

INTRODUCTION.

GLEN — is a quiet valley, fertile and populous. It lies in —shire, beyond the Tay. I purposely suppress the name, that its immunity from public attention may be preserved. Peaceful and unthought of by the great world beyond its boundaries, as it lay amid the hills, when, a child, I first knew it, so lies it now; and I see no good to follow from giving its name. Glenaldie will suit my purpose.

The valley is ten miles long from north-east to south-west, and its average breadth is about two miles. Its immediate boundaries are rising grounds of varying elevation, which, at some points of the northern boundary, start into the altitude of the hills, of which in reality they are only the advanced works. On that side the heights give views of a fine mountain range, stretching away to the north and west, not far distant, but still far away, over intervening miles of heath and peat-hag, of crag and ravine. To some parts of this mountain-landscape there is added the sombre green of the ancient fir-wood, lending a sort of funereal character to the scene, otherwise solemn in its quiet grandeur. The heights to

the south afford no such prospect. They look out on undulating wood and heath sloped off to the southward, with "the Braes of Langrig" in the south-west background. The flanking heights suddenly approximate at the north-east end of the glen, shooting out rugged spurs across the low ground, making the entrance to the valley both narrow and tortuous. These spurs are clothed with birch and hazel, and, at top, with pine. Indeed, all along the environing heights, clumps of wood are irregularly scattered, diversifying the aspect and colour of the scene. At certain seasons the colouring is gorgeous, and the valley seems bound with fringe of gold. That is in early May, when the gorse, with its resplendent flowers, lights miles on miles of the summits. At the south-west end of the valley the two chains of hills diverge more than before, and, then, they finally slope away to the south and west. There, where the ridges cease to present their definite outline, a range of hill is interjected from the west, terminating the strath at that end by a precipitous eminence of crag, 600 feet high, which takes its name from the valley, and is—I shall say—Benaldie. On it, also, the mountain-pines start spectre-like from crevices, and, clustered on its summit, crown it with clumps twisted and deformed. On each side of Benaldie flows or tumbles a stream from the hills beyond; now brawling brooks, now foaming, seething, torrents, as summer suns or winter tempests exhaust or swell them. Wandering in devious courses into the strath for a mile or two from Benaldie, they unite their waters,

and thereafter sweep on through the valley with the composure and importance of matrimonial life, until, reaching the north-east, the combined waters have to crush, and rush, and tumble, through the obstacles which there present themselves.

The valley, I have said, is fertile. Possibly at one time the whole strath was a great lake basin, before the waters found a way seawards to the north. This small fact remains, that in great floods, when rain on the hills sends down the streams "in spate," and the narrow outlet between the rocks is insufficient to drain off the increased waters, they swell thereabouts into a small lake, rendering the lands, for several hundred acres around, a marsh in winter. Here "the carse" in summer yield luxuriant pasture, which takes the browsing cattle deep to their hocks. Put whatever may be the ancient secret of its fertile loam, numerous comfortable farm-steads bespeak the value of the soil, and assure us that, at least to the possessors of these steadings, the tilling of the earth is no unmitigated curse. These farm-steads, too, contribute in no small degree to diversify the valley's beauty. Here, with bulky if not ornate architecture, crowning a grassy knoll on the river bank; there, peeping from a clump of orchard-trees; at every short interval sending up the flaky, curling smoke from comfortable hearths, among the ash-trees, into the clear blue sky, they break the agricultural monotony of field and fence.

An enterprising and independent body of men are

the farmers—or tacksmen, as they are pleased to style themselves, methodical, careful, and, as a class, hard of head, and heart, and hand. Rents are high, and rigid thrift of management is necessary for the maintenance of that moderate “state and style,” which the greater ones affect, or for the filling of kitchen, and larder, and purse, which the larger number reasonably set for their object. They are intelligent, but not intellectual; acute as to the relative values of manures and seeds; but insensitive to the pungent odours, seeds of disease, which steam in the bothies of their “horsemen;” keenly alive to the improvement of the bone and muscle of the animals they rear and sell; little regardful of the amelioration of the peasants whose lives are spent in tending and feeding the fostered “stock.” Good-hearted and well-disposed, they are entitled to be accounted; but, still, they regard any increase of wages to their labourers, or any fall of price of produce, with a very selfish horror,—a class highly to be commended withal.

