



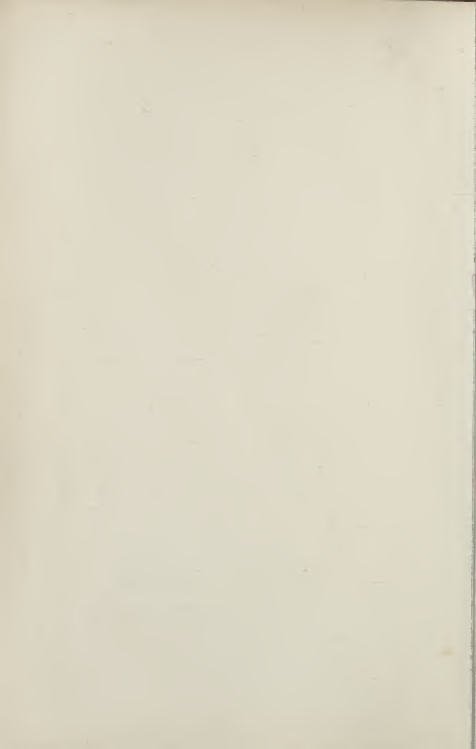
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
ROBERT CHALMERS,
THE OLD POLITICAL AND
SOCIAL REFORMER.

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1872.

THE HISTORY OF THE
ANTHROPOLOGY

ROBERT CHAMBERS

THE OLD PLOUGH AND
THE NEW PLOUGH



EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To JOHN TORRENCE, Esq., Commercial Traveller.

SIR,

I have much pleasure, indeed, in dedicating to you the following incidents of a long life spent in this world, sometimes enjoying in it many pleasurable sensations, and at other times feeling many griefs and sorrows; but, notwithstanding all these vicissitudes, I believe, owing to the natural buoyancy of spirits I possess, I have been enabled to overcome many difficulties which would have otherwise crushed many to the dust. These will all appear in due course in the history. But it may be thought by some, why not dedicate your work to one of longer standing in intimacy with you? Have you not many true friends yet alive in many places? True, I have, also many who have gone the way of all the earth, equally honourable men, all entitled to my highest esteem and respect; and there is one of these friends now gone, whom I would especially wish to keep in remembrance so long as I live, one of the *noblest patriots* and friends of the people, that ever trod the soil of Great Britain—I mean Ernest Jones, Esq., Barrister-at-law. Few or none ever suffered more in the cause of the people than he did, at the hands of a base, cruel, and unjust government, acting in accordance with their vile nature against the

best interests of our common humanity. Had he lived, owing to the correspondence we had, I could not have done otherwise than dedicate this work to him.

But now, Mr Torrence, I must give my reason for selecting you as a gentleman, in my estimation, every way worthy of this selection. When I was first introduced to you by Councillor Nicol, Cloth Merchant, in this burgh, I was at once struck with your kind and affable manner of conversation, being not only delighted, but, as it were, spell-bound by it. The many conversations we have since had, have strengthened and confirmed me in my original opinion regarding you. I could not but admire the nobleness of mind and great eloquence which characterised every sentiment you expressed when assembled with the few friends with whom we had the pleasure of associating. And now, sir, having honestly and freely made these statements respecting you, no old friend can be displeased; but, on the contrary, will rejoice that I have made such a selection. And in conclusion, allow me to express the heart-felt wish, that you may enjoy long life and prosperity in that vocation to which Providence has seen meet to call you, so that you may continue to the end of your days in the enjoyment of that blissful peace and happiness which characterise the lot of every good and true man.

I remain, Sir,

Yours most devotedly,

ROBERT CHALMERS.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

ROBERT CHALMERS.

MY BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

I WAS born at Alyth, a village in Perthshire, on the 22nd day of April 1801. My father's name was William Chalmers, and he was by trade a weaver; my mother's name was Lillias Forrester. My parents married at a comparatively early age. So far as I can learn, my father was a shrewd and intelligent man, and was held in high respect amongst his neighbours. Unfortunately, however, like too many of the members of his craft, he was in very delicate health, and died very early, leaving my mother with two young children, of whom I was the oldest, entirely unprovided for. My brother, whose name was David, appears to have inherited the sickly constitution of my father, for he was cut off at the tender age of four years. Fortunately for me, I seem to have inherited the constitution of my mother, which was certainly remarkably good, she having attained the ripe age of nearly eighty years.

MY RELATIONS.

My paternal grandfather, James Chalmers, rented a small pendicle of land west from Alyth, belonging to the Earl of Airlie, on which he kept a horse and a cow. He also was a weaver. These small pendiclers paid their rents by growing flax, which they converted into cloth, weaving in the winter time; and by this means they were enabled to discharge all their liabilities for the year. At my grandfather's death, the land reverted to his daughter Margaret—the only aunt, I believe, that I ever had. She was married to Robert Forbes, who was long church officer in the parish church of Alyth. They had a family of seven sons and one daughter; of whom, five of the sons are still alive, and all have deported themselves honourably.

My mother's parents did not live to an old age. They had three children, of whom my mother was the oldest, and then Thomas and James. My maternal grandfather was also a weaver. He and his family resided in Dundee; and when both of the parents died, the family was removed to their grandfather's, he having a house and small pendicle, which enabled him to keep a cow, &c. His place of residence was on the Ground of Bamff, and he was in the habit of weaving cloth for all those in the immediate neighbourhood, who employed him according to order. In his day, he was considered a man of great wisdom and penetration, so that, at any time when a dispute arose among his neighbours on any matter, he was pretty sure to be consulted; and his arbitration in most cases appeared to give satisfaction to the parties concerned. He was, in fact, regarded as a sort of general peacemaker among the tenantry on the whole estate. He lived to a good old age, and died generally respected by all who knew him.

My uncle Thomas was by trade a tailor. He went to Kirriemuir, where he married Isabella Ramsay, by whom he had two children—Betsy and Lydia. The latter, who was the younger, now only survives. She is a widow, with one daughter, Isabella Dick. My uncle left his wife and family, enlisted in the army, and was never heard of afterwards.

My uncle James was also by trade a weaver; but, so far as I can learn, he might justly be denominated a 'sweer'

weaver. He had no inclination for physical labour of any kind ; nothing satisfied him but books and learning. As he, my mother, and myself constituted one family, I will have to take up the history of each separately.

MY MOTHER'S EARLY STRUGGLES.

I shall commence with my mother, who was pre-eminently the head of the family. Soon after my father died, she found a very kind friend in Mr Dean, a most worthy and benevolent man. Mr Dean was a leading elder in the parish church, in which also he held the office of treasurer. He was likewise, for a long period, the Alyth postmaster ; and in addition to these offices, he carried on the business of a grocer, in a shop which was his own property, at the Cross. When Mr Deans saw how my mother was placed, through the unfortunate death of my father, he very kindly came to her assistance. Finding her naturally intelligent, and possessed of a fair share of education, he proposed to her that she should open a school to teach children reading, &c. This my mother agreed to do, and Mr Deans kindly aided her by taking for her a house in the part of the town most suitable for the purpose. She opened a school here accordingly, charging three-halfpence per week for each child who came ; and I may only state, as indicating the success of this venture, that my respected parent had not long set up as a schoolmistress, when she found her school filled even to overflowing.

My mother was also fortunate in having a good and true friend in Mr Peterson, the parish schoolmaster. It was said of him, and, I believe, justly, that he was one of the best scholars who adorned the profession in Scotland. I have heard my uncle say that he was the best Latin scholar he had met with, and that his pupils were sure to gain preference, go to what college they might. In the case of Mr Peterson and my mother, the old proverb did not hold good, that 'two of a trade never agree ;' for they agreed most cordially, and frequently, when parents brought their children to Mr Peterson to educate, he would say : 'Oh, just send them to Mrs Chalmers in the first place ; I like very well to receive pupils who have been under her for some time.' In

this friendly relation my mother and he continued until the day of his death; and when that event occurred, it caused a feeling of deep regret throughout the whole parish.

After a few years thus spent in teaching the young to read, my mother, with a view to her personal improvement in the art of education, went to Dundee for six weeks during her harvest vacation, for the purpose of learning needle work. This she did for several years, and then she added needle work to the branches of education taught in her school—the fees being in consequence raised from three-halfpence to twopence weekly. Her school continued to be well attended so long as she was able to teach. One thing studiously observed by my mother may be mentioned; and that was, that she made it a practice, every Saturday forenoon, to examine the whole of her scholars in the Shorter Catechism of the General Assembly of Westminster Divines. She divided the Catechism into three parts, and made her scholars repeat this third, question by question round; after which she selected a particular question, upon which she catechised her scholars all round, giving explanations upon each question as she proceeded. Each Monday morning, also, all her advanced scholars were required to have committed to memory four verses from the metrical version of the Psalms. They had also to repeat, every day, some verses from the Old and New Testaments. In this manner did she continue to conduct her school in Alyth for a period of forty years.

MY UNCLE JAMES.

I must now give a brief history of my uncle. Already have I spoken of him as a 'sweer' weaver, being more attached to his books than the loom. A few years after my mother commenced teaching in Alyth, he got a call to commence teaching two miles west from Alyth, at a place called the Hillock of Fyal, situated on the estate of Tullyfergus. His supporters, or rather employers, were John Miller, Esq., of Wester Tullyfergus; his brother, of Easter Tullyfergus; Mr Playfair, farmer, Muirtown, on the estate of Balhary; Mr.owler, farmer and cattle-dealer, Mains of Crochies; and Mr Souter, farmer, Welltown, on the estate of Banff, &c. My esteemed uncle commenced his career as a teacher under very favourable

auspices indeed, so that he soon obtained a large attendance, a good many scholars being sent to him from Alyth. These scholars continued to attend on his teaching during the whole time he remained as a teacher in the Hillock of Fyal. When he began his labours, he was very kindly received and treated by the whole of the above-named gentlemen, and many others in the surrounding neighbourhood. During the whole time he taught in this school, he made it a point to come to Alyth every Saturday afternoon, and waited on Mr Peterson for the purpose of receiving private instruction in the Latin language. He continued with him in pursuing his studies until he was ready for attending college.

I may here mention that, during my uncle's labours in the Hillock of Fyal, he very frequently visited all the families in the neighbourhood, whose younger branches attended his school; but there were some of these families to whom he was peculiarly attached. Among these I may mention the family of Mr Miller, of Wester Tullyfergus. In Mr Miller he found a very congenial spirit, he being a man famous in his day in searching for knowledge, especially the knowledge of divine truth as exhibited in the preaching of a pure gospel, in accordance with the doctrines and precepts made known to us in the Word of God. My uncle and he frequently conversed together on these subjects, for on them he gave every evidence of being thoroughly acquainted. But although he was a strict disciplinarian in his family in religious matters, he did not lose sight of the things of this world, but took an active interest in any movement which had for its object the elevation of mankind in general. I recollect that, at the time of the passing of the first Reform Bill, he took an active part in that movement. As an instance of this, I may mention that, at that time, I was engaged in collecting subscriptions for the formation of an instrumental band in Alyth; and when I went to the country, I for the most part took an octave flute along with me, on which I played with all my might such tunes as 'The Hills of Glenorchy,' 'The Campbells are coming,' &c. I found this practice to have a great influence in softening the hearts of the people in the country, and loosening their purse-strings. When I called upon Mr Miller for that purpose, his subscription was good, and heartily given.

For the reader's amusement, I may relate how I obtained his subscription. I accosted him by saying: 'Now, sir, you know we must be preparing for the great day of the battle at the polling booth, and then we must march forward in order. Would you accompany me for a little, and endeavour to keep the step along with me to the tune of "March to the Battle-field?"' He laughingly complied with my humour, until I pronounced that he was keeping the step excellently, and quite competent to take his part in the approaching battle.

There is still another anecdote or two in relation to Mr Miller and myself which I wish to relate, as they, to a certain extent, show the character of us both at the time. He asked me the question, when I was sent on an errand by my uncle: 'Has strong grace as yet taken hold of you?' Being a little nettled at this question, I answered it by asking another: 'Do you mean your watch 'dog?' Perhaps it would have been better for me to have kept silent, but my internal emotion at the time got the better of me. Another question he asked shortly after, to the following effect: 'What think ye o' yoursel', sittin' up yonder on the Sabbath day [meaning the precentor's desk], and your bits o' ruffles on like a pridefu' coxcomb?' to which I immediately answered by asking him: 'What think ye o' yoursel', comin' to the kirk wi' an auld hat on, only fitted to be stuck on a pole to scar awa' the crows from your potato or turnip fields?'

