

CHAPTER IX.

PEDAGOGICAL.

THE parish which forms the theatre of the principal scenes in this history, if not amply furnished with the means of education, had, at any rate, the advantage of a couple of schools. There was, first of all, the parochial school; a sample of that noble institution which is understood to have done so much for the enlightenment of our native country. And I should be the last to depreciate the value of the parochial school, though I have a strong impression that the statutory dominions of a quarter of a century ago, up and down, were, as a rule, highly inefficient for educational purposes. The improvement in the general style of teaching since that time is, I also believe, much greater than is imagined by many people.

The Rev. Jonathan Tawse, of the parochial school of Pyketillim, whose name has been previously mentioned, was considered, on the whole, a superior educationist, as compared with his brethren throughout the Presbytery. What the parishioners said about him in the early part of his career was, that his ambition lay too much toward the pulpit to admit of an efficient discharge of his duties as a teacher. And certain it is that the Rev. Jonathan Tawse was not destitute of a desire to wag his pow in some particular poopit which he could call his own, as his prompt readiness to officiate for any absent or sick brother of the Presbytery testified. And he usually sought opportunity to

air his gifts still farther afield about the time of the annual vacation. It had even been bruited that he made bold, on one occasion, to offer himself in this way to the suffrages of a vacant town's congregation. But whether it was that the people were inappreciative, or patrons unaccommodating to the influence that he could command, the Rev. Jonathan Tawse settled down as a dominie, and a confirmed old bachelor, and took rather kindly and freely to toddy and snuff. I don't think that the Church lost much in respect of the Rev. Jonathan Tawse's failure to reach the dignity of formal ordination. For even in my time he preached at rare intervals in Mr. Sleekaboot's absence; and we juniors liked him; only it was for reasons which I greatly fear did not tend to edification. Firstly, his sneeshinie habits were a sort of pulpit novelty that tended to liveliness as contrasted with the stiff and demure solemnity of the usual minister. And then Mr. Tawse's services were short as compared with those of Mr. Sleekaboot. Not that he said less, either in prayer or in the sermon, but he had remarkable rapidity of utterance. There are religionists, I believe, in the East at any rate, who pray by machinery. Now, the Rev. Jonathan Tawse, in prayer, behaved exactly like an instrument which had been wound up, and must run down. With an exactitude that was remarkable, the well-worn phrases fell in in rapid succession to each other, each in its own due order, as cog answers to cog in the mill wheel and pinion. Thus were daily mercies, and the weekly returning day of rest with gratitude acknowledged; thus was our beloved Queen (a recent change from his Majesty the King) prayed for, with the high court of Parliament, the Assemblies of our national Zion, and all judges and magistrates of the land, that we (the parishioners of Pyketillim) under them might lead quiet and peaceable lives, that they might be a terror to evil doers, and a praise and protection to such as do well. Then, when Mr. Tawse came to the sermon, he tackled it with corresponding impetus. They were not new sermons that he used, but productions of a long bygone time, when he had considered himself a probationer, and they were

framed after the manner of Blair, though marked by an occasional juvenile efflorescence of style that was rather out of keeping with the now mature age of the preacher. Such as they were, Mr. Tawse read them off with a monotonous rapidity that did great violence to all those principles of elocution and punctuation which he was wont to exemplify with impressive emphasis in the audience of his pupils. The only breaks in the discourse were when he made a halt to take snuff, or when the exigencies of the case compelled him to lift his head for the purpose of blowing his nose with his speckled silk handkerchief.

But, as I have said, Mr. Tawse was reckoned an able teacher; and he laboured away in his vocation with tolerable assiduity, the monotony of the ordinary routine being broken by occasional outbursts of a rather irritable temper, and the less frequent coruscations of a sort of dry humour that lay within him. He had usually a class of two or three "Laitiners," on whom he bestowed much pains, and a good deal of chastisement. These were intended to be the parsons and lawyers of the future; only the results did not always fulfil the expectations cherished, for I could point to sundry of the Latiners of my time who, at this day, are even less reverend and learned than myself, which is saying a good deal. As to his classes generally, Mr. Tawse had not much that deserved the name of method in their management; and still less was there of thoroughness in the little that he had. English grammar was one of the modern improvements which he prided himself on having introduced, and against which not a few of the more practical sort of parents loudly protested, as implying an unwarranted curtailment of the time that should have been devoted to the more useful branches, particularly coontin. And I know of one pupil at any rate, who, being much more earnestly bent on play than work at that period of his life, managed to maintain a decent grammatical reputation and a respectable position in the class, without his having ever possessed a copy of any Grammar whatever of his own, or ever looked in the most cursory way at the day's lesson out of the im-

Jonathan Tause.



