endured. In his

master's train did this youth visit first Mecca, which followers of the Prophet consider holy, and finally also Jerusalem itself. In the latter place, which, so many years before, he and his companions had ignorantly set out to reach, he now was struck with painful wonder, both at all things there, and at himself. Nothing more beautiful or holy was there here than elsewhere. The fields, the woods, and the hut where he was born were, in his mind, fairer far than this pale, scattered city, with its deep, dark valleys of tombs, into which the gray Desert crept. Almost a scorn of all beliefs flashed upon him as he saw the dusty pilgrims prostrate around a piece of silent stone in the church of the Sepulchre, while the turbaned faces of the Moslem sneered behind. Only there still abode in his heart *one* deep holy Thought, which seemed alone to contain many others unknown – the thought of that one place on earth which had been the source to him of pure feelings, and where he had once been so near to some different beginning of life. It appeared to him that *it* indeed was worthy to make a pilgrimage to, and that, if he could again return thither, he should from it behold the true opening into things which were at present to him dead and unintelligible. The last hope of his better nature had, as it were, passed unnoticed over his head, and now shone far behind, instead of in the airy future; and thus be remembered how, long ago, on their childish adventure, he had seen with misgiving the Eastern morning sun before them renew its splendour over again in the West.

"At last, accordingly, this same wanderer did escape from thralldom, and come back to his native Germany. On reaching the place where his father's little hut had stood, by the side of the clear forest stream, which he remembered well, yet he found it gone, to the very threshold-posts. The clear stream ran past still under the old tree roots, and the entrance into the wood was there; but nothing remained of the dwelling whence he had stolen forth in the early morning to join the children's march, before its blue smoke had risen up over the forest top against the sky. There arose within him clearly, as he stood in a bitter trance, every little circumstance of the household; – what his father and his mother were; the common and quiet joy, without words, which he knew not till then had been hidden in sleep, and in meal-times, and in trifling acts; the happiness which he now felt would have grown daily out of helping them in their declining years. Yet these had been forsaken for a dream, excited perchance by evening radiance on the hills, by bright skies seen through the trees, by distant sounds, the very delight of which was lost when home was left. He stood close at hand, and, notwithstanding, the whole was more irrecoverable than ever – the open air came down to the foundations, and was spread across the chamber floor. The late dead forest was now putting forth its green buds – the grass was verdant with the spring – flowers were blossoming in it – birds were singing – and all nature was warmly bursting up again into full life after winter. The bells of the convent near rang loudly for the vesper-service, as it was Easter-day, the festival of Resurrection; and when the wanderer turned round the forest, he beheld village children rolling on the grass their coloured Paschal eggs. In these many years the unhappy departure of him and his companions had been forgotten. All were rejoicing because of some nameless cheer. But at the door of one cottage there sat an old pair upon a wooden bench, enjoying the warm evening air, and gazing at the children – while a young maiden, their daughter, stood behind in the doorway, her fair hair tinged with the golden light. These good people accosted the wanderer kindly, for they saw that his features were darkened by hotter suns; and it seemed to them that perhaps, he was a pilgrim and had been in the East. Their greeting was in accordance with the custom at that season of Easter, and they said, 'Peace be with you – Christ is risen,' expecting the usual answer – 'Yea, he is risen indeed.' But the wanderer stared blankly upon them and the young girl, wondering, in truth, as all the events of his past life came fast upon his mind, and as he recollected the old feelings with which he had set out from home. For a deep mystery of Home appeared at that moment to be revealed to him; he almost understood why it was vain, and had been to him vain, to seek abroad for that which all the while was nearest of all things to the soul. Yet, on the other hand, the old people were much surprised, when he told them that night of his wanderings, how it was that he who had visited the Sepulchre itself, did not perceive there best that the Saviour was risen. And it could perhaps only be thoroughly apprehended by the returned pilgrim himself, when once more

there arose for him a home on the spot where his father's cottage had stood, and when it was shared with him by that fair young maiden whose countenance had first again restored to him the conception of life which he had lost. For then it was that, in the fulfilment of common simple necessities, in unquestioning intercourse with natural things, and in gradual progress to the holy grave, he felt truly how the pure and complete hope of happiness proceeds out of the bosom of human life; how the desire of goodness must be drawn out of real experience; and how enthusiasm disproportioned to its object is dangerous and false. It was thus, my children," said the old schoolmaster, looking round them all in succession, "that one of the children who sought the Holy Land far off, was taught to seek it near at hand; and that perhaps many knights and pilgrims of the Crusade may have found it on their return. And the mistakes of that period are doubtless capable of their benefit to us.

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