I believe in a saying of auld Jenny Meekie's: that 'fouk sud honour the Lord's hoose on the Sabbath day wi' the best o' their claes on.' There is another saying of auld Jenny's which I will mention here. In talking one day, in her hearing, about some persons who had got themselves into disgrace at one of our weekly markets, and a few of such being professing Christians, says Jenny: 'Oh, ay, maut ale is no the natural drink o' man ava'; for when man was first created, he was placed in the garden o' Eden, and everything provided there by his Creator for him was perfect in its kind, and a' that he required was gi'en him. We ken that a river o' water flowed through this garden; and if his Maker had thocht that a river o' wine, or strong ale, would have been better, there is nae doubt he would ha'e got it; but if these persons ye ha'e been speaking o' had contented them-

selves wi' what the God o' nature had provided for them, they wadna ha'e brought this reproach upon themselves.'

I must now conclude these passages between Mr Miller and myself, by saying that, at a subsequent period, he and I came to a far better understanding of each other; and when we met, we always did so on the most amicable terms.

There was another family for whom my uncle manifested a special regard—the family of Mr Playfair, farmer, Muirton. These he visited often at their own home; and so far as I recollect, there were three of Mr Playfair's daughters at school at one time.

EARLY SCHOOL DAYS.

I must now commence and speak a little of myself. I shall therefore begin at the eighth year of my age, when I was sent from Alyth to the Hillock of Fyal, to attend school with my uncle. There, however, I had not to go alone. I had sometimes a considerable number who accompanied me.

I may observe here, that shortly after I went to school, the pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet, and the words of our language, underwent almost an entire change; and when this change took place, I was hastened on as fast as possible by my uncle to get thoroughly acquainted with it, so that I might be enabled the sooner to assist him in training the whole scholars to a knowledge of this important change, as was thought at the time. Many a time I was very wearied of the work, but there was nothing for me but to persevere, both in season and out of season, as I thought at the time. I had not only to continue laboriously at school all day in training scholars to this change of pronunciation, but when I arrived home, I had immediately to commence training my mother to the same exercise. In her, however, I found a very apt scholar, and she very soon mastered the alteration completely. This change of pronunciation, I may state, was an importation to the north by my uncle from one of the seminaries of learning in Dundee; but where they originally got it, I cannot tell. One thing, however, I am sure of—it brought to me no little trouble and vexation.

A little after this period, I was unfortunate enough to get my right hand bruised in the quarries of Alyth, whilst I,

along with others, was engaged in extracting a species of red stone, which we were pleased to denominate 'keel,' for the purpose of drawing figures with. This bruise turned out to be rather serious for me, causing excruciating pain, and also the loss of the upper joint of the little finger. It was years before the bruise was properly healed. However, it did not long prevent me from attending school, but it prevented me for a time from studying writing and arithmetic. My uncle, therefore, thought it advisable that I should commence the study of Latin, at which I was accordingly held until my hand was nearly whole.

REMOVAL TO ALYTH.

After teaching for some years at the Hillock, my uncle became so popular, that he was advised by a number of his friends in Alyth to open a school there. He took their advice, and commenced as a teacher there after the harvest was ended, in the year 1811. He soon gathered together a large number of scholars, consisting of all the various classes of society inhabiting the town. With regard to religious training, he followed the same course as my mother did. He also opened a Sabbath class in his large and commodious schoolroom, in which he was assisted by Mr John Fenton, tailor and clothier, the father of Mr James, who has been long his successor in the same line of business. They had a very large attendance of scholars, besides a great many of grown-up people who came to listen to the instructions given there.

When my uncle came to Alyth, my mother and he took up house together, so that, along with myself, the family were three in number. We seldom wanted a goodly company of visitors; for, in addition to a large evening class held in the school-room, my uncle kept a private class in his own room at home, for grown-up people, who were somewhat advanced in their education. These met for the study of geography, &c. With so many persons coming about the house, there was a continual bustle all day long, and all the evening too.

COMMUNION REMINISCENCES.

I may here mention respecting my mother, that she was

very punctual in attending the various communion services in the neighbouring towns—often going as far as Dundee and Lochee on these occasions. She looked forward to the communion services of Lethenday and Rattray with peculiar interest, for in these places she was always sure to meet the Rev. Mr Gilfillan, of Comrie, who always attracted a large congregation. No house could have contained the multitude who assembled on these occasions, so that the services were conducted in a wooden tent, erected in a field. After the ‘action’ sermon, as it was termed, was preached by Mr Balfour, the communicants adjourned to the church, where they ‘communicated.’ The exercises of the day commenced at ten o’clock in the morning, and they were continued without intermission until eight in the evening. With such protracted services, it is but proper to state that the creature comforts of the people were not neglected. An enterprising tradesman, with a sharp eye to business, pitched a large tent immediately adjoining that for the worshippers, and here all who had a desire for ale, beer, and other such liquors, could have their taste fully gratified. Truth to tell, however, a great many did not avail themselves of his very tempting invitation. These latter, for the most part, had taken the precaution to bring some bread and cheese with them; and when overtaken by hunger, they squatted down by the side of a running brook, and partook of the simple viands they had brought along with them, after which they drank from the brook—and a beautiful, clear, running stream it was—meditating, at the same time, I have no doubt, upon the words of the gracious promise—‘Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure.’ However, when I looked into the tent, and saw what was being enacted there, it frequently reminded me forcibly of Burns’s description of such scenes in his inimitable ‘Holy Fair.’

MY APPRENTICESHIP.

I remained at my uncle’s school, after he removed to Alyth, until the beginning of April 1812, when I was apprenticed to Charles Stiven, a celebrated weaver in the town. I was engaged with him for two years. At that time, the weaving trade was reckoned among the best in the country; for,

owing to the wars of the first Napoleon, our country had a monopoly of the whole European trade in this line. Many young men were in consequence induced to learn the trade.

About this time, my uncle was requested to open an evening class for instruction in the theory and practice of music, which he accordingly did. I attended this class, and derived much pleasure from it, as I was passionately fond of music. In the practice of sacred music, I was greatly encouraged by my apprentice master, who was the precentor in our congregation, and who repeatedly declared that I should one day fill his place—a prediction which was verified to the letter, as I was subsequently appointed precentor, and continued to hold the office, with a few intervals, for the long period of nearly thirty-eight years.

SOMETHING ABOUT MY UNCLE.

In the winter of 1812, my uncle attended the college of Aberdeen; and there being at that time no railways, he had to travel the whole distance from Alyth to Aberdeen, and back, on foot. He engaged a divinity student to conduct his school during his absence. While in Aberdeen pursuing his studies, my uncle was induced by the Rev. Mr Templeton, who took a kindly interest in him, to open an evening class for instruction in sacred music. This class proved a great success, so that my uncle was enabled to return from his first winter at college with a lighter heart and a heavier purse than when he set out from Alyth.

On the arrival of the next winter session, my uncle could not find a divinity student to teach for him, and had to be content with the services of a mason from Dundee, who was a good writer and arithmetician. Unfortunately, however, this mason was not acquainted with Latin. To supply this deficiency, the knowledge of the Latin tongue which I had obtained was turned to account, and I took charge of the class for two hours each day during the winter. My uncle was more fortunate during his third session at college, for he secured the services of a student who was ready to be licensed as a preacher.

EXPERIENCE AS A HERD LADDIE.

My apprenticeship was completed early in the spring of 1814. At that time I was in very delicate health ; and being advised by the doctor to follow some out-door employment, I was engaged to Mr Cramond, of Litfie, to herd his cows during the season for 30s. I entered upon this occupation in April, and continued until Martinmas. I took a number of books with me when I went to this new situation, including among them a few Latin works. I selected what I thought a safe place in the kitchen, where I deposited my small library. It so happened, however, that one day one of the servant girls came upon my treasure, and picked up one of my Latin volumes. After looking at it earnestly for some time, she exclaimed, in great surprise, to her neighbour : ' Losh preserve me, Meg ! come an' see thir buiks o' the herd laddie's. I never saw the likes o' them afore. Gude preserve me ! I doot the laddie maun ha'e dealin's wi' the de'il himsel' ! ' My master overheard the girl's exclamation, went to see the wonderful book, and came out with it to me ; and I was not a little amused when he told me what a fright it had given the servant maid. At his request, I read him a portion of the book, and he appeared much surprised when I told him that there were boys at my uncle's school, younger than I, who had a much better knowledge of Latin.

Mr Cramond was an elderly man, and seldom went from home. I had almost daily visits from him ; and, at his request, I used to relate to him the history of the Roman Wars, in which he appeared much interested. On one of these occasions, I offered to do all in my power to learn him to read for himself. He laughed heartily at this offer, and replied : ' I doot, laddie, I've owre mony scores on my horn to commence such a task.'

AT WORK AT THE LOOM.

At Martinmas, 1814, I left Mr Cramond, and not without regret on both sides. I was greatly invigorated by my short experience as a herd laddie ; and as the weaving trade was still pretty brisk, although provisions were high-priced, yet we contrived to live moderately well, having good wages for our

work. Weavers who were diligent at their work, and provident in their habits, could save a little money; and some, who were very economically disposed, built houses, while others bought small properties as they came into the market. A few were even able to commence manufacturing on their own account.

Soon after my return home from Litfie, I obtained a loom and loom-stance from Mr John M'Lauchlan, weaver, who resided at the Mid Green, as it was then named. Here I accordingly commenced work, having for my shopmates Mr M'Lauchlan and Mr William Buick, mason, who always worked at the loom during the winter. We were very happy in each other's society, and I was particularly pleased to find that Mr M'Lachlan was a musician. He, and Mr Peter Gorthy, a glover, were good flute-players, and were both for some years fife-players to the Royal Perthshire Local Militia. Having expressed to Mr M'Lauchlan a wish to learn to play on the flute, he kindly did all in his power to gratify that wish. He furnished me with one of his military fifes, along with a scale for such an instrument duly marked out. I recollect well, that when I got my 'stent' accomplished for the day—for at that time it was the custom of almost every weaver to 'stent' himself to the weaving of a certain number of yards every day—I left the workshop, taking the fife and scale in hand, and marched up the town very smartly. After reaching home, I commenced to my performance in right earnest, and sometimes produced most unmusical notes, to the great annoyance of my poor mother.

MUSICAL RECOLLECTIONS.

I prosecuted my studies on the fife under Mr M'Lachlan with great enthusiasm. The first tune I got set for practice was 'Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon;' and when I was able to master this to the satisfaction of my teacher, I got a printed music-book, containing a number of tunes adapted to the German flute; and as Mr M'Lachlan had a first flute, I purchased an octave flute, and the two, when well played, made very pleasant music. Sometimes at meal hours, and in the evenings, when the day's labour was accomplished, he would indulge me by playing some popular airs, and I would

accompany him to the best of my ability. This I found to be a very profitable exercise, in leading me to a proper style of playing, especially in keeping time and tune.

About this time, a Mr Thomson, a half-pay officer, resided with Mr Marshal, farmer, Jordanston, whose farm was in the neighbourhood of Alyth. Mr Thomson was an excellent flute-player; and he had not long arrived at Jordanston, when he came to Alyth, where he met with Messrs M'Lachlan and Gorthy, who introduced him to other musical friends, including Mr Henry, a publican who had recently come to the town. This gentleman was one of the best violin players who ever appeared in Alyth; and the musical junta thus introduced to each other were very happy in each other's society. They established an Instrumental Musical Society, which was inaugurated in the only hall of which the town could at that period boast. The instruments consisted of flutes, violins, and violincellos. The society existed for several years, and held an annual ball, which was patronised by the aristocracy of the town and neighbourhood.

A FARMER OF THE OLDEN TIME.

I may here relate one or two anecdotes illustrative of the character of old Mr Marshal, of Jordanston. His foreman, one fine morning, said to him: 'We will require to go to the leading this day.' 'Jist so,' he replied; 'yoke twa horse in three carts, and drive it a' in, shorn and unshorn.'

On another occasion, Mr Marshal went to the market to engage a man to thresh his corn for the winter season—threshing being all done by the flail at this time. After fixing upon a likely looking man for this purpose, they adjourned to an ale tent, to arrange as to terms. 'Weel, man,' said Mr Marshal, 'fat wages wid ye be seekin' to thresh my barn a' winter?' After higgling for some time together, they ultimately came to an agreement; and at the time appointed, the man put in an appearance, the barn being previously filled with corn. He threshed all morning until past breakfast time. Wondering why he was not called in to breakfast, he at length went to the kitchen to see about it. He there met the master, who told him that, although he had engaged him to thresh his barn, he did not engage

for any food, neither did he at the time stipulate for any. The man at once saw that he had been 'sold.' He returned to the barn, wondering what was to be done. At length a happy thought struck him. He remembered that the literal agreement was, that he was to thresh 'the barn'—not the corn in it. Acting upon this literal interpretation of the terms of agreement, he mounted to the top of the barn, and commenced to 'thresh the barn' in right earnest, making the thack fly in all directions under the vigorous strokes from his flail. This extraordinary proceeding soon brought out the master, who came running up to see what it meant. The man was not long in fully and satisfactorily explaining the matter; and Mr Marshal felt as if he had been caught in his own trap. 'Jist so, man,' he said; 'come doon, and ye'll get your meat, and nae mair about it.'