perative school hours. The mode adopted was to keep one's acquirements modestly in subordination, and of set purpose avoid being inconveniently near the top of the class. Then when lesson time drew near, one could ordinarily manage to obtain a furtive glance of some other body's beuk, and hastily scan the lesson. With the thing very fresh on the mind, and a deft calculation, based on the number between you and the top, of the particular bit you would have to repeat, you stood a fair chance of getting over the first round creditably; and that accomplished, it was your own fault if you could not get sufficiently up in the subject by the time the whole class had been gone over to enable you to meet with impunity any further demands on your erudition at the hands of the dominie. This was a practicable course with both the Grammar and "Catechis;" and in the arithmetic department it was quite possible, by judicious guess-work, and "copyin" from others as opportunity offered, to have gone well through the inevitable "Gray," rule by rule, and yet be unable to face a very plain question in Proportion or Practice without heartfelt dread, if it happened to lie outside of Mr. Gray's "examples." The annual Presbytery examination has been said to be very much of a farce. In my day it was felt to be anything but that; for we had one vehement member of Presbytery who broke freely out in scolding fits, which were much dreaded; while another had an appalling facility in scribbling down arithmetical problems that made the hair stand on end to think of, much more to face in the way of attempting their solution; and thus the yearly appearances of the "ministers" came to be the most formidable ordeal to which we were subjected. In the ordinary course we dozed away very comfortably, and the pupil who was alive to the current dodges of the time might have as much trifling and remain about as ignorant as he chose, for there was no real system of testing his acquirements, and he only needed to dread being "brought to the scratch" when some extreme aberration on his part had put Mr. Tawse in a thorough rage. Then he might expect a severe overhaul, with a certain

amount of punishment by having his lugs ruggit, the sides of his head cuffed, or a few strokes with the tawrds implanted on his palms; and thereafter things settled down again to the ordinary routine.

Now, as I have indicated, it had been felt by many judicious parishioners that the parochial school of Pyke-tillim, under Mr. Tawse, was too much of a mere high-class academy. The complaint was not that Mr. Tawse's system, as administered, was lacking in general efficiency and thoroughness, but that he "took up his heid owre muckle wi' that Laitin and Gremmar, an' ither beuk leernin—a mixter-maxter o' figures wi' the letters o' the A B C, aneuch to turn the creaturs' heids." And indeed it was cautiously averred by some, that the dominie had really driven one pupil doited by the distance he had endeavoured to lead him into the abstruse region of Mathematics. Mr. Tawse himself said the lad was a natural born dunce; that he had hoped to make a decent scholar of him by dint of hard drilling, but that his harns, after deducting the outer case, might have been contained in an eggshell, and that his own muddled stupidity was the only disaster of an intellectual kind that was ever likely to befall him. The boy was the elder son of Mains of Yawal. Of course, Mains did not relish the insinuation, and complained to Mr. Sleekaboot of Jonathan's rude style of speech.

"Oh, well, you know his temper is a little hasty; but he is a man of sterling principle, and a very competent teacher," said Mr. Sleekaboot.

"Still an' on," replied Mains, "it's nae ceevil eesage to speak that wye aifter he gat's nain gate wi' the laddie."

"In what branches has the boy failed?"

"Weel, aw cudna say; he hisna been makin naething o't; he's jist a kin' o' daumer't i' the heid like."

"He has perhaps increased his tasks too much for the boy's capacity?"

"I cudna say aboot's capacity—ye canna pit an aul' heid upo' young shou'ders, ye ken. I suppose he's jist like ither laddies."

"H—m, yes ; well, I'll speak to Mr. Tawse, and get him to modify his tasks."

"My rael opingan is," said Mains of Yawal, resolved to have a hit at Mr. Tawse, "that the dominie's nae gryte deykn at the common coontin 'imsel' ; an' that mak's 'im sae fond to get them on to some o' that rowles, that works by a kin' o' slicht o' han'."

"Sleight of hand !" said Mr. Sleekaboot, with a smile, "what works by sleight of hand ?"

"Weel, I'll tell ye, sir," answered Mains, pulling up ; "fan I wuntit him to gi'e Sawney a raith at lan' mizzourin, to qualify 'im for a lan' steward or siclike, gin it ever happen't sae—there's naebody wud ken, ye ken—he begood aboot deein't by Algaibra an' Jiggonometry, an' threepit owre me't it was sic an advantage to dee't that gate. Noo, I'm seer fan Dawvid Hadden, the grun offisher—an' there's nae a capitaller mizzourer o' grun in a plain wye i' the seyven pairis'es—cam' owre to lay aff a bit o' oor ootfeedles last year, he not naething but jist the chyne an' 's poles, an' a bit sclaittie an' skailie. An' him an' me keest it up in a han' clap."