A great road from the north runs through the valley, entering by the pass through which the river finds its outlet. A mile from the base of Benaldie it branches into two roads, which run in distant windings, one southwards, into and through the parish of Langrig, the other westward through the solitary hills. Immediately north-east of where these roads separate stands the village of Glenaldie, commonly known as “Kirktown of Glenaldie.” It occupies a sunny plateau on the

northern side of the strath, widest here, just where the hills die away, and the valley expands southward to Langrig and opens out above Benaldie to the western hills. The village is essentially a peasant village, uncontaminated by railway or telegraph. It contains about 700 souls. "The larachs," or building-stances, stretch along the road in prolonged disorder, for no feuing plan regulated the early years of the village. Irregularity of architecture and position is consequently the leading feature of its buildings. Here a thatch-roofed cottage abuts on the line of road, there a clay-built bothy presents its soot-permeated gable to the passer-by. A few better and more comfortable houses there are, built a short way back from the street or road, rendered pleasant to look at by a few shrubs or trees in the space in front. This better class of dwellings is now, however, chiefly to be found at the east end of the village, in that modern part thereof—"the Square." Here are the Inn, the shop of the principal merchant, the residence of the doctor, my good friend Blake, and of others, the principal inhabitants. Portions of the sites in the Square are still unbuilt on. The straggling street stretches westward from it; while parallel to the street and to the north of it, stands a line of very humble cottages in all stages of progressive decay. The very poor ones of the people dwell there. It is "the Back Street." Just where the roads diverge, and on the south side of the main road, is the site of my cottage, but it is of little

interest for the present. A hundred yards westward from it, and to the north of the western road, stands the Kirkhill, on which the parish school is situated, and a little further west are the Church and Manse of Glenaldie. Down by the foot of the Kirkhill, a tiny, brawling brooklet tumbles. Crossing the road by a conduit, it flows eastward in front of my cottage grounds, and onwards for some way along the road, till, bending southward into the valley, it is caught in the mill-dam, which works Glenaldie Mill a quarter of a mile further down.

I know every man, woman, and child of the village; and it is in them, and not in the village or valley, that I wish to interest you. Have they any special points of interest? I am not aware of it. I believe them to be of the ordinary sort of Scottish villagers, neither better nor worse.

How little is known of these lowly ones! The reading world at least knows our peasants very remotely. Indeed, since the truth is that the kindest-hearted of us have but little knowledge of the liveried or well-dressed domestics whom we see hourly, how can it be expected that we should have an intimate knowledge of the ungainly and soil-daubed labourers in provincial fields, or any sympathy for their joys or sorrows or lives? When our writers treat of humble life in cities, it appears that they mostly know not what they describe. Commonly it is caricature—"High life below stairs." Yet sometimes a

great writer condescends to give to the world genuine specimens of the world's humble ones, and then the world is or ought to be the better for it. I am little skilled in writing, and am unknown; but I desire to elicit your sympathies for our peasants, by picturing their lives as I know them. The working man of our cities has ample attention. I think he has been too much made of. I entreat attention for a class whose mute endurance and patient suffering and toil, from age to age, are sufficient guarantees that humane consideration and ample sympathy for them will involve small risk of spoiling either their heads or hearts.

And that the pictures of peasant life which follow may be understood, it is reasonable that I should here sketch briefly the usual life of the mass of the peasantry; and, to do so methodically, I must take a peasant in babyhood, thus to begin at the beginning. I need not tell you that, like his congeners, he is then helpless and puling, needing the same daily ablutions and long sleeps. He does not, however, die off in infancy at the same rate as the young ones in our cities. I will not positively say from what this arises. His mother is not usually a tender-handed female. His father has seldom much time or heart to bestow on "the bairn." Yet that the infants of the rural population perish in less numbers than those in towns appears well established. Even with regard to "natural children" the same rule appears to hold good; and the intelligent Registrar of Glenaldie parish has remarked to me, "Thae weans live as lang at least as

the Sherra's decree" (for their maintenance). Probably this greater immunity from death in infancy results from the superior physical condition of the parents, and from the amount of fresh air which the infant inhales. The treatment which the baby receives is, if not tender, generally fair. In summer and harvest a nursing mother is not seldom found in the turnip or harvest field, earning her daily bread, while her infant lies at "the head-rig" snugly enveloped in numerous petticoats. Gazing on such a bundle, kicking lustily in vain effort to develop itself and burst into the sunshine, I have thought that, compared with the infant of the slums and cellars of cities, our poor babe had a great advantage, sucking or squalling in pure invigorating air; gazing, when it can gaze, on green field and blue sky; always secure of reasonable care; for our young women very rarely taste drink, and I never knew one addicted to it. The infants are weaned in the twelfth month generally. Then the daily washings are discontinued, and God knows when the creature is wholly cleansed thereafter.