Shortly after this, Mr Marshal's wife died; and a custom prevailed at that time, that so soon as the corpse was dressed, the family engaged in worship. Mr Marshall, following this custom, assembled the family together in order to engage in this exercise; but my readers will agree with me that he selected rather singular words to be sung upon such an occasion, when I mention that they were from the psalm which says:

Because of this my heart is glad,
And joy shall be expressed.

Mr Marshall had a son who was a stout, fine-looking man; and he also had a son—Mr Robert Marshal, teacher, Glenprosen—with whom I am well acquainted. He is a literary writer of some ability, and a contributor of popular tales to various newspapers.

WAR AND PEACE.

We now come to the year 1815, which to many persons was a memorable year indeed. In the beginning of it, trade was going on smoothly, nothing seemed to disturb the equanimity of any class of society. The all-absorbing question with us, as a nation, was the total overthrow of that ambitious man, Napoleon Bonaparte. We never had the least doubt in our minds that Wellington and his allies would ultimately crush him to the dust; but when they got hold of him, how

were they to dispose of him, so that he might no more be allowed to go at large and disturb the nations of Europe? These were the all-absorbing topics of the day in the beginning of this year; and on the memorable 18th of June, Napoleon fought his last battle, and was completely overcome. History has recorded the memorable event and its results. After peace was proclaimed, a general rejoicing was held by the nations of Europe; and in this respect Alyth was not behind any of the towns in Scotland, having regard to its size. There was a general illumination, and I believe, every window in the town was illuminated in some manner or other. In some of the windows there were some very handsome devices. I recollect of one that was in the window of Mr Moncur, on which was printed in large letters, 'PEACE AND PLENTY.'

HARD TIMES FOR THE WEAVERS.

Well, we got the peace; but, alas! for the plenty which followed. Our trade failed, and nothing but misery stared every working man in the face. In the beginning of that year, weavers were getting £1 for weaving an Osnaburg; but soon after Waterloo was fought, the wages came down almost every week. The first reduction was 6s. per piece—the same web which had formerly obtained 20s. being now paid with only 14s. This large and sudden reduction seemed at the time utterly to paralyse the weavers. They met in groups for consultation; and I recollect well of some of them expressing their indignation by saying that, rather than work an Osnaburg for 14s., they would hold up their fingers to the sun. Vain threat! The wages came down steadily, week after week, until, ultimately, 5s. was the whole amount paid for weaving an Osnaburg. After the necessary reductions had been made from this sum for pirns filling, loom stance, and oil in the winter time, what remained free to the weaver was the miserable pittance of 3s. 6d. for weaving about 150 yards per week. I cannot relate these painful facts without shuddering at the heart-rending scenes of destitution and misery which the recital brings back to my mind. Unfortunately, this sad state of matters was not of short duration, but continued for a series of years. It may very naturally be

asked how the weavers in these days contrived to sustain life at all ; and this question I will endeavour to answer, so far as my memory serves me. It will readily be understood, that it could only be by the most careful economy and skilful planning that soul and body could be kept together on such starvation allowances. The bill of fare in the weaver's family was something like the following :—In the morning, the first 'meal'—if it can be so termed—consisted of water put into a pot amongst a quantity of mashed potatoes, which had been left from supper for this purpose ; so that a very small quantity of meal—just to thicken the water a little—sufficed to put over the breakfast. No milk, however, could be allowed at this diet. Dinner, for the most part, consisted of potato soup made with a little suet, and it was seldom that bread was to be seen on the dinner table. In the evening, the apology for supper consisted of mashed potatoes, with suet amongst them, and sometimes—and this was reckoned a great luxury—the younger branches of the family were allowed a little milk to this meal.

From this simple, yet truthful statement, the reader will be able to form some idea of the terrible struggle which the unfortunate weavers of those days had for very existence. With trade about as bad as it well could be, and most articles of food at famine prices, 'the battle of life,' as it has been poetically termed, was, to the great body of the working classes, something terribly real ; and those who live in these more favoured times should feel thankful to a gracious Providence that their lot has been cast in much happier days. O the dire distress of that awful year of privation ! My flesh creeps even yet as memory recalls the terrible recollections of pinching poverty—of never satisfied hunger—of utter misery—with which it must for ever be associated in my mind. Burns, in some of his songs, speaks of the

Hamely parritch, chief o' Scotia's food ;

but in this year of famine, the 'halesome parritch' was very little known in the dwellings of the working classes. The only article of diet that was at all moderate in price was potatoes ; and, as a consequence, it constituted the staff of life to the suffering poor during this terrible crisis.

THE CORN LAW AGITATION.

In the following year, provisions came down very rapidly in price—so rapidly, indeed, that many farmers failed, and were unable to pay their rents. In order to meet this emergency, our legislators, in their wisdom, passed a law prohibiting grain from being imported into this country, until the home-grown corn had reached an exceptionally high price. This extraordinary piece of legislation, which went under the name of ‘The Corn Law,’ was supported alike by the aristocracy and the state-paid clergy. It was an easy matter to pass such a law at that time, as all those interested in the maintenance of dear corn constituted the law-makers. It has been very pithily remarked, that such a law must have been hatched in hell; for the devil himself, although it were possible to make him Prime Minister, could not have devised a law more detrimental to the best interests of the industrious classes. History has placed upon record the long struggle which the people had in getting rid of this most infamous piece of legislation; how long and how nobly the Anti-Corn Law League continued to agitate for the abolition of this most iniquitous law. We in Alyth, as well as in all other places in the United Kingdom, took an active part in this ever memorable struggle.

I recollect that when a delegated conference on this important matter was held in Dundee, we sent my cousin, Robert Forbes, as our delegate for Alyth. It was arranged, that when the conference was over, a public meeting should be held on the evening of the same day, which should be addressed by Mr Richard Cobden and other repealers of some celebrity. This great meeting was held in Bell Street Church—which, I was about to say, afforded the largest indoor accommodation then to be had in the town; but the Rev. G. Gilfillan reminds me that this is not quite correct, as the Established Churches in the town, which were fully larger, were shut against the meeting.

AGITATION FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

No sooner had this most obnoxious Corn Law been passed, in the year 1816, than it gave rise to a general and deep-

rooted feeling of discontent amongst the working classes throughout the whole country, and caused them to unite as one man in a demand for Parliamentary reform. A well organised agitation was carried on throughout all the principal towns in the United Kingdom; and it is melancholy to have to say, that some of these meetings did not take place without bloodshed.

ARBROATH LEADS THE WAY.

Being in Arbroath on Monday, Oct. 9, 1871, and calling on some acquaintances, I mentioned to them that, at the suggestion of a number of friends, I was then engaged in writing my autobiography. They expressed their pleasure at hearing this, and desired me to take notice of Arbroath as being the first town in Scotland in which the Magistrates and Town Council moved in the direction of Parliamentary reform—which I very gladly do. In 1817—so they informed me—a few working men met in private, and agreed to call a general meeting of their own order, which was held on the Common. At that meeting, it was agreed to appoint twelve of their number as a committee to wait upon the Provost of the burgh, and solicit him to call a public meeting of the inhabitants to consider the subject, and preside at it. The Provost, after consulting the Town Council, and being supported by them, agreed to call the meeting, which was held on the Abbey Green. The Magistrates personally attended it, and were accompanied by the town officers carrying the insignia of authority. About 4000 persons were present—a number which at that time was very considerable indeed, and must have comprised nearly the whole adult population of the town. I regret that I forgot to inquire the name of the Provost who thus nobly distinguished himself. All honour be to his memory! I would suggest, as a means of perpetuating his noble conduct, that a subscription should be got up to erect his statue in some conspicuous part of the town.

ARBROATH OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Whilst speaking of the noble part which Arbroath then took on the Reform question, I may be permitted a few remarks in relation to the Arbroath of the present day. In

the first place, it is greatly enlarged both in size and wealth since the period of which I have been speaking. It is now the second town in the county, and in population far exceeds all the other provincial towns. The principles of co-operation seem to have taken firm hold of the people in Arbroath, and the co-operative system appears to flourish. I had the pleasure of visiting the boot and shoe department of the West Port Society when there last, and was highly gratified with the admirable manner in which it was conducted. There is also what is denominated the Guthrie Port Society. I am sorry to learn that, some time ago, the co-operative society had separated, and formed two distinct societies. This is a great mistake. It should always be remembered that union is strength, and disunion the opposite.

GREAT REFORM MEETING AT DUNDEE.

A memorable Reform meeting was held at Manchester in the year 1819, at a place named Peterloo; and to the utter dismay of those who attended, this peaceable assembly was turned into a field of blood by a mounted force of yeomanry cavalry sent for the purpose of dispersing the meeting. Well did this force obey orders, by cutting down men as well as defenceless women and children. This outrage at Peterloo created an immense sensation throughout the whole kingdom, and many meetings were held for the purpose of sympathising with the unfortunate sufferers, and contributing pecuniarily towards their assistance.

Amongst the many such meetings held throughout the country was a grand demonstration held on the Magdalen Green, at Dundee; and as I was present at this important meeting, my recollections of what took place at it may be sufficiently interesting to the reader to warrant their introduction here.

I went to this meeting in company with my cousin, Alexander Forbes. The distance from Alyth to Dundee is seventeen miles; and this journey we had to perform on foot—there being no ‘iron horse’ in those days. Before starting in the morning, we took care to partake of a hearty breakfast of porridge and milk, knowing that a long time must elapse before we could have another meal. I am sure very few of

those who read this autobiography would care to undertake such a journey now-a-days with so light purses as we had ; for all the money we could muster was only fourpence each ! The low state of our finances, however, did not deter us from our purpose. Our greatest regret was that we would have so little to contribute in aid of the Manchester sufferers, for whom we felt much sympathy. In regard to this affair, I may mention, that we made an agreement by the way, that we should give at least twopence each to the collection, and that when the proceedings of the day were over, we would on our return journey take a refreshment in 'The Mile House,' as it was termed—this being a public-house at the side of the road in Lochee. It is somewhat out of the order of my narrative ; but I may just here state, that we strictly carried out the resolution thus formed. We gave our twopence each to the poor Manchester folks ; and when we reached the Mile House on our return journey to Alyth, in we went, and called for a bottle of small beer and two penny rolls of bread. These were brought to us without delay ; and being in need of some repose after the fatigue of the day, we took our time over this repast, and thus enjoyed our refreshment and a little rest as well.

Coming now to speak of the meeting, I will first state how it was got up. A large committee of working men in Dundee and Lochee was formed for the purpose of drawing out a programme, and framing resolutions to be submitted to the meeting, and to find a gentleman who would preside. For this latter duty, all eyes were turned to that uncompromising reformer, Mr George Kinloch. Mr Kinloch at once complied with the request, and the necessary arrangements were therefore made.

The day of meeting arrived ; and, so far as the weather was concerned, we seemed to have the countenance of the visible heavens at least ; for the sun shone in all his meridian splendour. The turn-out of people from Dundee, Lochee, and the surrounding neighbourhood was very large indeed. I never saw a procession like it before, nor have I since ; and I have seen many processions and public meetings in Dundee since that time. The processionists for the most part carried old broken tea-kettles, tea-pots, broken pots and pans, &c.

In contemplating the curious spectacle, I could not help wondering where on earth the people had procured such an enormous quantity of broken and decayed articles. There were also many flags and banners bearing appropriate mottoes. One banner, in particular, I remember, was of large size, and had for its motto, in conspicuous letters, 'BREAD OR BLOOD!' So far as I recollect, some of the bands—of which there were several in the procession—played, 'I'm wearin' awa', Jean,' and 'Scots wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled.' These airs appeared to have a very solemnising effect upon all who were within hearing of the very impressive music.

When Mr Kinloch ascended the platform, the voices of the multitude rending the air with their cheering, the waving of flags, the shaking and clanging of the old broken pots, pans, and tea-kettles, were something quite terrific. The proceedings of the meeting went on smoothly. In the speeches, it could not have been otherwise than that the measures of the Government, in hunting down the people when assembled for the purpose of considering their grievances, should have been condemned in very strong language. The present generation can have no idea of the privations and sufferings to which the masses were subjected at that period. There was neither freedom of speech nor of action. Now, however—thanks to a more enlightened and liberal Government—we can enjoy both without fear of molestation.