Mr. Sleekaboot perceived that Mains was rather gratified by his own success in the delivery of this speech. So, instead of attempting further elaborate argument with him, he crept up his soft side by ostensibly deferring to Mains's opinions on the practical question of land measuring ; and then promising that he would talk the whole matter over with Jonathan Tawse, and bring him to a right frame of mind toward the younger Mains of Yawal. And Mr. Sleekaboot, without much difficulty, succeeded in healing this breach. But he failed in eradicating the opinion that obtained, especially in the west side of the parish, that it was desirable to have a school better adapted to meeting the wants of those who were bent on a purely practical education—the modern side in their view, in short.

And thus it came about that the side school of Smiddyward was established. Sandy Peterkin was one of those original geniuses who seem born with an extremely good

capacity for acquiring knowledge, and no capacity whatever for turning the knowledge so acquired to any noticeable account, so far as bettering their own position, or benefiting other people connected with them, is concerned. In his boyhood he had sucked in knowledge with a sort of good-natured ease and avidity; and then, when he came within sight of a practical application of the same, Sandy disappointed the hopes of his friends by changing his mind, and turning out a kind of "sticket doctor." I really don't think that Sandy could ever have had sufficient nerve for the medical profession. Then, in an equally erratic fashion, he had gone abroad to seek his fortune, and after twenty years, returned without finding it. In a general way, then, Sandy had again made his appearance in the locality, willing to settle down, but without any particular vocation, or well-defined idea as to what he would desire to apply himself to. Luckily for Sandy, the agitation on the subject of Mr. Tawse's shortcomings was at that particular time pretty keen, and the notion of another school rather popular. I would not insinuate that it was because Mr. Sleekaboot opposed the project that Johnny Gibb lent his aid so zealously in patching up the old maltbarn at Smiddyward—which they pierced with two windows of four panes each, at the same time converting the ingle into a hearth—in order to adapt the place as a school. But Johnny certainly did take an active part in planning the structural works, and defraying the cost of material and workmanship, as well as in recommending the new teacher as a "byous clever chiel, a feerious gweed coonter, an' a prencipal han' at mizzourin grun."

At the date of my story, Sandy Peterkin had conducted his school for only a few years, the usual winter attendance numbering about thirty pupils. In summer it naturally decreased, and in order to eke out his stipend for that part of the year, Mr. Peterkin was wont, when the "hairst play" came, to hire himself out as a raker, or general errand man, to some of the neighbouring farmers.

Such were the two schools and schoolmasters of Pyke-tillim.

CHAPTER X.

BENJIE'S CLASSICAL STUDIES.

It was to Jonathan Tawse, such as I have described him, that the goodwife of Clinkstyle took her youngest son, Benjie, with the view of his addicting himself to the profession of the law. She had unfolded to the dominie her plans regarding the future of the young man, and wished his advice as to the requisite curriculum of study.

"Ou, weel," said Jonathan, "we'll jist hae to set him on for the regular coorse in classics."

"I wudna won'er," answered the goodwife. "An' foony classes will he hae to gae throu' syne?—ye ken he's i' the foort class, an' complete maister o' the muckle spell-beuk, 'cep some unco kittle words 't 's nain fader can mak' naething o'."

"Hoot-toot-toot, ye're wrang i' the up-tak'—it's classics—nae classes. Mair plainly, an' he war a wee thing better grun'it in English—through Mason's Collection may be—we maun pit him to Latin an' so on."

"Dis lawyvers need muckle o't, noo?"

"The mair the better, whan they want to bamboozle simple fowk," said the dominie. "Like Davie Lindsay's carman, that gat's gray mare droon't whan he ran to the coort:—

They gave me first ane thing they call *citandum*,
Within aucht days I gat but *libellandum* ;
Within ane month I gat *ad oppenendum* ;

In half ane year I gat *inter loquendum*,
 An' syne I gat—how call you it?—*ad replicandum* ;
 But I cud never ane word yet understand him."

"Keep me, Maister Tawse! ye've sic a heid o' leernin' yersel'. I dinna believe but ye cud mak' up a prent beuk an' ye war to try. But mithnin he dee wi' the less coontin?"

"No; certainly not; he maun hae Mathematics confeerin."

"An' that be the gate o't, the seener he's begun the better, I wud think, to nae loss time. Cudna ye begin 'im at ance wi' a bit lesson? 'Leern ear', leern fair,' they say, an' Benjie's a gran' scholar o' s size. He wud bleck's breeder that's twa year aul'er nor him, ony day."