The child's home is not a dwelling to be commended. When built of stone it is circumscribed of area, slimly constructed, and rarely plastered within. If it contains a "but and a ben," that is, a room on each side of "the trance," or lobby, it is a superior fabric; and the people are reckoned "well-to-do," who have both rooms, small as they are. In such a house the parents usually sleep in the "ben" room, while the younger people are huddled together "but," in the

kitchen or family room. Other houses consist of "a but and a ben," each room partitioned so as to form a room and closet; and then each room and closet are occupied by a separate family. Such are the dwelling-places of married farm-servants on our best farms—such the abodes of many decent village families. But many, too many, of the cottages have only a few layers of stones bound with clay, as the foundation of the walls, the upper portion of which are wholly of divots (sods), except the chimney-stalk in the gable. In Langrig, where there are a great many crofters, a still humbler style of cottage obtains. There the dwelling-house, byre, stable, and barn, are all contained in one long low erection of divots. The dwelling-house is, of course, at one end, and is divided into apartments by wooden box-beds and similar bulky articles of furniture. There is no chimney-stalk at all, no stone work, the whole edifice is of sods. In the innermost apartment, in the centre of the floor, on stone slabs, the fire is lighted. A large iron hook (not unfrequently part of the worn-out tyre of a cart-wheel is used for the purpose) is stuck into the earthen floor, or a rope with iron hook is hung from the rafters, and supplies a means to suspend a pot. For the escape of the smoke a gap is left in the roof; but usually the smoke appears persistently to object to egress thereby. Indeed, to secure the most defective ventilation, the entrance-door is placed in the distant byre, there being no doorway into the dwelling-house proper. Thus, the visitor is first introduced into the

odorous abode of the "neat" cattle, and thence gropes his way through the barricaded beds and furniture into "the fire-room," the sitting-room of the cotter family. Of course, there is no interior plaster-work, no ceiling, and the oozy, cobwebbed, smoke-begrimed thatch stares through the rude and blackened rafters. The only light comes from a scrimp pane of glass stuck here and there into holes in the sod walls or roof. The comforts of the hearth are commonly contested, in unequal strife, by children, young pigs, dogs, and barn-fowl, which all seem equally sensible of the pleasures of the peat fire.

How can people practise cleanliness in homes like these? Warmth may be, and generally is secured. Cleanliness is out of the question. It would astonish our dwellers in city palaces, and other high places, to learn how numerous are cottages, hovels, of the class last described. In them the inhabitants have made no advance on the civilisation of three hundred years ago, unless it be that the beds are now commonly of chaff instead of moss or heath. Will our lairds and lords of the soil do nothing to help progress?

In such habitations our peasant children are reared. It is certain that it needs a great deal of the fresh air on field and hillside to counteract the reeky atmosphere of the home. But there, nurtured along with the calves and swine, and junior colley dogs, the child grows slowly into boyhood. When five or six years old, if within three miles, or other reasonable distance of a school, to school he is sent. If the school is further away, he must wait

till older. Then to school he trudges by devious ways, cart-track, or "moss-road," or how he may, with his "piece" in his pocket, his book, his slate, when he comes to use one, and, every day, from 1st October till 15th April, a peat under his arm. The peat is his daily contribution of fuel to the school fire. Books may be left at home, slates forgotten, the "piece" omitted—the peat never.