It is stated that a few persons of what is called 'the upper classes' attended this meeting, in order to report the proceedings. Amongst others, it has been affirmed that a certain clergyman attended as a spy, and reported to the authorities what was deemed seditious language in the utterances of Mr Kinloch. Every one knows what was the result of this meeting—Mr Kinloch had to flee the country, and take up his residence abroad for a time.

When the business of the general meeting was over, Mr Kinloch met with the Dundee authorities in the Town Hall; and the people, conceiving that he had been made a prisoner, assembled *en masse* at the Cross, and determined at once to free him from their grasp. The crowd were highly excited, and a great many had stones in their hands, with which they were prepared to smash the windows of the Town House;

while others were on the look-out for instruments with which to demolish the whole building. When this purpose was made known to the Magistrates, and to Mr Kinloch, the latter threw open the centre window of the building, and presented himself to the excited multitude. Mr Kinloch did this just in time to save the whole of the front windows from destruction. He then addressed the people, assuring them that he was not a prisoner, but perfectly free to go where he pleased. On receiving this assurance, the whole multitude shortly afterwards quietly dispersed.

It is well known to every one, that the nation never ceased to agitate for a reform of the House of Commons until such a measure was passed in the year 1832. The history of these stirring times is familiar to every one, so that it is unnecessary to dwell further upon it here.

MORE MUSICAL REMINISCENCES.

From this point, I will proceed with my autobiography without particular regard to dates.

Notwithstanding the dulness of trade, I continued the study and practice of instrumental music under the tuition of John M'Lachlan, and with some success. It is to be here observed, that the Alyth Musical Society, under the leadership of Mr Thomson, was still continued; and having expressed a strong desire to be introduced to the meetings that were held for practice, Mr M'Lachlan promised to do all in his power to assist me. Accordingly, on the next night of meeting, I accompanied him to the hall, and he spoke to Mr Thomson in my behalf. That gentleman at first demurred to his proposal, urging that the hall might soon be filled with such listeners; but upon being informed that I was pretty well advanced in the practice of flute playing, and might one day be instrumental in raising a band which might surpass our present one, I was admitted. This success, gratifying as it was, encouraged me to persevere in my studies.

MY FIRST LOVE.

There is no worldly pleasure here below,
Which, by experience, doth not folly prove;
But among all the follies that I know,
The sweetest folly in the world is love.

—SIR ROBERT AYTOUN.

I must now, if the reader will excuse me, become a little sentimental, and relate some particulars of what was certainly, to me, a most interesting episode in my life.

Well, then—to be at it at once—one fine morning in the delightful summer time—I cannot now say precisely how many summers ago—a large wagon arrived in Alyth, and took up a position on the Green, just opposite to our workshop. This was a travelling show wagon, in which was a group of wax figures of various kinds. The wagon was accompanied by a man and a young woman—the latter a handsome, blooming girl of eighteen, and who, as I afterwards learned, was the niece of the showman.

The fairest maid she was, that ever yet
Prisoned her locks within a golden net,
Or let them waving hang, with roses fair beset.

So, at least, did I imagine; and no sooner had I set my eyes upon this pretty damsel, and beheld her great beauty, than I felt a most curious and extraordinary sensation steal over me—a sensation which was altogether new to me, and which I could not at that time have described in words, however I may do so now. Unquestionably—forgive me, kind reader, for owning the soft impeachment—it was *my first love*! It is true that, previous to this, I could talk about love, could jest lightly about it, and could even sing of love as perhaps few persons could; but now, for the first time, did I experience its power. When I gazed upon the lovely countenance of that charming girl, I could not help inwardly exclaiming: ‘Why, Eve herself could not have been more lovely when she came from the hands of her perfect Maker!’ Her face seemed lighted up with—

A light more beautiful than summer noon;
Warm as the sun, yet tender as the moon.

When I first heard her speak, her silvery, musical voice sent something like an electrical thrill through my whole soul. It was something that I could not at all comprehend. How little did I know, till then, of the truth of the words of the song—

O love is like a dizziness!

Previous to this, I had regarded such words as mere doggerel, but now I began to find out their meaning.

Well, I was fairly over head and ears in love before I was well aware of the fact; and my happiness was unmitigated to find that my newly-fledged passion was reciprocated. This important discovery I made in the following manner:—One day, Mr M'Lachlan and myself were standing beside the show wagon, with our musical instruments, when she very politely asked if we would be so good as play a Scotch tune to her. You may be sure we readily acceded to her request, Mr M'Lachlan selecting the song, 'My love is like a red, red rose.' This we played 'with feeling,' my fair charmer all the while apparently listening with much delight.

When we had finished, I remarked: 'I wonder why they did not call this rose white.'

'Why?' she asked.

'Because,' I replied, 'white is equally lovely, and is, moreover, the symbol of innocence and purity.'

At this observation, which was intended as a direct compliment to my idol, she merely smiled.

Mr M'Lachlan, however, soon perceived how matters stood between us, and did all he could to fan the flame—holding us both on the road we were willing to be driven.

I then remarked that the organ she had, besides being one of the largest I had ever seen in connection with a travelling wagon, was also the best toned instrument of the kind I had ever seen. 'Is the barrel large?' I asked.

'Yes—pretty large,' she replied.

'How many tunes is it set for?' I continued, 'and how many are Scotch?'

'The barrel,' she said, 'is set for a good few Scotch airs, which we find to take very well in England. But you may come up,' she added, 'and I will explain its capabilities to you.'

This invitation was just what I wanted, and I promptly accepted of it. No one was then present to interrupt our conversation; and on finding ourselves alone, we both stood for a little while speechless, and feeling somewhat embarrassed. I was the first to break the silence, and did so by requesting her to play me her favourite tune. With this request she very kindly complied by setting the organ to the tune of 'Robin Adair.' While she was playing, I trembled with emotion, and was almost rendered speechless. All I could articulate was: 'O, how is this?'

'Why,' she said, 'I will explain, and make an honest confession. I had your name from Mrs M'Lachlan, from whom also I learned all about you. And now I consider myself in honour bound to tell you my name. It is Louisa Shaw. My father and mother are both dead; and I am left entirely under the control of my uncle until I am twenty-one years of age—my present age being eighteen.'

I cannot describe what were my sensations as she thus spoke.

Fair she was as fair might be,
Like the roses on the tree;
Buxom, blithe, and young, I ween,
Beauteous like a summer queen;
For her cheeks were ruddy hue'd,
As if lilies were imbued
With drops of blood, to make the white
Please the eye with more delight.
Love did lie within her eyes,
In ambush for some wanton prize;
A leeper lass than this had been,
Corydon had never seen.

All I was able to say in reply was: 'Come into the wagon.'

I was scarcely able to stand, from trembling emotion. When we had got inside the wagon, I took her hand in mine, and said: 'O Louisa, Louisa, I do not know what to say!'

'But I know what you want to say,' was her prompt reply.

In a moment we understood each other, and were locked in each other's fond embrace. I imprinted on her beautiful vermilion lips the first kiss I had given since, as a child, I had kissed my mother.'

'Well, Robert,' she said, 'you have got my mother's kiss in return.'

After a short time spent in this soft dalliance, she brought it to a close by saying :

'Now, Robert, dear, you know we must part for the present, in order to attend to our respective duties.'

'O, my love,' I replied, 'that is both true and reasonable ;' although, to tell the truth, I had almost forgotten that I was in the world at all, or had anything to do with it.

Before parting, it was arranged that I should see her again in the evening, when I would play the organ for her, while she described the figures inside for her uncle. She at first made some demur to this proposal, as being likely to excite observation ; but I assured her that the assembly outside would take no notice of me being at the organ, knowing that I was so fond of music. Poor, foolish simpleton that I was ! As Shakspeare has it—

Love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit.

I was totally oblivious to the 'pretty follies' which, under the influence of calf-love, I perpetrated whilst turning that barrel organ for my fair Dulcinea ; and, ostrich-like, I fancied that, because I saw nothing amiss, neither did any one else. Alas ! in this I was sadly mistaken, as I too soon discovered, and to my great grief.

Things went on smoothly for two nights, and I was quite ecstatic in the enjoyment of the society of my lady love, little thinking how soon the delightful dream in which I indulged was to be rudely and for ever dispelled. The transformation scene came on the third night. Some kind friend had been ill or well enough advised—whichever the reader may regard it—to inform my mother of what I had been about ; and the result was a domestic storm of no ordinary violence. I was quite astonished at the salutation I received from her on going home that evening.

'Well, Robert,' she said, 'this is pretty conduct. Aren't you ashamed of yourself ?'

'Why, mother,' I asked in astonishment, 'what is the matter ?'

'Matter!' she exclaimed—'why, you seem to be running the high road to hell, and that as fast as your feet will carry you.'

'Me, mother!—me running to hell as fast as my feet will carry me?' I asked.

'Yes,' she said, 'threatening to run off with a show lassie! Did anybody ever hear the like?'

I was perfectly thunderstruck at this unexpected explosion; but after the first ebullition of my mother's wrath had subsided, I boldly answered:

'Well, mother, I will not deny that I love the girl, and would follow her to the ends of the earth; but, whatever you may say to the contrary, I think there is a great difference between galloping to hell and following a lovely girl.'

This terminated the 'few words' that I had with my mother upon the subject.

It appeared that, simultaneously with this onslaught upon me, a similar attack was made upon my dear Louisa by her uncle, who was in great wrath when he learned that she had been 'taking up' with 'a weaver loon.' His indignation knew no bounds; and determining to prevent matters from proceeding further between us, he at once yoked the horses to his wagon, and drove off with Louisa; so that we were separated without having said one word of good-bye, or having been able to arrange any plan for ever meeting again, or even of communicating with each other! As may well be imagined, I received a dreadful shock when I found that Louisa was gone. It was a terrible blow indeed, and for a time almost completely prostrated me. Young has well said that—

Our first love murdered is the sharpest pang
A human heart can feel.

My first love was most ruthlessly murdered; and sharp indeed was the pang it sent through my young and inexperienced heart. I was so completely upset, that I could not for some time give my attention to anything, and I was like to have forgotten my music altogether. Mr M'Lachlan spoke very kindly to me, and endeavoured to get me to forget my grief by resuming my musical studies; but I told him that

his remonstrance was like that of Patie with Roger in the 'Gentle Shepherd;' and I felt as if I could say with the latter :

I'll break my reed, and never whistle more.

Time, however, that mitigates the intensity of all our sorrows, brought relief to my wounded feelings, and I was able again to take a cheerful view of life, and to enter with my former spirit into my wonted engagements.

Such is the plain, unvarnished tale of the youthful love of a man who has now exceeded his threescore years and ten. It is given not without some reluctance on my part; but considering that I have already repeatedly told the story in private circles, and that it may amuse, if not interest, the sympathetic reader, its introduction here may not be deemed out of place in my autobiography.

IN THE PRECENTOR'S DESK.

Some time after this unfortunate love affair, my uncle being nearly ready to be licensed as a preacher, it became necessary for him to vacate the precentor's desk, which he had held for some time. It was agreed that, before he left, he should look out for a successor, and, if possible, procure one who belonged to the congregation. In considering the matter, he found that there were two persons, either of whom would be suitable. These were—a cousin of mine, David Forbes, weaver; and John Reid, tailor. My uncle agreed that these two should be tried separately, along with himself, in the first instance, and afterwards have a day of the precentor's desk separately, after which it would be left to the congregation to decide between the merits of the two candidates. By this time, however, I had an eye to the precentorship myself, and I reminded my uncle that he had also promised me a day. He was inclined to demur at first; but after a little persuasion on my part, he agreed to give me a trial also, after Forbes and Reid had had theirs. With this I was very well pleased.

Well, it came to my turn to sing, and I entered upon the trial with a considerable feeling of trepidation. My nervousness caused my voice to be somewhat shaky during the

singing of the first four lines ; but after these had been successfully gone through, I gained confidence, and sung the remaining three verses without the slightest sensation of fear. When the congregation were dismissed in the forenoon, I could easily perceive that I was the principal subject of their conversation, and I felt much flattered by some of the observations that were made respecting me. I recollect that one gentleman—Mr Anderson, farmer—accosted my uncle as follows : ‘ I tell you, Mr Forrester, that laddie is to be oor next precentor ; he has a far better voice than ony o’ the young callants ye hae been tryin’, an’ I think there’s mair music in his voice than there is in yer ain. Hey, laddie,’ he continued, turning to me, ‘ ye’ll gae up in the afternoon again—mind that.’

I heard no more from him, but hurried home as fast as I could, highly flattered with the compliment Mr Anderson had paid me.