"Aweel, lat me see," said Mr. Tawse, who, having at the time no Latin class, had begun to cast about as to the possibility of setting one agoing for the winter, "I'll see if I can get anither ane or twa, an' try them wi' the Rudiments—ye may jist get a Ruddiman i' the meanwhile, till we see."

"That's the beuk that they get the Latin oot o', is't?"

"No, no; jist the grammar—the rules o' the language."

"It cudna be deen wuntin, cud it? I dinna care aboot owre muckle o' that gremmar, 's ye ca't."

"Care or no care, it's quite indispensable; an' it's utter nonsense to speak o' wantin't," said Mr. Tawse, in an irritated tone.

"They're sic a herrial, that beuks," pursued Mrs. Birse. "Aye, aye needin' new beuks; but maybe ye mith hae an aul' Kroodymans lyin' aboot? I'm seer Benjie wudna blaud it—he's richt carefu' o' s beuks, peer thing."

"No, no, Mrs. Birse. I'm nae a dealer in aul' beuks"—

"Eh, forbid't I sud mint at that, Maister Tawse; but an' ye hed hed ane't ye cud 'a len'it the laddie, I'm seer we wud 'a been richt muckle obleeg't."

"If ye dinna value yer son's edication sufficiently to think it worth yer while to pay for the necessary beuks, jist train 'im for the pleuch stilts at ance."

"'Deed, Maister Tawse, I'll dee naething o' the kin'.

R.

W.B. Rose
1871



There's neen o' s fader's faimily requarin to work wi' their han's for a liveliheid, an' it cam' to that, no. Peter'll get the tack at hame, 's breeder Robbie'll be pittin in till a place, an' his sister sanna wunt 'er providin'; an' gin that war't a' we cud manage to plenish the best fairm i' the laird's aucht for Benjie; but fan craiteurs has pairts for leernin, it's a temp'in o' Providence to keep them back."

"Oh, *rara avis in terris!*"

"Fat said ye?"

"Oh, that's only the Latin way o' expressin' my admiration o' the boy's pairts," said Mr. Tawse, "an' it shows ye vera weel what a comprehensive an' elegant tongue it is. It wud be a perfect delight to ye to hear Benjie rattlin' aff sentences fae Latin authors—I'm sure it wud."

"Is that Kroodymans a dear beuk, Maister Tawse?"

"A mere trifle—a maitter o' twa shillin's or half-a-croon."

"Weel, I think ye mith jist get it the first time 't ye're sen'in to the toon—they'll maybe gi'e some discoont to the like o' you—an' we can coont aboot the price o' t at the en' o' the raith."

Ruddiman was procured in due course, and Benjie set to the study of it, along with a lad whom Mr. Tawse had got as a boarder, and who was understood to be the natural son of—nobody knew exactly who. He was an idle boy, but quick enough when he chose to apply himself. And thus he and Benjie made, as Mr. Tawse confessed, an extremely bad team. For if the truth must be told, notwithstanding Mrs. Birse's eulogistic estimate of Benjie's literary capacity, as compared with that of his paternal parent and elder brothers, none of the Messrs. Birse junior had manifested exactly brilliant intellectual parts; and any capacity or predilection they had shown had been very distinctly in the direction of intermeddling with cattle and horses, and concerning themselves with the affairs of the farm. I don't think that Mr. Birse senior was in the least disappointed at this, though of course he had long ago reconciled himself to the idea that Benjie was somehow to be the great and

learned man of the family. Howbeit Ruddiman agreed but ill with Benjie's tastes, and the consequence was that when the first raith was almost ended, he had scarcely got past *Ego Amo, Tu Amas*, and certainly had not the remotest conception of what it was all about. But this was not all. The effect of Benjie's studies had been to drive him home from school, over and over again, and with growing frequency, in a shattered state of health. Now it was his head that was in a dreadful state, and next his wyme, and Benjie shed many salt tears over his deplorable condition.

This state of things could not go on. Clinkstyle growled, and averred that his youngest son would be killed by too much learning; and the goodwife coaxed and coddled with no beneficial result. Then she went to Mr. Tawse to ascertain whether he was not tasking the excellent youth too severely, as it was alleged he had done in the case of Mains of Yawal's eldest son and heir; and she came back in a great rage, for Mr. Tawse had been curt and uncomplimentary, and had hinted very plainly something about Benjie "shamming," after which he abruptly left Mrs. Birse standing outside the door, and proceeded to the interior of the school to finish his day's labours.

"Weel, weel, 'oman," said Peter Birse senior, "they wud need a heid o' iron 't could gae throu' that stuff; ye'll need to pit a stop till 't some gate."

"Gae 'wa' wi' yer buff; it's muckle 't ye ken about it," answered Peter's dutiful spouse, determined not to be convinced by him at any rate.