Now, as soon as the A B C is mastered, the storing of religious knowledge is commenced through that least heavenly of all roads to knowledge—the Shorter Catechism. The Testament, and next "the Bible," are regular class-books—the Old Testament being usually read in the most advanced class in "side schools." Hitherto the child has, morning and night, listened wearily to his parents (if he is the child of a crofter—if the child of a farm-servant, the parents seldom have time for such exercises) reading "the books" and at prayer, comprehending the meaning not at all. Now, the meaning is thrashed into him; and, indeed, it is not easy for such meaning to get there. Not that I take exception to the Shorter Catechism in itself. It contains an admirable code of divinity, all duly verified by "proofs," expected also to be committed to the infant heart. But why bother a poor peasant boy with a complete and terrible and unnecessary system of divinity? It makes him regard religious knowledge as disagreeable exceedingly, the hardest and most perverse of studies, the prelude to chastisement,

temporal now, with the "tawse"—eternal hereafter. For at the very threshold of the knowledge thus inculcated come "the decrees of God," from which there is no escape. I speak on this point feelingly. Long ago, in my boyhood—about six years old I was—I remember that I lay down in the cradle of my infant sister, and secretly and silently wept for hours because of these same decrees. As painful hours they were, and now as keenly impressed on me, as any hours of a long and not painless life. I had newly learned the doctrine, and understood that I might be designed for everlasting burning, and that I could not help myself. On the peasant mind the doctrine is firmly impressed, and abides for life, hushing murmurs against the hard things of the peasant's lot, even much natural murmuring against the evil results of the misdeeds of those around him as "ordaint o' the Lord's wull;" nay, even stifling right reason in his own actings, and penitence for wrongdoings, as "things he cudna wun past."

Cannot something less complex and perplexing than this catechism be devised to help our peasant boy to know God? I think there might be. Of this I am satisfied, that if one-fifth part of the drilling and whipping were employed to instil into his mind the common principles of God's law of health and happiness, much more good would come of it.

The peasant schoolboy is rarely a bad little man. He is free from the leading vices of boys in cities. He may be as poor and hungry, as tattered and forlorn, as

the veriest city Arab ; but he does not steal—unless mayhap, a turnip from the field to eat it. The love of license, which in town boys is so often exhibited in petty acts of mischief and depredation, is in him sufficiently vented in long pursuit of the hated yellow-hammer, which, he oddly believes, is or was a witch ; or by assaults (wanton) on a rookery, or (daring) on a wasp's nest. The incidents of his life are so little complex that he has small need of refuges of lies. Already the qualities which mark him in manhood distinguish him—patience under cold, or pain, or punishment ; caution and love of peace ; and that “solid-headedness” which is hard to move to emotion of any sort. Thus his ninth or tenth year finds him fit “to do a little for himself ;” and then, if the parents are poor, he leaves the school in spring, and goes off to “summer herding.” He may return to school thereafter for “a winter or two ;” but, too commonly, he has acquired all that he is destined to acquire, and at once enters on his life of labour.

If the parents are able to maintain their child without prematurely sending him to earn his own food (and this, to their credit, they strive to do), the boy remains at school till the age of twelve or thirteen—in such case really acquiring a smattering of the ordinary branches of education. The education of the female child is, however, far more desultory. She rarely advances beyond “the Bible class.” To write her name, and perhaps, a few words more ; to cipher the simple

rules of arithmetic; to slowly spell a verse or two of "the Testament"—comprise all her educational acquirements. She is too useful at home, setting the mother free for a day's labour, helping in the "redding" of home and byre, to be long spared at school. Indeed the peasants, as a body, regard education as unnecessary, if not prejudicial, to their females. I am glad to notice that, of late years, a great improvement on the old system has been begun, and that the "higher" classes, both boys and girls, in parochial and village schools, are taught something of composition, and to write to dictation. In these schools, government inspection has effected much improvement. When will a paternal government stretch its hand over the distant hill-sides?

It is singular, that, notwithstanding the inferiority of the schoolmasters in districts like this, and the difficulties in the path of the peasants, both parents and children, here and there a boy emerges from school, betakes himself to studies in lonely barn or outhouse, building on the loose foundation of knowledge lined off for him at school. Stranger still, almost self-taught, he sets off to college, and, if he succeeds in winning a bursary at the college competitions, pursues his success until he reaches the haven of a rural manse. Those who thus make their way are generally sensible men. I have seldom found them distinguished or distinguishable from their brethren in the ministry. Perhaps, such careers are just an outcome of a real spring of enterprise and power to dare

and do, common to the people generally. If so, then, in the ordinary peasant such spring and power are crushed and broken utterly. How can it be otherwise? Restricted to a narrow field, and bound to labour on it for daily bread, he has as little practical power of motion as an encrinus. Still, I think the spring is in his nature. Break the ties that bind him to his spot of earth, evict and rout him out and drive him upon the world and his resources, and the chances are that there is that within him which will make the change, which his nature shrinks from as an evil, wholly and greatly good.

