

---

---

## Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

---

---

### II.

#### XVII.—MORE ABOUT THE VILLAGE PHILOSOPHER.

Stewart got his first ideas of history, it may be mentioned, at his father's knee out of an old volume of Buchanan's History of Scotland, and was, as already stated, an omnivorous yet discriminative reader. He did not have a very high opinion of Cromwell, having been greatly influenced in his estimate of the Protector by Hume. One of his judgments was—"Oliver was clean wrang when he declared that the Lord delivered the Scotch army at Dunbar into his hands. Man, it was the Presbyterian ministers that delivered them!" He was frequently heard to say of the gipsies, whom he was wont to lecture about their own ancient history in a manner more amazing than instructive—"Naebody can sing withoot a certain amount o' literary culture, but thae gipsies come gey near the thing by pure imitation." He was a volunteer in his early days, and while at Lunan Bay, a suspicious Dutch lugger having been captured by a British gunboat, the crew were brought ashore and Stewart was deputed with others to escort the prisoners to Inverness. He used to declare that these sailors were the most desperate-looking characters he ever saw, and that "ony o' them might have stood for the original of Dirk Hatteraick." A remarkable old soldier—Sir Bannister Tarleton—took Meikleour House for a number of seasons. He had been a captain of horse during the American War of Independence,

---

---

## Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

---

---

and being of a bluff, hearty, good-natured disposition, and very fond of the villagers, he soon discovered

### A BROTHER SPIRIT

in Stewart, who became a frequent visitor at the house, where over many a steaming bowl the old warrior

Fought all his battles o'er again,  
And thrice he routed all his foes,  
And thrice he slew the slain.

The Meikleour slater, if he was not "fellow with the best king" was the "best king of good fellows" on such occasions. Old Tarleton used to maintain that after the war he was "played out like a d—d fighting cock!" He was a devoted angler, and the Tay close by yielded frequent tribute to his skill. His wife, however, who was equally kind-hearted and interested in the villagers, prevailed upon him to lay aside his takes on the Wednesdays for their behoof; but when he had landed a particularly fine fish on that day and wished to gratify some of his friends (and do a little self-glorification) he would compound with his humble and complaisant beneficiaries for a gift of flesh instead of fish—always to the advantage of the recipients. Before leaving Meikleour for good and all he rode round the Cross on his war horse—which he always brought with him—three times, bidding good-bye to everybody, and as a final and inclusive valediction sat upright in the saddle, and thus addressed them:—"My friends, I bid you all good-bye once more. I've been all round the world in my time, but swear I have never seen any dem'd place it has cost me so much trouble to leave as Meikleour!" Here follow a few more

---

## Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

---

of Stewart's witticisms, and if the "dram" is a too conspicuous figure in most of them, it must never be forgot as palliation of Stewart's weakness that the "fierce light that beats upon a throne" applies equally well to the village slater, who was an outstanding individuality in his own little circle. One day he and David Scott, mason, had been west of Clunie purchasing a cow each, but

### COULD NOT PASS MILLER'S INN

without entering—tying the cows to the paling before doing so. Some wag made off with the animals, and caused the worthies some trouble when they were ready to resume the journey. They had to start off without their bestial, and when they reached the Limekilns *les miserables* sat down to condole with each other. William Duff, Clunie, who is understood to have had something to do with the disappearance of the kye, was passing, and heard Scott say, "Man, Stewart, we'll get an awfu' hearin' frae Mr Balfour for this!" (Mr Balfour was their minister.) "I'm no carin' a dockin' for Mr Balfour," said Stewart; "but I'll tell ye what, David," added he, taking a great pinch of snuff, "it's high time we started a *new religion*, and the first article o' doctrine will be that ilk ane get as muckle whisky as he likes to pay for." On being reproved by a clergyman on one occasion for his excesses, Stewart's reply, which had a pointed reference to the clergyman himself, was—"Weel, Mr —, I've never yet seen atween the twa brods o' the Bible ony prohibition o' *whisky*, but there are plenty o' passages makin' it gey hot for wine-bibbers!" "As for wine itsel'," said he on another occasion, "I wudna gi'e it guts-room!" One day he was found drinking from the Loch of