"Jist wyte than till ye see the upshot. I sudna won'er nor he mak' the laddie an' objeck for life—min' fat naar happen't wi' Mains's laddie."

"Mains's laddie! Humph! An' my son hinna some mair smeddum aboot 'm nor the like o' that gawkie trypal, it's time 't he war set to herd the laird's geese instead o' followin' aifter edication. Ye nicht hae some regaird for ither fowk's feelin's, man, gin ye hae neen for yer nain!"

"But I'm nae sayin' 't Benjie hisna a better uptak' nor the like o' him," pleaded Peter, apologetically.

"Better uptak!" exclaimed Mrs. Birse. "Sma' thanks t'ye for that! Foo af'en hiv I seen 'im, peer innocent, bleck you an's breeders tee, readin' namie chapters oot o' the Word o' Gweed. An' that's fat he gets for's pains! I'm seer he sets an example to aul'er fowk."

"Hoot, 'oman! I wusna meanin' to misca' oor nain laddie."

"An' foo did ye dee't than, Peter Birse? Tell me that?"

Peter had not an answer ready—in time at any rate—and Mrs. Birse went on, "I'm seer ye ken brawly fat wye my uncle, 't deet Can'lesmas was a year, wan in to be a lawvyer aboot Aiberdeen, an' made jist an ondeemas thing o' siller—as the feck o' them does. Awat he len'it a hantle to the toonship, an' leeft a vast o' property forbye. Peer man, he did little gweed wi't i' the hin'er en'; or some o's mith 'a been in a vera different seetivation fae slavlin' on till ony ane, takin' chairge o' bestial, and milkness, an' a pack o' vulgar trag o' fairm servan's. But's wife's freens raive a heap o' 't aff o' 'im fan he was livin', an' manag't to get the muckle feck o' fat was leeft fan he weer awa'."

"But aw doot he hed a hantle o' enfluence, or he wudna come on sae weel," said Peter.

"Aw won'er to hear ye speak, man. Fat enfluence cud he hed; fan he gaed to the toon, as I've heard 'im tellin' a dizzen o' times, a laddie wi' a tartan plaid about's shou'ders, an' a's spare claise i' the neuk o't? Forbye, isna there Maister Pettiphog't fell into my uncle's business, an' was oor awgent fan ye pat awa' yer second horseman fernyear for stravaigin fae the toon o' the Sabbath nicht, an' gyaun in owre's bed wi's sharnie beets on—a vera respectable man—didna he begin, as he taul's himsel', upo' the 'sweepin's o' the Shirra Court'?"

"True, true," said Peter, in a half-bewildered tone.

"Aweel, aw think it would be ill's pairt, an' he wudna tak' Benjie for a 'prentice at ance, an' pit 'im o' the road to mak' a wye o' deecin for 'imsel'. He made a braw penny aff o' you at ony rate."

It was impossible for Peter to answer such powerful and voluble reasoning; and he had virtually succumbed before Mrs. Birse reached the concluding and more practical portion of her discourse, which revealed a part of the plan of Benjie's future of which he had not hitherto got the faintest glimpse, although as now presented it rather commended itself to him. The effect upon Mrs. Birse herself of so fully expressing her sentiments, was, on the whole, soothing. But on one thing she was fully resolved, come what would—to give Jonathan Tawse a snubbing. So, in addressing our promising young gentleman next morning, she said, "Ye'll tak' my compliments to Maister Tawse, noo, Benjie, an' tell 'im to sen' his accoont wi' ye—the raith's oot at the en' o' this ouk at ony rate—an' gin he canna manage to behave wi' common ceevility to them't he's makin' 's breid aff o', and teach their bairns withoot brakin' their health, maybe anither will. Will ye min' that, noo?"

What this threat signified exactly, in the mind of the person who uttered it, it would perhaps be difficult to guess. At any rate, when Benjie brought the account, Mrs. Birse's thoughts took quite a practical shape. Jonathan Tawse's fee for the ordinary curriculum of the school was 3s. 6d. a quarter; when Latin was included he made it two shillings more; and when Mrs. Birse saw the enormous charge of 5s. 6d., followed by 2s. 6d. for a half-bound Ruddiman, it was some little time before she could give adequate expression to her feelings. She declared first that she would never pay such an "extortion;" and next that ere she did pay she would certainly make Peter Birse senior face the unconscionable dominie before the Shirra, where the account would be rigorously taxed, and the iniquity of its author exposed in the face of the world. The actual result as regards the account itself was that after a while Peter Birse senior was sent to pay it, with orders to deliver certain sarcastic remarks bearing on the combined greed and professional incapacity of Mr. Tawse; and which orders Peter, as is usual in such circumstances, did not carry out to the letter; but, indeed, mumbled some sort of awkward apology for the

withdrawal of Benjie from the school; for, of course, he had been instantly removed—a result which Benjie seemed in no wise to regret during the interregnum that occurred until it should be determined what should be done with him next.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KIRK ROAD.