But to return to our peasant: once he is fairly bound to the yoke, his toil is unremitting. In all seasons and weathers there is labour for him, until death makes labour needless, or disease or accident disables him and brings want, worse than death, to his door. It is a very fine thing for poets to sing of the pleasure and happiness of a rural life. With them our peasant seems a being wrapt, from dewy morn till vesper's glorious tints, in the enjoyment of simple but admirable delights. I wish there had been less singing and more sense in reference to our peasantry. Just consider our ploughman's summer-day life—at turnip-sowing, we shall say. Aroused from his bed at five o'clock (dewy morn, truly!) he proceeds to feed his horses, and thereafter to groom and harness them. From six till eleven he holds the plough-stilts, and guides his team. Then he houses and feeds his beasts again. Till now he has gone unfed himself,

unless in haste he swallowed a bit of dry bread while throwing on his clothes, or, more usually, supped a few spoonfuls of meal-brose. Now, at mid-day, he makes a meal of porridge and milk and bread and milk, and then goes out to discharge various little duties till one, when he re-yokes his plough and labours till six. Then he has dinner or supper, or whatever he may call his meal—brose and potatoes and bread and milk again, and lights his pipe for a quiet smoke. But not for long, for the horses have to be groomed and bedded and fed, the harness looked to, and, perhaps, a plough sock or coulter carried to the blacksmith for repair, before his day is ended. I do not say the work is severe, but it is monotonous, stupefying, slow, and lowly.

In labour like that the peasant toils to manhood through the various stages of herd, halfling—half-man, that is—lad, and ploughman. Physically he is easily described. The average rustic is above the average size, strong in proportion, with considerable power of endurance. Vicissitudes of weather seem to affect him little. Pain he often bears without flinching. But when fever besets him, he succumbs without power to rally. Probably his diet, almost wholly vegetable, unfits him to withstand typhus, scarlatina, and fevers generally. Be that as it may, certain it is that from year's end to year's end his food is meal of oats, or of bere or barley, prepared in porridge or brose or cakes; potatoes; a few turnips now and again; and milk stintingly supplied to him. He is

easily satisfied with food, and but little or not at all particular about its quality or preparation. He has no daily draught of beer, and is rarely addicted to drink. If at village or market he happens to take or to get "a bad dram," it is apt to get into his head; but he carries himself and his liquor in good-humour and peaceably, "letting off steam" by yells or shoutings or songs. In truth he is a peaceable animal. In a dull, heavy way, he is social too; affecting much, in youth, the society of his females, and, at least, decency in his attire, with a tendency to favour gorgeous colours. He is not nice in his sense of smell, nor in regard to personal cleanliness, which are, however, matters of cultivation. He rarely, during his six working days, washes hands or face until supper-time comes round. On Sunday, he washes face and neck and hands, usually before breakfast. His body never is purified. That story is altogether true which is told of the old man attacked by rheumatism "between the shoulders." The laird's wife having recommended frequent applications of cold water, he thanked God, that "cauld watter wusna on his back for forty year bygane." Thus, while careful of external appearances, only the outside of his platter is made clean—just so much as the world sees. Skins and homes are not much for the public. Who shall teach our people the sanctifying merits of water? Would they be better if taught it? Is a clean skin compatible with the grubbing of earth and manure?

Mentally, he is also easy to describe. He is slow of mind as of body; not studious of new things; and, indeed, as he advances in life, he clings to things as they are with peculiar tenacity. He is reticent of his feelings, and seldom states an opinion; perhaps he rarely forms one. Inoffensive himself, he is patient of injury. Decorous in his deportment in the sight of men, reasonably attentive to churchgoing, he develops in time into a religious man, greatly God-fearing. On the other hand, when his quiet nature is sufficiently disturbed and he is "roused," he is insensate in his wrath. Notwithstanding, too, all the good qualities ascribed to him, his religious pretences and his fear of God, he is undeniably, in his youth, open to the reproach of the registrar-general for contravention of that commandment, the breach of which, next to murder, induces the greatest amount of social sorrow and wrong. I do not mean to insinuate that he is, in this particular, a sinner above other men, but only that his sins suffice to disgrace him. It is his great blemish, but, perhaps, it is the chief blemish of mankind. It is due primarily, no doubt, to a superior physique; but his social circumstances, and some other things, contribute to the result with equal certainty.