My uncle made arrangements for me to fill the desk in the afternoon, and alone. This I felt to be a very great honour, although I was also sensible of the responsibility which rested upon me. When I saw our aged and venerable minister, Mr Hay, ascend the pulpit, and found myself sitting alone in the precentor’s desk, a cold perspiration broke out upon me. However, when the minister began to read out the psalm, and I had my tune selected, I mentally said : ‘ Now, Robert, you must banish fear, or you will spoil all.’ At that time, it was customary for the precentor to sing the first line by himself ; and this I found to be very trying to my nerves. However, I got through it tolerably well ; and when I heard the congregation joining in so harmoniously, I was enabled to banish fear effectually, and so to get through with the duty satisfactorily.

After this successful *début*, I was no stranger to the precentor’s desk, even during my uncle’s incumbency ; and when he resigned, I was duly installed as his successor.

A WORD TO PRECENTORS.

Before proceeding further, I will make one or two observations, for the benefit of other precentors. I would say, then, do not have too much confidence in yourselves, or in your

own abilities; for if you look aright, you may see many sitting below you who are superior to you, both in fine taste and musical abilities. Depend upon it, too much self-confidence on your part has a tendency to destroy your influence in the opinion of all those who are men of well regulated minds. Perhaps this observation may apply in some respects to clergymen themselves. It is true, their responsibilities are still greater; and hence the necessity devolving upon them of carefully guarding their conduct in every movement affecting their duties not only in the pulpit, but also in mingling with the men of the world. To have a desire for popularity in either case is commendable; but take care, on your part, that there be not too much fishing for it. Perhaps I have gone too far on this subject; but if I have, I hope the reader will bear with me.

A PRECENTOR'S ANECDOTE.

I will conclude what I have to say upon this subject by relating a characteristic anecdote relative to the introduction of new tunes into congregations. I must preface the anecdote by remarking that the congregation at Alyth, of which I was the precentor, had a great aversion to new tunes being introduced, and occasionally some little unpleasantness was caused in consequence. Well, one day as I was going to Dundee on business, I happened to meet the Rev. Dr M'Gavin at the Newtyle station, he being on his homeward journey to Dundee. We got into conversation; and in the course of our talk, he knowing the prejudice which some of our people had, said:

'Well, Robert, are you still persisting in introducing new tunes?'

'Well, sir,' I replied, 'I am now and again endeavouring to introduce a new tune to satisfy the taste of the younger members.'

'Ay,' continued the reverend doctor, 'and how do the rest like it?'

'Oh,' I replied, 'I am sorry to say they do not relish it at all.'

'Indeed,' said the doctor; 'what have you been giving them lately?'

'Well,' I replied, 'I have been giving them several tunes;

but if there is one more than another that they abhor, it is Piety.'

At this the reverend doctor burst out into a hearty laugh ; and he afterwards related this conversation in numerous church circles ; so that my allegation of the abhorrence of the congregation of Alyth to Piety is a standing joke to this day.

EXPERIENCE AS A COUNTRY SCHOOL TEACHER.

I now enter upon another era in my life, and introduce myself to the reader as a teacher of the young in a country school.

I think it was somewhere about the year 1820, that a communication came to my uncle, addressed to him by two farmers from the districts of Drimie and Claywhat, asking if he could recommend a teacher suitable for their district, as it was in that district he had commenced his own career as a teacher. The farmers expressed a hope that he would still take an interest in their behalf, in procuring for them a person who would answer their purpose. They intimated, at the same time, that they could only engage a teacher for six months during the winter season. Although I was so young, my uncle took it upon him to recommend me. They wrote in reply, expressing their satisfaction that he had been able to recommend one so intimately acquainted with himself. They stated the salary they would be able to give, with victuals ; and requested, if I was satisfied with the offer, to signify the same in my own handwriting. I accordingly wrote and accepted the situation.

I opened the school about the beginning of November in the same year, and I had a large class all winter. I may observe, that the school-house was very open, and required a large fire to be kept up during the cold weather. This, however, we had to our hearts' content ; for it was a regulation of the school, that every scholar should bring a peat each day, and some of the older scholars occasionally brought more, so that we were thus enabled to maintain a roaring fire during the whole of school hours. The scholars made excellent progress in their education, so that I considered I would have great credit by them at the ensuing Candlemas examination.

CANDLEMAS FESTIVITIES.

Happening to mention, to the person with whom I lodged, what was the nature of these examinations, he informed me, much to my surprise, what was the manner in which they held their Candlemas festivities, and which, he assured me, had been held in the same manner from time immemorial. It was the only social gathering which the people in the district had all the year round; and I was very much amazed to learn that a leading feature in the festivities was that disgusting and brutal exhibition—a cock-fight!

Well, the important day arrived, and a great gathering of country folks there was—the whole population, young and old, for miles round, coming to see the great cock fight. I never witnessed such a repulsive sight in my life before, and I have no desire to do so again. I took no interest in this part of the day's proceedings, for it appeared to me to be a 'sport' that was so thoroughly objectionable, that no person of right feeling could find any enjoyment in it. I therefore kept myself as much as possible aloof from the brutal and degrading spectacle.

The scholars, I may here observe, were extremely liberal in their Candlemas dues towards me. These 'dues' consisted of gratuities, in different forms, which it appeared to be the custom for the children to give their schoolmaster at this period. One of the gifts thus offered to me, however, I felt bound to decline. After the fight was over, one of the scholars came to me, and handing me a cock, asked me to take it.

'Why,' I asked, 'what is this for?'

'O,' replied the boy, 'he is a "fogie"—he would not fight.'

'Well, my lad,' I said, 'you had better just take him home with you, for he appears to me the most sensible animal I have seen here to-day.'

The boy picked up the bird, and went home seemingly well pleased.

After the cock-fighting part of the business was over, the farmers of the neighbourhood, accompanied by the minister of Persie and the excise officer of the district, adjourned in

a body to the mansion of Laird Scott, where a handsome entertainment was provided for us. I did not absent myself from this part of the day's festivities, but, on the contrary, attended, and enjoyed it as much as any at the table. After a substantial repast had been duly discussed, the cloth was removed, and the punch bowl was set down, together with a plentiful supply of those ingredients necessary to fill the bowl with well made punch, and so add to the hilarity of the meeting; for it should be remembered that at that period there were no Good Templars, nor had such a thing as teetotalism been then known.

Conviviality then became the order of the evening. Toast and sentiment were proposed in rapid succession, and were duly responded to; and the greatest harmony prevailed. In compliance with repeated calls, I sung a number of Scotch songs in the course of the evening, which appeared to add to the gratification of the company.

I completed my six months' engagement here to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, and it was one of the happy periods in my life; so that when the day of parting arrived, I left Claywhat with much regret.

Life hath as many farewells as it hath sunny hours,
And over some are scattered thorns, and over other flowers.

AS TEACHER OF A PARISH SCHOOL.

Soon after I arrived from home, after completing this engagement, I was called to teach in the parish school of Airlie under the following circumstances:—The parish schoolmaster there met with an unfortunate accident, by which several of his bones were fractured, and it was rendered impossible that he would be able to attend to his duties for some time to come. At the same time, it was highly desirable that the school should not be shut—not even for a single day. In this awkward dilemma, the sister of the schoolmaster came over to me in great distress; and at her urgent request, I agreed to go and supply her brother's place. I accordingly went home with her that same afternoon, and opened the school on the following morning at the usual time.

A TURNING POINT IN MY LIFE.

I found the scholars to consist, for the most part, of very young children, which is generally the case in all country schools during the summer season. One family I had of whom I wish specially to speak; and that was the family of Mr Hoffman, gamekeeper, of Lindertes. I had not been long at Airlie when he and I became very intimately acquainted. Mr Hoffman was a most enthusiastic musician, well acquainted with the theory of almost every instrument that one could mention, and a good performer on not a few. The violin, however, appeared to be his masterpiece, and on this instrument he played to perfection. Finding in him such a congenial spirit, I was a frequent visitor at his house, where I always received a most cordial welcome.

During my stay here, Mr Hoffman, whose musical abilities had procured for him a wide celebrity, received a proposal from the manager of the Adelphi Theatre, Edinburgh, to form and lead a band for that place of amusement. When Mr Hoffman received this offer, he told me that, in the event of his accepting it, he should be glad if I would accompany him, and if I would do so, he would give me the French horn to play, which was one of the easiest instruments.

I was rather surprised to hear him speak in this manner. 'I wonder, Mr Hoffman,' I said to him, 'you should think of giving up your present situation for one of such a precarious nature. You tell me you have here forty pounds a year, with a free house and garden, and two cows for the use of the family. This is a certain income that you now have; the situation you propose to accept, although one much more in accordance with your taste, is very precarious in its nature. Were you a single man, having no one dependent upon you, I could not say a word against your making a trial of the situation; but situated as you now are, at the head of a family, I am rather surprised that you should think of accepting such an appointment.'

However, Mr Hoffman received a very tempting offer from Edinburgh, which he ultimately accepted. When he had decided to accept the appointment, he was anxious to induce me to accompany him, and at first I was strongly inclined to

do so. I was passionately fond of music, and would have sacrificed not a little to obtain a thorough theoretical and practical knowledge of it; but an apparently trivial circumstance occurred, while the proposal was under consideration, which led me to fear that my accompanying Hoffman would involve a sacrifice of a much more serious kind than I was prepared to make, notwithstanding my ardent attachment for music.

Talking over the matter with Mr Hoffman one day, 'O,' he said, 'come down next Sabbath, and let us run over some fine new pieces I have just received.'

'No,' I replied, 'I cannot come down on that day for such a purpose.'

Coming to reflect seriously upon the associates I should have, and the influences under which I should be brought, if I accompanied Mr Hoffman to Edinburgh, I determined that I could not enter upon so slippery a path, and I therefore wisely resolved not to leave my present position. I have had no cause since to regret that resolution. I believe, with Cowper, that

God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.

Had I accepted of the very pressing invitation of Mr Hoffman, and accompanied him to Edinburgh, I should, in all probability, have had a very different story to tell from this point in my career.

AGAIN AT THE LOOM.

I kept the parish school of Airlie until the vacation of the same year, by which time the schoolmaster was fully recovered, and able to resume duty himself. I accordingly returned home, and held myself in readiness for any other engagement of a similar nature that might turn up. In the meantime, as it was not profitable to remain idle, I resolved to take a spell at the loom; and in this manner I managed to fill up a month or two, until another scholastic appointment came my way, which it did much sooner than I expected.

APPOINTMENT AT LEITFIE.

A Mr Duncan Reid had taught in the school of Leitfie for about two years ; but about this time he received the offer of a better situation ; and he accordingly resigned his appointment at Leitfie. Having heard that I was open to an engagement, the managers of the school made me an offer to become Mr Reid's successor, which offer I at once accepted, and opened the school there on Nov. 6, 1822. I had a goodly number of scholars to start with, which was probably owing, at least in some measure, to the fact that the directors had a personal interest in the number being as large as possible, because it was part of their arrangement with me, that, in the event of the fees not bringing a certain sum, the directors themselves had to make up that amount to me. However, I am happy to be able to state that, during the two years I had charge of the school, the attendance of scholars was so good, that the directors had nothing to make up.

I look back upon the two years that I spent at Leitfie as among the happiest in my life. I had to walk four miles every day in going to and returning from school ; but this exercise was very exhilarating and conducive to health. In addition, in these walks I was accompanied by a number of scholars from Alyth and the neighbourhood, and their society kept me from wearying on the road.

The directors of the school were all men of good name and fame, and I have much pleasure in here giving their names, considering that the memory of such men should be perpetuated. They were as follow :—John Robertson, farmer, Leitfie ; William Howie, miller, there ; Angus M'Pherson, quarrier, also there ; Mr Colville, also of Leitfie ; Andrew Paton, farmer, Liroch ; William Harris, farmer, Berdmony ; William Bruce, farmer, Balharry ; and Joshua Kidd, farmer, Jordanston.

During the winter season, the school continued to be well attended ; but in the spring, a number of the grown-up scholars had to leave, in order to go and work. When the summer weather set in, however, I received a few additional scholars of the younger class, who to some extent made up for those who had left.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES.

During this summer, a Sabbath morning prayer meeting was established at Leithie, where there was at that time a considerable population. This meeting was pretty numerously attended by both males and females. I understood that this meeting was got up principally by Messrs Howie and M'Pherson, and was held in the school-house. Mr Howie was the first who gave me any information respecting these meetings, and he at the same time invited me to come down occasionally and see them. At this interview, he assured me that the directors were all well satisfied with my method of instruction, and with the religious teaching which it was my custom to give to the scholars on Saturdays. He remarked that, although the directors all belonged to the Established Church, while I was a dissenter, that would be no objection to my coming down and uniting with them in their religious exercises—'because,' he said, 'true religion knows nothing of denominations.'