How shall I describe the Kirk Road of Pyketillim? Of course it is the Kirk Road when the parishioners are assembling for public worship that I mean.

It is a beautiful spring Sunday morning of the year 1842. Samuel Pikshule has duly tolled his eight o'clock bell, which sends its billows of pleasant melody rolling over bank and hollow to the farthest end of the parish, amid the still, dewy sunlight; then he has gone and deliberately discussed his breakfast, and shaved off his beard, and washed his face, before he would ring ten o'clock and turn the key in the kirk door.

It was at a quarter to twelve that Samie began to ring the people in. But for good part of an hour before that they were to be seen wending slowly onward in twos and threes by this and that side path into the 'commodation road, which winds along by Smiddyward, Gushetneuk, and Clinkstyle, and so on over the Knowe and down upon the Kirktown. As they met on the main road they resolved themselves into groups, larger or smaller, according to taste and other circumstances. Here is a knot of three or four women, including one sturdy old dame, with close mutch, ancient shawl of faded hue, and big umbrella planted firmly under her arm, fine as the day is; there another couple, one of indefinitely goodwifely aspect, the other evidently a thrifty spinster, and a lassie clanking on in heavy tacketie

shoes at their skirts, anxious to get what comprehension she may of the semi-prophetic gossip, and to discover the individualities referred to in the confidentially-breathed "she says, says she," that occupy the tongues of her seniors. There Dawvid Hadden, ground-officer to Sir Simon Frissal, pulls up, takes off his hat, wipes his brow, lets his wife forgather with whom she may, and the bairns scatter on in front, while he hooks his one thumb in his waistcoat armhole, and puts the other hand below his coat tail to wait for Hairry Muggart, the wright, and get the news as they jog socially on, picking up a fit companion or two by the way. At other points we have knots of sturdy chaps, free from the plough for one day, and done up according to taste in rough gray tweeds, and with the ends of their brilliant neckerchiefs flying loose, tramping along by themselves; and skweel loons, on the alert for idle pranks, and fully conscious that Jonathan Tawse's rule is intermitted for the time, now loitering and next scampering on with utmost speed.

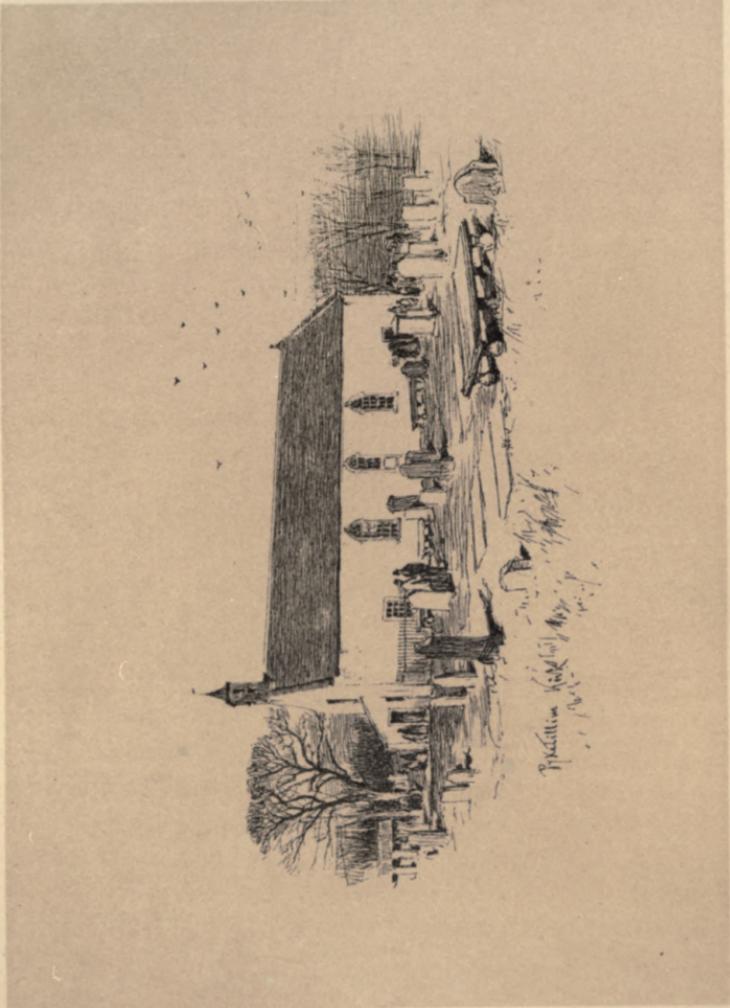
When the journey is about accomplished, we have no end of friendly inquiries to make as we cluster about the kirkyard yett; then slowly filter inward to re-group ourselves on the open space in front of the kirk-door; to sit down with a few cronies on the green slope under the venerable trees, or it may be on a lair stane in God's acre itself, to take snuff, and see how far our notes about the weather and the crops agree. Samie begins to ring at the quarter, but we let him ring on; and it is only when Mr. Sleekabout is seen coming up the long walk in full canonicals (we had no vestry in those days) that we betake ourselves to the interior of the kirk, crushing in in a somewhat ram-shackle and irreverent fashion it must be allowed, and planting ourselves in attitude to sleep, or observe, as the case may be.