Being constitutionally reserved and shy, when "he does a-wooing go" he prefers to woo privily, and manifests odd susceptibility if his secret is spoken of. The limited accommodation of the peasant cottages—large families occupying small rooms—favours the idiosyncrasy

of the peasant sweethearts; and hence it is the accustomed course that most of the wooing is done out of doors, in the shelter of the peat-stack or cornyard, or in barn or byre, outwith the sight of parents or friends, and in darkness. Indeed, this has come to be regarded as the privilege of true courtship, and "ingle-love" is purely platonic. To this practical facility for undue familiarity much of the evil I allude to is referable. It is a snare to the peasant—male and female.

Again, consider the case of the peasant "bothy girl." Four or five unmarried ploughmen (here we call them "horsemen") live in an out-house—some detached portion of a barn or stable at the steading. The room is barely furnished. A deal table, two or three wooden forms or "settles," two or three large "brown dishes," and a mug a-piece for the men, with a bowl or two extra, complete the inventory of furniture. The men sleep in beds fixed in two tiers along the back wall. Their wooden chests are ranged along the other walls. Such is the bothy. In this room, away from female superintendence or control, "the bothy girl" mends (makes up) the beds, cooks the men's porridge and bröse, and bakes cakes for them, fetching in their milk from the dairy-woman, and generally ministering to them. Her hours, not thus occupied, are spent at labour in the fields. Thus, thrown into the society of rough men—all very excellent lads, no doubt, but all of them possessing, more or less, the peasant's affection for female society, with that courtship-privilege of the stackyard in the background, young

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in years, untaught to fence herself against rudeness or familiarity, much less from loving blandishment—what hope of safety can you form for her? True, she has her nominal residence in “the female bothy,” a similar room occupied by the unmarried female workers on the farm. That is but a frail fence. These girls share her peril, to a large extent, without succouring her at all; and one bad girl in such a bothy may work the direst evil. My wonder is that the tale of shame and sorrow is not greatly worse.

To some extent, too, our Scottish marriage laws, or the peasant’s hazy notions of them (they perplex the College of Justice itself), operate to augment the evil. It is a common apology of the unfortunate female, “I thocht it was richt atween us. He promist me mair-ridge”—an apology generally accepted. In fact, so ordinary a thing is it to find one lapsed daughter in each peasant household, that the peasants generally have lost that fine moral sense which in better society makes the fallen woman an outcast and despised. I hold Mother Kirk, too, answerable for much of the evil state of things.

I speak with all reverence of the churches and clergy of the present. Am I safe in reflecting on their predecessors? The fact was that, a hundred years ago, offences against chastity were punished by the kirk-session of the parish by a pecuniary fine, and by the imposition of a public penance, whereby the parties, “standing in the face of the congregation,” were rebuked

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for their misdeeds. The civil law might be used to compel the submission of a recusant. But such penance undergone and the fine duly paid, the offenders were received into the bosom of the Church again, and baptism was administered to their bantlings as to the children of "believers!" Then, when a laird or other magnate fell into sin, and acknowledged it by sending the usual amount of money-penalty to the session, with "his compliments," or some such indifferent message, the reverend court was satisfied. Can it be wondered at that an offence which the Church for a century held as venial and so easily condoned, came to be considered by the people as little offensive to God himself? And when the peasant mind became imbued with this idea, so acceptable to the common temperament, ages were required to eradicate the mischievous belief; and the time requisite has not yet elapsed. Could not the clergy of to-day speak a little less to our peasantry of doctrines, and more of the practice of religion—a little more and more plainly of that cleanliness of person and life, which is akin to godliness? An annual sermon against stackyard courtship would be a good thing, worth many platitudes on "faith and grace."

But our peasants are essentially orderly, and whatever may be the errors of youth, they are married and given in marriage; and, not unfrequently, reparation by marriage covers a multitude of prior transgressions. Then, indeed, when children come, the peasant is truly *adstrictus glebæ*, his life and horizon bounded by the

land he tills, save by his views of a world to come, where labour is unknown and joy abounds.