I accordingly went down to Leithie on the first Sunday after this interview, and was quite astonished to find so many persons assembled at the prayer meeting, and to see with what marked attention they listened to all that was said and done.

SOJOURN AT DUNDEE.

I went on very pleasantly with my school at Leithie all through the summer; and when the vacation occurred which takes place at the beginning of harvest, I took advantage of the opportunity of attending one of the Dundee schools for the purpose of improving myself principally in my knowledge of arithmetic.

I had a good many acquaintances in Dundee at that time, consisting for the most part of persons belonging to the religious denomination with which I was connected; so that I felt quite at home among them. The Rev. Matthew Frazer was then the minister. It so happened that, a short time previous to my going to Dundee, the congregation were deprived of the services of their regular precentor, and the duties were in the interval being performed by two of my

acquaintances—Mr James Milne, tobacconist, and Mr Alex. More, painter. These two precentors *pro tem.*, on learning that I was coming to Dundee, requested me to officiate for them during my stay in town ; and with this request I very willingly complied. I accordingly occupied the precentor's desk upon the first Sunday after my arrival in Dundee ; and arrangements having been previously made between Mr More, Mr Milne, and myself, to have a congregational practice of sacred music, to be held in the church, at least two or three evenings each week during the time that I remained amongst them, Mr Frazer announced these practices from the pulpit on the first Sunday I officiated. These practices were very well attended during the whole time they were continued, and by a number of persons belonging to other congregations than Mr Frazer's.

ANOTHER CRISIS IN MY HISTORY.

During the time I remained in Dundee, I boarded with Mr Rattray, teacher of the Deaf and Dumb Institution. He was known as an excellent mathematician, and I had accordingly selected him as my instructor. I found him a most able teacher ; and in his school, which I attended, we certainly enjoyed great peace, for no one who attended it could speak, except Mr Rattray and myself. We two enjoyed each other's society very much ; and I must say this for Mr Rattray, that he did all in his power to forward me in my studies.

About this time, circumstances occurred which had an important influence in determining Mr Rattray's subsequent career, and which had also an important bearing upon my own future prospects. The Government was at that period bestowing some attention upon its colonial possessions at the Cape of Good Hope ; and with a view to promoting education there, it advertised for certified teachers. After due deliberation, Mr Rattray applied for an appointment ; and having been well certified, he found no difficulty in obtaining one. The salary offered was £120 per annum to married men, and £80 to unmarried men, with free house, and other advantages. As it was specially stated in the advertisement that preference would be given to those who had a knowledge of Latin and

music, Mr Rattray was very desirous that I should accompany him, and did not doubt, from the knowledge which I had of both Latin and music, that I would obtain an appointment readily enough.

To his proposal, I replied : ' Although I were to be successful in obtaining a Government appointment, I am afraid there are two obstacles which would stand in the way of my accepting it.'

' If it be a fair question,' he said, ' what may these obstacles be ?'

' Well,' I replied, ' it is scarcely of any use to mention them, as they appear to me of such a nature as to be quite insuperable.'

' O, you don't know,' he replied ; ' perhaps I might help you.'

' Well,' I said, ' the first is that I have a decided objection to go to a new country unmarried.'

' Why so ?' Mr Rattray asked.

' Because,' I said, ' I do not think it advisable to go out to a strange country, and take my chance of getting a good wife there.'

' Don't you ?' he asked.

No ; young as I am,' I replied, ' I would rather prefer marrying at once some one that I know belonging to this country.'

' What am I to understand by this ?' he said—' some one that you know ? Do you mean that you have already a wife in view ?'

' Well,' I replied, ' that is pressing me rather hard ; but since you have fairly put it to me, I will confess that there is one whom I would prefer to all others, but I cannot tell you who she is.'

' Why not ?' he asked.

' Delicacy prevents me,' I replied.

' Well,' he continued, ' whether you tell me her name or not, 'do you think you could obtain her consent to go with you ?'

' Well, Mr Rattray,' I replied, ' I know you are very anxious that I should accompany you to the Cape of Good Hope ; and were it for no other reason than to gratify you,

I could wish from the bottom of my heart that she would say, "I will go." We have been so short a time acquainted, however, that I am really afraid to put the question.'

'Then you have not known the lady very long,' he said.

'No,' I replied. 'The fact is, I have only made her acquaintance since I came to Dundee.'

'O, indeed,' he said.

'Well,' I continued, 'if any one knows her, you certainly should, because she is—your own sister!'

'O!' he exclaimed with some surprise, 'the land lies that way, does it? Well, perhaps we are destined to be very intimately related friends indeed. So far as I am concerned, I shall not object to such a relationship, but will do all in my power to hasten it. Now, then, for your second objection,' he added.

'The second,' I observed, 'is not of so delicate a nature, but I fear it may prove more formidable than even the first. As you know, my mother has been for many years a widow, and I am her only surviving son. My uncle and she, along with myself, have now for some years constituted one family; but my uncle is expected to leave almost immediately, as he will soon be licensed to preach. Should he be fortunate enough to receive a call to any congregation, this will in all likelihood cause a separation between my uncle and my mother. In these circumstances, I do not see how I could leave my mother.'

'Well,' said Mr Rattray, 'this is indeed a very formidable obstacle in your way; but if the matter is rightly represented to your mother, and the advantage to your worldly welfare which is likely to result from your removal to the Cape of Good Hope, she may be induced, however reluctant at first, to give her sanction to your expatriation.'

'I do not know whether she would,' I said; 'but I think it would be as well, in the first instance, that your sister should be consulted in the matter, and her mind upon it ascertained.'

To this Mr Rattray assented, and the subject was dropped for a time.

Mr Rattray took an early opportunity of speaking to his sister about the affair, and asked how she felt about it. To

his surprise, as well as to mine, she decidedly refused to entertain the proposal.

'Why,' Mr Rattray said, 'is Robert distasteful to you?'

'No,' she replied, 'I cannot say that exactly, although he is rather too much of a general lover to suit my taste; but on no consideration whatever will I be induced to go abroad. This is my great objection, and it is one that can never be overcome.'

I saw her soon after this conversation took place; and I believe that, when we met, we both felt a little awkward. I had to introduce the subject, however, and I endeavoured to do so in the manner most agreeable to her feelings. My persuasions, however, were of no avail. She decidedly and flatly rejected my suit, and endeavoured to console me for her rejection by saying that I might find some one else who would be induced to accompany me abroad. In her case, I experienced the full truth of the couplet,

If she will she will, you may depend on't;
And if she wont she wont, and there's an end on't.

Her refusal put an end to the emigration scheme, so far as I was concerned. However, we parted on very good terms. Mr Rattray, with his wife and family, sailed for the Cape of Good Hope in the following spring, in company with several other teachers. A few years afterwards, so far as I could learn, Miss Rattray went to a situation in Liverpool, where she subsequently married a wealthy brewer, whose fortune enabled her to keep her carriage and live in grand style.

RETURN TO LEITFIE.

After my time of six weeks was completed in Dundee, I returned home, and again opened school at Leitfie on the 6th of November 1823, commencing the second year there by Martinmas. The school continued well filled with scholars until spring. I think it was in that year Mr John Howie, junior, commenced in good earnest to writing and arithmetic. He was naturally clever, and soon distanced all the rest who commenced along with him. So far as I recollect, he went the length of vulgar fractions in Gray's arithmetic that

season. I am very happy indeed at his prosperity in the business to which he has devoted himself, the more especially as I came to learn that his workmen are very much attached to him as an employer. This intelligence I had both from masons and quarrymen the last time I visited Alyth. One thing I am sure of, if he is as kind and obliging as his father was, he indeed deserves to be well respected.

COMING EVENTS CASTING THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

I now come to another incident in my life. On the Whitsunday of that year, two young women were engaged with Mr John Crockatt, one of the elders of our congregation, to learn the weaving. The name of the first was Susan Burns. She had served for four years previous to this in the manse of the Rev. Mr Hay, her yearly wages being only £4 per annum—just such as other women were getting in like circumstances at the time. The other woman's name was Elizabeth Robertson, a distant relation of my own; and as there were a good many women learning the weaving at that time, they determined to go also. They accordingly agreed with the above-named gentleman on the following conditions:—Their apprenticeship was to last until they had woven thirteen webs, and he was to have the half of their earnings during that time, amounting altogether to about £2 sterling. This arrangement was quite reasonable, provided he had been qualified to learn them—which he was not. Being too old and infirm, and his eyesight almost gone, he was totally unqualified to do anything like justice to them. However, there were two men who worked in the shop with them who gave them some little assistance at times until I came up from the school, when I made it a point to visit them every day, with a view to set their looms in good working order. The two men who worked beside them sometimes would in a taunting manner say, when they were like to get into any difficulty during the afternoon: 'Have patience, ladies; the Leittie schoolmaster will be here in a little, and he will put all things to right.' I must say I had them to learn, although old John Crockatt got the payment for it; but, for my

trouble, I afterwards got one of them altogether as my wife—which will be mentioned in due course.

RETIREMENT FROM TEACHING.

During that summer, the school went on very prosperously, and we continued together until the vacation, which always takes place at the beginning of harvest. During the end of this summer, I turned somewhat poorly in health, which caused me considerable uneasiness, so that I could not think of engaging again for next year. We had, therefore, to part, however reluctantly on both sides.

I may also state here, that during the vacation of that year I had the offer of a school at Kingoodie, some miles west from Dundee. This school was represented to be worth about £80 per annum; but being in an infirm state of health at the time, I was obliged to decline this offer. Here, then, ended my career as a teacher of day schools; but I may state, that I often held evening classes after this date, both in Alyth and elsewhere, for the purpose of teaching sacred music, and in these classes I certainly was very successful, and I believe this success arose chiefly from the plan I adopted, which was to lower the fees. The sum generally charged by other professional teachers of music was 2s. 6d. per month of 24 days, whereas my charge was 1s. 6d. for the same time. By adopting this plan, I always had large classes, and consequently drew more money at the end of the month than others did. Besides, it afforded an opportunity to many of the working-classes to attend, who would not otherwise have attended. This was also carrying out the principle which I always advocated and acted upon, which will be made to appear in what has to follow in the course of this narration.

A CONCERT INCIDENT.

I might relate a number of incidents that took place during these gatherings, especially when I was teaching in the country; but I shall content myself by only giving one which occurred at Shanzie, a farm-town about two miles east from Alyth. At the termination of a month's practice, a night was

set apart for a general concert, to which all and sundry were admitted by ticket at the low price of 6d. ; and when the concert ended, dancing was resorted to, and generally was continued until an early hour next morning. In order to procure refreshments for the people congregated together on these occasions, the services of a publican from Alyth had to be engaged ; and for the accommodation of lads and lasses, the sweetie wives also attended, and certainly on these occasions drove a large business. On the particular night to which I refer, a large assembly were gathered together, and everything went on well during the early part of the evening. About nine or ten o'clock, however, one of the most severe snowstorms came on that had appeared for many a year. At the time we were ready to break up, the snow was deep on the ground, and large blown wreaths had accumulated, so that it was almost impossible to know how the road lay. The publican's cart, with the remainder of the provisions he brought with him, was totally covered with snow to a considerable depth ; but when daylight made its appearance, we discovered its whereabouts, and got it emptied of the remainder of its contents, which he sold to various of the families who were present on the occasion. The cart lay for some days after till it was possible to take it home. There was considerable anxiety on the part of us who remained as to how those who left the assembly reached their homes. We were anxious about one man in particular, who would not stay, but went off at all hazards. This was Mr Robert Marshall, a gentleman beloved by all who knew him, and one of the best comic singers of our day ; indeed, he was the real 'Harry Clifton' of that age. How joyful I was next day to know that he and the rest of the company arrived at their homes in safety, and no accident befel any of them. It was for years afterwards the talk of many, that evening of the Shanzie Concert.

ONE FOR THE GOOD TEMPLARS.

I may observe here, that I continued to raise classes for the purpose of teaching sacred music, also Scottish song ; and in that department I was generally reckoned not far behind

any singer in that age ; and even yet, old as I am, many say that I can sing a Scottish song to good effect. But I must be honest in telling you here—although it may be highly displeasing to the whole of the Good Templars of this age—I cannot sing worth a doken until I take at least one single tumbler of well made whisky punch. I may be told that this is my weakness, but I must just as honestly say that it is my strength, although Good Templars may doubt the statement.

RETURN TO THE LOOM.