But I will not describe the church services farther than has been already done. Our profiting usually was pretty much, I presume, what might have been expected. At the close Mr. Sleekabout sat down composedly, and the elders seized the ladles—substantially built ladles they were, and had served their purpose for generations past—and peram-

bulated the kirk. We gave our bawbees like loyal Presbyterians; that is to say, the head of the family always gave one, and sometimes his wife another, or one of the elder bairns—a habit and practice which have been most faithfully adhered to in most congregations, town and country, till this day; insomuch that hundreds of worthy people of fair wealth and position, who would be ashamed to offer less than sixpence to any other good object, proclaim their veneration for the usages of these ancient Christians by carefully abstaining from ever dropping into the brod aught else than a copper counterfeit presentment of Her Majesty. Well, we did this in the parish church of Pyketillim; and I do not recollect more than once seeing a man—it was up i' the laft—put a penny into the brod as it was pushed round, and then adjust his offering to the statutory amount by taking out a bawbee.

When the kirk skail't, the scene was different from the gathering. To be sure, if Samie Pikshule had a roup to scry, or a strayed stirk to “advertese,” there was a general and eager clustering about him at the kirk gable, as Samie yabbled out the particulars. But otherwise we put on double steam to what was in use when we were daundering up to the “courts of the sanctuary,” as Mr. Sleekaboot phrased it. Before we were clear of the Kirktown some half-dozen of the male parishioners (usually elderly ones, familiar with the dwellers in the Kirktown, and who cared not to carry fleerish and flint in their Sunday claes) had availed themselves of a het sod to light their pipes; and the result was seen in a cloudlet of blue smoke rising here and there over the streams of people as they moved on in steady flow east and west; everybody now marching onward with something of the air of those who have serious business on hand.

Now, it so happened that on the particular Sunday morning to which I have made reference, Peter Birse had living with him over the day, as a visitor, a particular friend from up-throu,' an ardent agriculturist like himself. The two had been out betimes in the morning and had enjoyed a saunter over Clinkstyle's fields, discussing matters relative



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thereto as they went. After the ten o'clock bell had rung in, and long after breakfast, it occurred to Peter as they stood at the top of the garden walk, not knowing well how to occupy themselves further, that a profitable use might be made of the spare time yet between them and the hour of public worship.

"Nyod, fat wud ye say to takin a stap roon b' the back o' the wuds gyaun to the kirk. The laird has a puckle fine stirks i' the Upper Holm park 't the grieve's aye blawin' about?"

"Oot already?"

"Ou ay. They war some scant o' strae, ye see; they keep sae mony horse beasts about the place. But they're fine lythe parks, an' ear' tee; beasts mith live i' them throu' the winter naar."

"I wud like freely weel to see them, man," said the stranger.

"Weel, jist heely till I gi'e a cry in 't we're awa'."

And they went by the back of the woods—it was a long way round—where the stirks were duly seen, criticised, and admired. Then they stumbled on a field of the laird's which the grieve was preparing to be laid down in turnips, and took a skance of what was going on there.

"It's easy deen for them 't yauchts the grun to try protticks wi' 't," observed Peter.

"He's been trenchin seerly," said his friend.

"Ou na; but they hed a gryte stren'th o' beasts rivin' 't up wi' fat they ca' a subsoil pleuch."

"The stibble lan', likein?"

"Ay, ay, stibbles."

"Weel, I cudna say; aw wud be some dootfu' about it. A bit faugh across the rig i' the en' o' the year, an' syne a gweed deep fur's better nor turnin' up the caul' boddom."

"Oh, loshie, ay, man," said Peter Birse. "But than ye see it's a' ae thing to him fat he pit into the grun gin he can raise a crap; an' he'll haud on the manure to the mast-heid, fatever it may cost. They war sayin' he hed gotten a curn o' that ga-ano stuff 't they speak about."