---

---

## Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

---

---

Clunie. "What are you about, Stewart?" asked some one. "Oh, juist makin' grog o' last nicht's drink!" At a

### CERTAIN SOCIAL GATHERING

the intervals between the toasts were far too long for his taste. "Mr Chairman," said he, rising, "I've a toast to propose in which I houp ye'll a' jine heartily." "Hear, hear," cried the company, "go on wi' your toast, Stewart." "Weel, gentlemen, fill your glasses, an' here's to *a' people that on earth do dwell!*" Coming into Blair one day he met Matthew Harris, a hunchback. "Hillo! Mattha," exclaimed he, "did ye come strecht frae Blair?" "Ay," said Mattha. "Weel, ye've gotten awfu' crookit on the road." He once fell from the roof of a house into a heap of manure. "Man, Stewart, that was a geyin' fa' ye had," said a sympathetic old wife as she scraped him. "Fa', wumman," exclaimed the wrathful and malodorous slater, "the fa' wad hae been naething but for the confounded stinkin' stappin'." He had a big score "caulked" up against him at Miller's Inn, Clunie, and the landlord kept nagging him for payment. Stewart's exchequer couldn't stand the strain of present demands, let alone past, and saying nothing about the future; but, credit or no credit, he put a handful of old keys, &c., in his pocket and stept along to Clunie. "Weel, Mr Miller," said he, "I've juist come along to see aboot that account o' mine. It's been owre lang on the road." "'Deed I, Stewart," chimed in the expectant creditor. "Weel," said Stewart, jingling the keys and other "rubbitch" in his pocket, "see a gill o' your best, an' rin up hoo muckle I'm awn ye." The gill was set down, and the slim slater had gulped it down and was through with business before the landlord had

---

## Stewart Jack, Meikleour.

---

adjusted his "specs" for the formidable summation. "Ye can

PUT THAT DOON WI' THE REST,"

remarked he, as he passed out into the night. He had a job up Glenshee way once, and got up very early on a Sunday morning to put on the last few slates before starting for home. All the caution in the world, however, would not prevent an old wife hearing him. "Ye auld, muckle-nosed sinner!" cried she, "to daur to brak' the Sawbbath in that shamfu' wey!" "Michty me, wumman," exclaimed the slater, stopping short, "ye dinna tell me ye've Sawbbath sae far north as this!" While repairing the roof on Tay Farm house, near Spittalfield, Duff, the farmer, chaffed Stewart about the number of people he had "done" for a dram. "That was because they didna ken ye, Stewart," said he; "I'm gey shure ye'd never tak' me in." "Maybe no," was all Stewart said, and went on with his work. Shortly afterwards he came down for a load of slates, got half-way up the ladder when he was seized suddenly with an awful fit of trembling, scattering the slates in every direction, and nearly toppling over the ladder with his contortions. Arrived on the ground, he sank down in a state of collapse, his groans really heart-breaking. The farmer, in a great state, ran in for the whisky, but poor Stewart's teeth chattered in his head to such an extent it was with great difficulty that a glass was got over; another was tried, with better results, and, muttering something about "feeling better noo," the slater gathered up his slates and got up the ladder all right. "Man, Duff," exclaimed he from the roof, "ye're

DONE WI' THE REST!"

If the following story is true, he was neatly done

---

## Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

---

himself on one occasion. It is told of another villager also, however. Stewart, as formerly mentioned, was a great snuffer, but used to get his supplies from Balmain's, Perth, having nothing but contempt for the snuff sold in the village. One day the carrier, having forgot to bring a promised half-pound, supplied himself in the village, and met Stewart on the road to meet him, fairly "finissin'" for his sneeshin'. Opening the "poke" he took a mighty pinch, and, with a great inhalation and immense gusto, exclaimed loud enough for the people inside the shop to hear—"Man, that's a pear o' anither tree! nane o' your rubbitchy Meikleour stuff!"

*Pallida mors* knocked at Stewart's humble portal on the 5th February 1863, in his 76th year; and thus passed away a man of such mental endowments as might have graced many a high position in life.