After I finally left Lietfie in consequence of being somewhat in delicate health, as before stated, and after I had slightly recovered, I made up my mind to resume my old trade, the loom, as I always enjoyed better health at this occupation than any other. I went to the Messrs Duncan, for whom I formerly worked, and immediately obtained work. I may here mention, that these gentlemen, at that time, were almost the only manufacturers in Alyth, and employed a good many weavers, both in the town and surrounding country. Weavers were multiplied considerably at this date, in consequence of a large number of young women having taken to weaving, the trade being in a pretty prosperous condition, and their wages being small with farmers.

A DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP.

Shortly after this, Messrs Duncan came to an agreement to separate upon equitable terms, each of the partners carrying on trade on his own account. The mode of their agreement, so far as the weavers were concerned, was to take weaver about as they appeared in the list from the weavers' name book ; and in this division it so happened that I fell to the lot of Mr John, whilst my old apprentice, to whom I claimed a special right, was balloted to Mr James. So far as we two were concerned, this arrangement could make no difference ; but as I had particular reasons to plead against this arrangement, after weaving the first web to Mr John, I stated these reasons to him as follows :—‘ Although,’ I said,

'I can find no complaint against you as an employer, yet I have to state that, having come in contact more with your brother than I ever did with you, there naturally sprung up a warm attachment betwixt us, which makes this separation the more painful to me. Your brother is a great reader, and so am I, and when I make application for books to him, I get them with the greatest willingness; and I must say that in conversing with him, I often felt fascinated with the manner in which he treated the various subjects which came before us for discussion. On these accounts, and for other reasons I might mention, I cannot think myself happy in being separated from him.'

Accordingly I went to Mr James, and was received with kindness.

This gentleman was in politics a Liberal, kind and benevolent in all his transactions towards those who were employed by him. Above all, from the conversations we have often had together, he appeared to me to be a man of eminent Christian piety. 'Mark thou the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace!' And I was happy to observe, the other day, a fact recorded in the *Dundee Advertiser*, that Mr James Duncan, of the Brae, gave the largest subscription in Alyth for the sufferers caused by the fire at Chicago. This speaks volumes to those who believe in the transmission of hereditary qualities. Such father, such son.

MAKING ACQUAINTANCES.

It happened soon after this, that my old apprentice removed from Alyth to her father's house at Mains of Rattray, in order to be near her mother, and be company to her during her father's absence. He was what is termed a lint miller, and wrought at that time at the Mill of Cupargrange; soon after which he became taxman. He had attached to the mill a small piece of land, on which he could keep a cow. So far as my memory serves me, her eldest sister was married to William Mitchell, slater and plasterer. Before they removed to Cupargrange, her younger sister was at service at this time, and her brother Alexander was apprenticed to a wright there named

Allen. All things went on very smoothly with them, and I am happy to say I was always made a very welcome visitor whatever time I went.

AN OLD FRIEND.

My old apprentice, when her father removed to Cupar-Grange, erected a loom in the house, and obtained work from Mr Thomas Chalmers, Leyrigs, who served all the weavers in that district, he having an agency from one of the manufacturers in Dundee. Respecting this gentleman, I may state, that he possessed many excellent qualities, and was held in high esteem in the neighbourhood in which he resided. I knew him as the leader of the psalmody in the Secession congregation of Cupar-Angus, and a most efficient leader he was. He was, indeed, one of the best precentors I ever heard in that church. He is now an aged, infirm man, and nearly blind. Singularly enough, it so happens that both he and I now, in our old age, reside in Forfar. He lives with Mr Robert Ferguson, his son-in-law, who is manager in Dons Work, in this town.

MY MARRIAGE.

My intended wife continued to work at the weaving until the summer of 1825, when she came to stay, for a short time previous to our marriage, with her brother-in-law, Mr Mitchel Muir, of Balhary, about half a mile south from Alyth. After being proclaimed for three successive Sundays, we were duly united in wedlock on the 1st of August 1825. We took up house in Alyth, having rented a loom and a four-loom shop from Mr Andrew Dure, boot and shoemaker there. We soon afterwards had two apprentices, whom my wife instructed; and from this circumstance, as the reader will observe, I began to reap the fruit of my labour bestowed upon her when she was an apprentice with John Crockatt.

We had no family for five years after our marriage, which proved fortunate so far as we were concerned, when we take into consideration the serious disaster that befell our country not long after our marriage, and to which I shall now more particularly advert.



THE STARVATION YEAR.

The year 1826 was long remembered by many a poor and industrious family as one of extraordinary privation and suffering to them. The harvest commenced in the month of July; and what a harvest! The fields everywhere presented the most blighted appearance, and any one could easily see that they would not afford sustenance for either man or beast. That harvest was undoubtedly the most extraordinary that I have any remembrance of. I recollect that, on the 23d of July, I happened to be going from Alyth to attend the fair at Blairgowrie, along with a friend; and in the course of our walk we had an ample opportunity of seeing the melancholy condition of the crops. We witnessed numerous carts leading into the barn-yards of different farms; and the sight was quite distressing. The produce of the fields might be said to bear some resemblance to corn; but it was so light and devoid of substance, that the person filling the cart took up a whole stack in his hands at once, with greater ease than he would, on ordinary occasions, lift one sheaf. We looked on in painful silence at this doleful scene, so full of sad forebodings to the working classes.

My wife went down to her father's in Cupargrange during that harvest, and 'shore'—that is, reaped—upon the farm of Ryhill, which was then in the hands of Sir William Forbes and Sir John Hay, and she earned no less a sum than £3 by her harvest labours.

We had great difficulty in getting through the awful winter that succeeded this most deplorable harvest, and also the summer of 1827, during which provisions of every description were very scarce, exceedingly poor in quality, and terribly high in price. To many a poor family, it was a very trying time indeed. This will be readily understood, when it is mentioned that during this eventful period, oatmeal sold at from 2s. to 2s. 6d. per peck. The high price, however, was not the only calamity; for, in addition to this, the quality of the meal was so extremely bad, that it was scarcely fit to be given as food for swine.

The harvest of 1827, however, was a pretty good one; and towards the end of that year there was a very acceptable

improvement in the food supplies—at least so far as regarded their quality. Owing to the unusually high price of provisions for some time previously, however, many poor people got very deeply into debt, from which it was a long time before they got free.

ALYTH CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.

I was intimately concerned in the formation of the Alyth Co-operative Society, and in its practical working for many years; and some account of my connection with it may be given at this point in my story.

This society was established by means of shares of 5s. The whole amount, however, that the projectors could raise in this manner was only £30—a sum wholly inadequate with which to commence a grocery shop, coupled with a grocery establishment. We were determined not to be baffled in our enterprise, however; and after mature deliberation, it was agreed that we should endeavour to borrow the sum of £200 from the Commercial Bank in Dundee. This was certainly rather a bold step to determine upon, seeing that we had nothing like substantial security to offer; but we knew that, ‘never venture, never win.’ We also knew that Mr Christie, the cashier of this bank, was a very liberal-minded gentleman, and showed great kindness to all who were honourably trying to better their position. The committee, who were ten in number, directed me to write to Mr Christie, requesting such a loan. I did so, and at the same time sent him the names of the ten members of committee as security on a twelve months’ bill. My letter was not answered until the banker had an opportunity of consulting some of our Alyth merchants, who happened to do business at the bank. In reply to Mr Christie, they stated that the applicants were all very poor men, and recommended him not to risk such a sum in their hands. I should state, that we were aware that these gentlemen, so far from being friendly to our enterprise, had shown hostility to it in every possible way. The banker then said: ‘You say these men are poor; but I ask you this question—do you think they are honest?’

The answer of the manufacturers to this question was: 'We can say nothing against their honesty.'

'Why, then,' Mr Christie very kindly said, 'let us help them.'

Accordingly, I received a letter next day, announcing that the bank was willing to accede to our request. After further consideration by the committee, however, we thought £100 would be sufficient for our purpose, and we agreed to ask only this sum. We then procured a bill, to which all our ten names were attached; and three of our number were appointed to proceed to Dundee for the purpose of purchasing goods for the shop and flour for the bake-house. Those who were thus appointed were William Begg, my cousin Thomas Forbes, and myself.

I may mention that our friends the manufacturers, although not showing us much kindness in the earlier stages of our career, yet afterwards became very friendly to us.

The three members of committee having returned from Dundee, summoned the rest of their brethren to meet them and receive an account of their transactions and purchases on behalf of the society. We then examined in detail the prices of the various goods, as indicated by the invoices, with a view to settling the prices at which they should be sold to the public when the shop was opened. Without going into detail, I shall simply mention two articles, the price of which we were enabled to reduce to a considerable extent to the general consumer. The one was red herrings, and the other was treacle. At that time, the retail price usually charged by the grocers in Alyth for herrings was 8s. per dozen—they being at that period sold at so much per dozen, and not by weight, as now. We had two qualities of herrings in our shop, and we sold the best, in retail, at 4s. per dozen; while the other sort—denominated 'tenters' by the curers—we sold at 3s. per dozen. I must say, however, that the fish were very cheap at that time—much cheaper than they are now. Our treacle we sold at 3½d. per lb., while the grocers were selling theirs at 6d. These reductions speak for themselves.

The salesman whom we appointed was one of ourselves—William Begg, a man held in great estimation. I went to the shop on the opening day, to give him a hand in selling

herrings; and I recollect that I cleared out two whole barrells, containing no fewer than 120 dozen. This was a very fair stroke of business for one day, and I can assure you that at night I felt very much fatigued with my day's work. We had no need to advertise the opening of our shop, for one customer told another of the great bargains that were to be had, and we had a splendid run of business for that day at any rate. We were much amused at the various comments which were made by some of the old women on the occasion of our opening, and which were expressive of great surprise and gratification. My cousin and myself came in for a large share of remark, in consequence of the prominent part we took in the getting up and management of the society.

STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE 'LORDS' AND THE 'COMMONS.'

It was not to be supposed, however, that the grocers would tamely submit thus to have their *métier* invaded without making some attempt at resistance. Accordingly, I can scarcely say that we were surprised, on the morning after our shop was opened, to hear the town crier announcing that, at the shop of So-and-so, herrings were to be had at 2½d. per dozen, and treacle at 2½d. per pound. This was competition with a vengeance! The public were in ecstasies. One old man went into the shop of this under-selling grocer with a large flagon, and asked to be supplied with fourteen pounds of treacle.

This was rather too large a demand upon the grocer's stock. 'Weel, Jeames,' he said to his customer, 'I canna gi'e yie ye sae muckle's a' that; but I'll gie ye ae pund.'

The customer, however, was not to be 'diddled' in this way. 'Na, na,' he replied; 'come awa' wi'd, man. Oor Meg's gaun to brew a browst o' treacle ale; so ye'll jist come awa' wi'd, man.'

The grocer was forced to comply; and it need scarcely be added that, on these terms, he was not long in effecting what, in the trade, is known as 'a speedy clearance.'

To tell the truth, the grocers in the town felt considerably annoyed and chagrined at our undertaking, as their craft,

like that of certain artificers of old, was in danger ; and they did all in their power to thwart our scheme. One of their endeavours to do so consisted in causing the streets of the town to be placarded with a mysterious announcement, in something like these terms :

‘Beware of that notorious Pilferer of the Public, as he is going about cheating and devouring you ;’ and more to the same effect.

The members of our committee were highly indignant at this obnoxious placard, and one or two set themselves to pull down every copy that was to be seen. One copy only was preserved, which was produced at a special meeting of the committee, held to consider what steps should be taken with a view to discovering the author, and bringing him to punishment. After reading through the placard, however, we saw that nobody’s name was mentioned in it—although I had no doubt in my own mind that it was levelled principally against me.

‘My friends,’ I said, after a moment’s consideration, ‘this affair will do us more good than harm, so that I do not think we should concern ourselves further about it.’

The offensive placard was accordingly dismissed forthwith with a good laugh, in which all heartily joined.

The grocers soon saw that there was nothing for them but to fight ; and that, to fight successfully, they must do so unitedly. They therefore resolved to fight us, and with our own weapons. They determined to attack us in the baking department ; and with this view, they formed themselves into a joint stock company, the shares being £5 each. The reader will see, that this was a striking contrast to our shares, which were only 5s. each. We accordingly, in sarcastic recognition of their superior assumption, gave them the designation of the ‘House of Lords ;’ while we, by way of distinction, were dubbed the ‘House of Commons.’

A SHARP STROKE OF BUSINESS.

Well, the two rival houses went on together peaceably, each doing their best to serve the inhabitants of Alyth with as good articles as was possible. The price of flour remained

pretty stationary for a considerable time ; so that, whilst this lasted, we were enabled to go on together in harmony, always selling at the same price. Indeed, we were equally bound to do this, be the price of flour what it might. The time came, however, when a very sudden rise in flour took place, and we were both placed in the same position with regard to stock in that article—both our stocks being about exhausted at the time.