Meantime, just as his lowly plodding work and exposure to the weather stiffen his joints, making him awkward and lumpish, so its dull routine stupefies his wits and depresses his intellect. The whole literature within his reach consists of the Bible, the Catechism aforesaid, the "Pilgrim's Progress," and, perhaps, "the Confession of Faith," and "Boston's Fourfold State." All these are commonly to be found in the cottages. Not that the peasant reads them, excepting the Bible and the Pilgrim. Over the others he usually falls asleep on Sunday afternoons, showing at once his orthodoxy and good sense. A newspaper he seldom sees, but I am sorry to say that that vile style of cheap literature, of which "Reynolds's Penny Journal" is the type, has recently found its way into our strath, and, I fear, will not tend to edification.

Our peasant's ordinary mental food are the weekly sermons, and, as life advances, he readily yields himself to them. Indeed, his early religious exercises have haunted and weighed on him all through his earlier years, making him fear to do evil, and desire to do well. He would fain be as his fathers were; and gradually he becomes studious of the ordinances of religion. He ends a God-fearing man, I am afraid too much God-fearful, mouthing doctrines and mysteries, and rigidly enforcing the Bible and Catechism on his offspring, as was done unto him in boyhood. In all this he has a

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certain satisfaction and solace. If it cannot truly be said that "He *knows* his Bible true," he *believes* it, which, perhaps, is better.

And it is reasonable and well that he should lay up treasure in heaven, seeing that his portion of this world's goods is but small. Ten or twelve pounds of money-wage, eight bolls of oatmeal, a limited supply of peats, a daily pint of skimmed milk, two or three drills of potatoes, of which, good or bad, "he takes his chance," and his cot rent-free, are the full guerdon of his year of labour. If his place of labour is within walking distance of the village, and he rents a cottage and resides there, he receives a pound or two more of wages. If accident, or disease, or the dreaded rheumatism, or old age, disables him, his lot is dependence on his children if they are able to maintain him—if not, then on the parish poors'-rate. A few there are who avoid an end so entirely pitiful, by securing, in some moment of good fortune, a croft and turf cabin on the braes. Very few, indeed, push themselves further up the social scale once they have fairly joined themselves to a life of agricultural labour.

The peasant, married, finds it more difficult to get into "service" as a ploughman than when he was single. This arises from various causes, but chiefly from unmarried men being more easily housed—the bothy is all they ask for. Few farms have spare cottage accommodation. Then, too, it does not commend itself to the farmer's mind to have a lot of children about the stead-

ing, much less can he reconcile himself to the feeling that these little ones are dependent on him, the farmer, and have advantage from their dependence. Thus it is that on large farms, "the grieve" (foreman) is usually the only married servant. Very rarely indeed are there more than two married men, the grieve and first horseman. The wife of one of them acts as dairy-woman. Both women labour in the fields in busy seasons. Thus, also, our village is chiefly filled by married peasants, whose lives of farm labour have been interrupted by marriage, and who now find precarious wages as labourers, in the draining and trenching of land, dyke-building, stone-quarrying, and as scythemen and cornbinders at haymaking and harvest.

In the village and in the strath a few tradesmen reside ; tailors and shoemakers a few, and blacksmiths and cartwrights several. They are little to be distinguished, in the ordinary case, from the peasants around them, excepting that, living by labour more or less skilled, they earn wages greater, but more precarious, than their brethren. They are marked, however, by a somewhat greater intelligence, more self-assertion, more freedom of action, and some knowledge of the world outside Glenaldie. In short, they are more like ordinary artisans, and I need not further depict them.

Such is life in our strath. The reader comprehends it fully—the dullest, dirtiest, most stupid and most vulgar of lives. Well, well, it may be even so ; but where there are human lives lived out, there there must be

joys and sorrows, pleasant things and sufferings. Who cares? I wish you to care. Therefore, I have pictured for you scenes from the life in my village. Who knows but your interest, if aroused, may be enlisted for the amelioration of the peasant life around you? If only you regard these poor ones with more kindly consideration, something will be gained. I have no theory to propound, no dogma to illustrate. I only ask your sympathy.