"Yea, man!" replied the stranger in a wondering tone.

They approached the corner of a field off the road, and stood up on the top of the backit dyke, when Mr. Birse exclaimed, "Aw div not believe but here's a hillockie o' that ga-ano i' the neuk o' the park."

Peter was right. Guano was then a newly-introduced manure, which he and his friend, who understood the virtues of bone dust perfectly, had not yet seen. The grieve had got a consignment of the Ichaboe variety, whereof he had deposited a small parcel in the corner of the field to await turnip sowing. In a twinkling our two worthies had leapt off the dyke and were busy examining the guano.

"Eh, man, but it's fashionless-like stuff!" said Peter Birse's friend, after inquiringly crushing a sample or two between his finger and thumb.

"Isn't a mervel fat wye that cud gar onything grow?" was Peter's reply.

"But does 't raelly dee 't, man?"

"Weel, I've nae rizzon to misdoot the grieve's word; an' he taul' me that it sent up some cabbage kail 't he try 't it on fernyear like the very shot o' a gun."

"Man, aw wud like richt weel to try a pucklie o' 't. Mithna a body gae the length o' takin' the fu' o' a sneeshin pen?"

"Awat ye may tak' a nievefu' on-been miss't," said Peter.

"Gin they wudna think it greedy-like, an't were kent."

"Feint a fears o' that," answered Peter Birse. "But fat wye 'll we cairry 't?"

"Ou, that 'll be easy deen," said Peter's visitor, shaking out his crumpled cotton pocket handkerchief; "the dud 'll haud it fine."

"Weel, its keerious I didna think o' that, no."

"But wunnin ye tak a starn yersel'?" asked the stranger.

"Weel—aw dinna differ. I 'se tell the grieve 't we wus tryin' the quality o' 's ga-ano."

And so Peter next spread out his handkerchief, into which he too put a handful of guano. The samples were duly bestowed in the coat pockets of the two friends, who then resumed their journey to the kirk, at which they arrived in due time, highly pleased with their experiences by the way.

I do not know how far the suggestion may be necessary that the olfactory nerves of Peter Birse and his friend would not seem to have been particularly sensitive. But had the fact been otherwise, it would appear to me highly probable that the two gentlemen would have had some indications before they entered the kirk of the likelihood of a perfume rather more powerful than pleasant proceeding from their pockets. It would appear, however, that nothing of the sort had disturbed their reflections; at any rate, the two had entered and gravely seated themselves before the guano had cost them a second thought. Things did not remain long in this quiescent state, however. Mrs. Birse, who seldom came early, entered next, with Miss Birse. Peter and the stranger did not rise to put the ladies into the pew, but, according to use and wont, simply hirsled yont, and made room for them at the end of it. Miss Eliza Birse seated herself and sniffed; then her mother sniffed, and looked first at the floor and then at her husband. And all at once the situation flashed upon poor Peter's mind! Yes! He did feel the odour of the guano; and the man in front of him, who had turned half round and looked into Peter's pew, evidently felt it too. Samie Pikshule, who was going along the pass to shut the door, felt it, and stopped short with an inquiring glance around him; and it was said by those near him that Samuel uttered something about "some chiel comin' there wi' a founart in 's pouch, stechin up the kirk." But what could Clinkstyle do? There he was, shut into the top of the pew, and the service going on. To rise and force his way out would be to proclaim his predicament more widely; for he would without fail perform the function of censer to the congregation all the way to the door. And then it would be of no use unless he took his friend with him.

I have no real delight in cruelty to animals, and will not enlarge upon the agony endured by Peter Birse during the sermon. He had no doubt whatever that Mrs. Birse knew him to be guilty—his own imploring look had betrayed him there. He fancied that the eyes of the whole congregation were fixed upon him, and he verily believed that Mr. Sleekaboot was directing part of his observations towards him personally. The stranger, who seemed to be a placid man, sat perfectly unmoved. On the whole, the incident, which, of course, got abroad pretty generally among the people of Pyketillim, did not tend to secure increased respect for Peter; and it may be added that he *was* once or twice thereafter judiciously reminded of it by his spouse, as an illustration of the necessity for a more discreet head than his own to decide in, at any rate, all matters of breeding and etiquette. Thus far on the social aspect of the question. Peter's sole defence when put to it was, that he never for a moment supposed he could be wrong in following the example of his visitor, who, moreover, was a distant relative of Mrs. Birse; and that neither of them dreamt that "the ga-ano cud hae hed sic a rank kneggum."

To his surprise Mrs. Birse replied, with not a little solemnity, "Weel-a-wat, ye needna be surpris't nor it be a jeedgment o' ye for brakin' the Sabbath."