We got word from Dundee on a Saturday morning that flour would be raised in price from 40s. to 58s. per bag on the following Monday. A few of our committee met in the bakehouse immediately after we got this word on Saturday morning, in order to consult upon what was best to be done in this emergency. It was agreed that I should go off to Kirriemuir that same day, and call upon a Mr Esplin, baker and general flour merchant there, and do the best I could with him, we having had a quantity of flour from him previously which had given satisfaction. I accordingly went home, had my breakfast, and took the road immediately. I went on with all possible speed until I arrived at Kirriemuir, and called at Mr Esplin's, and was happy to find him at home. After entering into general conversation with him, I found that he had not been in Dundee the day before, which raised my hopes considerably. I was invited to take dinner with him, but this I could not do, as I had other friends to call upon with whom I would have to stay to dinner. However, I engaged to take tea with him, and you may be sure I went with good will. We immediately commenced to bargain, and after a little negotiation I gave him an order for ninety bags of fine flour and ten bags of seconds, to be delivered by instalments as required ; the price of the fine to be 40s. per bag, and the seconds 30s. per bag. I suggested that, as this was the first transaction I had made by myself on the society's account, it would be necessary to commit the transaction to writing and have it duly signed, which was accordingly done. We spent a pleasant evening together, and in due time separated after partaking of a substantial supper.

When Monday morning had dawned, after having had breakfast in the house of a friend, I took the road home-

wards ; and a meeting of committee was held in the evening, when I laid the result of my negotiations with Mr Esplin before them—with which, as may be supposed, they were all gratified, when I mention that, on that very day the flour had risen 10s. per bag. I said : ‘ Well, my lads, we have got the House of Lords in a fix, and now let us hold them there. We can easily do so by continuing to sell the 4-lb. loaf at 6d., for they know well they must continue to do the same, be the price of flour what it may.’ There was considerable difference of opinion on this proposal, however—some considering that we should heighten the loaf one halfpenny, others one penny. I urged, however : ‘ No lingering death to our rivals, the House of Lords ! Let us slay them at once by selling our loaf at 6d. ; for, depend upon it, if they had hold of us in the same manner, they would have no mercy on us. We will soon be able to show them that it is no easy matter to have to sell a 4-lb. loaf 1½d. below the current price of flour.’ The grocers, however, continued to sell along with us until their capital was exhausted, after which they dropped the concern entirely, reverting to their former mode of conducting their various businesses, individually, as each deemed proper, and without giving us any further annoyance.

A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT.

There is just one other incident I have to record regarding the Alyth Co-operative Society. I was at all times anxious to try experiments with a view to its improvement ; and, accordingly, at one of its meetings of committee, I proposed that, instead of purchasing flour from flour merchants, we should purchase wheat and make our own flour. This proposition met with strong opposition ; and had it not been that I had three of my cousins in the committee, I could not have carried it. However, it was ultimately agreed to, on the understanding that, if the plan turned out to be dearer than that previously adopted, all those who voted for it would have to make up the difference ; and if it should turn out to be about the same, or cheaper, I would be entitled to receive payment for my trouble in superintending the

operation. These conditions, although very hard, I accepted, and went to work immediately by going down to Cupar-grange, taking my father-in-law along with me in order to introduce me to Mr Andrew Archer, Cupar-grange. I bought from him twenty bolls of wheat, to be delivered to Mr James Young, flour miller, Cardean. I went to Dundee next day, and bought a small quantity of foreign wheat to mix along with it. At that time we had no bags in which to hold the grist, but Mr Young very kindly supplied this want. The result of the experiment was that, when the flour came to be tried by the baker, its quality was pronounced by him to be superior to any previously baked by him for the society. It also turned out more loaves per bag than any bought flour we had had, and we were consequently enabled to reduce the price of the 4-lb. loaf one halfpenny, besides giving to the consumer a much superior article. I was duly paid for my trouble without any further scruple, and I have only here to add, that the society continued ever after to make its own flour.

This society lasted for twenty-one years, after which it died in peace, I believe entirely from mismanagement, I cannot say how, for I had ceased to be a member for a considerable time before it breathed its last.

CO-OPERATION AT CUPAR-ANGUS.

I will now turn back for a little and give a short account of a deputation our committee sent to Cupar-Angus for the purpose of addressing a meeting there, where a Co-operative Society had been formed on the same principle as our own. Mr Spalding, from Cupar-Angus, came up to Alyth for the purpose of conferring with us upon certain misunderstandings that had arisen among the members of the society. It appeared differences had arisen as to the extent of credit which might be given to each member, and Mr Spalding wished our aid in settling this important matter. Three of us attended as a deputation from Alyth, being Mr Charles Buick, mason; my cousin Thomas Forbes; and myself. When on our way to Cupar-Angus, I went into our society and

bought a penny roll, and took it along with me ; and when we arrived in Cupar-Angus, I went and bought another penny roll from one of the bakers in the town. I considered myself thus completely equipped for a speech, although I said nothing about it until the assembly met. At the meeting, Mr John Ferguson was called to occupy the chair ; and after a few introductory remarks, he called upon one of the delegates from Alyth to address the meeting. I had intended to be the last speaker, but neither of my friends would be the first to stand up. There was, therefore, no other alternative but for me to speak first. I said I had no intention of hindering their time with a long string of theories on the subject, but should merely show the large audience some of the practical benefits derivable from co-operation. 'I will now,' I said, 'let you see my speech, and when I hold it up in my hand it will speak for itself. This speech, which is in two halves, just cost me twopence. The half in my right hand was from our co-operative shop in Alyth ; this in my left hand, I bought from one of your bakers when I arrived here. This small fellow (holding up the Cupar-Angus roll) represents individual interest in all its might and mastery ; this great big chap in my right hand represents the result of enlightened co-operation, or, in other words, the ready-money penny roll. Now, my friends, I ask you, which of them will you choose ? This small one is the credit roll, which I believe no one possessed of common sense would choose in preference to the other.' So far as I can learn there was no more mention afterwards of credit amongst them.

This society was for a long time in the habit of holding annual soirees, which I was, for the most part, invited to attend. It was for a long time conducted by Messrs Ferguson and Spalding, who acted as salesmen ; and two more energetic and efficient salesmen never served inside a counter.

ALYTH BOOT AND SHOE SOCIETY.

As I am now speaking on the subject of co-operation, I will give a brief account of the formation of the Alyth Boot

and Shoe Society. I could not rest contented with what we had attained in the practical operation of co-operative principles amongst us, considering that, if the working-classes were to rise in society, it must be through this medium. In proposing the formation of a Boot and Shoe Society on the co-operative principle, it was deemed advisable, in order to secure the interest of as many of the working-classes as possible, to make the shares 5s. each; but as it was my intention to obtain also the interest of the farmers in the district, I imagined that, if they were favourable to the enterprise, they would each take at least four such shares. In this I was not disappointed; for a good number of the farmers entered very heartily into the scheme. I regret to say, however, that comparatively few of the working-classes could be induced to embark in the business. It is a humiliating confession to have to make of the particular class to which I myself belong, but my own experience—which has been more extensive than most of my fellows, fully warrants me in making it—that the working-classes have almost invariably shown a singular amount of indifference and apathy in embarking in any undertaking which had for its object the bettering of their own condition.

After I had the plan thoroughly matured in my mind, I called on Mr Colville, farmer and factor to Mr Symth, of Balhary, at his residence at Toad Park, and laid before him my plans for the prosecution of this undertaking. When he heard them, he expressed himself as being satisfied with them, and in order to carry them out the more effectually, he would lend his 'shelt' to go to Glenisla amongst the farmers there. This being agreed to, when the day appointed had arrived, I went down to Toad Park, and after getting Mr Colville's shelt saddled and bridled, off I went on my journey to Glenisla. I had a busy time of it, for I had to give a lecture on boot and shoe co-operation in every house I entered, and I called at every house from the foot of the glen to the top of it. I got a welcome and hospitable reception in every house, however, and experienced no want for meat while on this journey, either for man or beast. A great portion of the farmers became shareholders, each subscribing for four shares. After having arrived from

Glenisla, I called on a few more farmers in the neighbourhood of Alyth, and was equally successful amongst them.

When we considered we had as much money subscribed as would warrant us, we called a meeting of the subscribers in order to form a committee. My friend, Mr Colville, was appointed chairman, and, so far as I can recollect, Mr Cownie, farmer, Morenty, treasurer; and myself, secretary. Our first transaction was to advertise for a manager. We had a good many applications for the situation, along with ample testimonials of character; but, ultimately, the appointment of Mr Peterkin, Dundee, was unanimously agreed to. I then went to Dundee and told him of his appointment to the managership. I took along with me the sum of £55 15s., and we went together to Mr Henry Henderson, leather merchant, made our purchases, and made ourselves ready to commence business without further delay—I having the shop taken previously. All arrangements regarding the conducting of the trade were left in the hands of Mr Peterkin and myself. In the affixing of prices, we found, when we came to take our first inventory, that we had erred, but I was more to blame for this than Mr Peterkin; for, I believe, that, in order to humour me, he consented to try the prices I insisted for; but I will here at once give the result. All we had over, after paying expenses, amounted to the small sum of 7s. sterling. According to arrangement, I called together the committee and laid before them the whole of the inventory sheets as taken, and the results. They seemed by no means surprised, but, on the contrary, expressed themselves quite satisfied with the result as it stood. The committee then discussed the propriety of giving credit, as others in the trade did, for six or twelve months, and after a long discussion, it was agreed to do so. I gave it as my opinion, that it was impossible to carry this resolution into effect without considerably enhancing the price of the manufactured article, and also greatly enlarging our capital. Unless we did this, we gave the death-knell to our society. The committee separated at that time, coming to no further resolution than they had already passed.

I was very much distressed at the resolution come to, and seeing that it was impossible to carry it out, and after con-

sulting with Mr Peterkin, I soon after convened the committee again, and it was then agreed to sell over to Mr Peterkin the whole stock and trade belonging to the society, for ten shillings in the pound; and that none of this sum could be called for by any of the shareholders for one year after that date. This was the end of the Alyth Boot and Shoe Society.

FORMER EMPLOYERS.

I shall now give another incident in my life, which relates to other two highly influential characters belonging to Alyth, who still work in the town, both father and son, who are now, and have been for a long time, almost the principal employers in Alyth; I mean David Smith, Esq., and his son John Smith, Esq., manufacturers. I worked for a long time to them previous to leaving Alyth; indeed I was the first weaver who ever worked a web for Mr Smith, senior, and at that time no one would have ever thought it possible for him to attain to the eminence he has since reached. Certainly, in his case, the wheel of fortune has turned in his favour in a remarkable degree.

HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR IS DUE.

From the great esteem in which the Messrs Smith were held, not only by their own workpeople, but by the whole of the inhabitants of Alyth, it was resolved to present them with some testimonial expressive of the regard entertained for them. A subscription list was accordingly opened, and a considerable sum of money was very soon obtained. It was then agreed that Mr Smith, sen., should be presented with an easy chair, and his son with a handsome silver snuff-box—each to have a suitable inscription. I was appointed to proceed to Perth to select the articles for presentation, which I accordingly did. Mr Yeaman, banker, formally presented the easy chair, in the name of the subscribers, to Mr Smith, sen., while Mr Johnstone presented the snuff-box to his son. The presentation took place in the oldest and largest hall in Alyth, and in the presence of a large and enthusiastic com-

pany. Messrs Yeaman and Johnstone both acquitted themselves admirably, and to the perfect satisfaction of the large assembly.

Mr Smith, the elder, has now retired from business, and I trust he will now have ample time to repose in his easy chair, and enjoy the repose which he has so well earned. Mr Smith, the younger, is now left to carry on the largest trade that ever was conducted in Alyth; and my fervent wish is, that he may be long spared, and that his business may continue to prosper, and to afford employment to as many people as at present.

PRESENTATION TO MYSELF.

As I am now speaking of presentations, it may be proper here to make mention of a presentation of a silver snuff-box which a number of the inhabitants of Alyth were good enough to make to me. This presentation was made under the following circumstances:—The bakers in Alyth were, in my opinion, charging too high a price for the four-pound loaf—much higher than was paid in the neighbouring town of Blairgowrie. I remonstrated with our Alyth bakers upon their conduct, but was simply requested by them, and that not in the most polite terms, to go about my business. I did so, however. I went to Blairgowrie, and made arrangements with the bakers there to send us over cart loads of bread, so that we were able to sell the four-pound loaf three-halfpence below the price which the Alyth bakers were charging. I continued to do this until the Alyth bakers were obliged to lower their price to the same as Blairgowrie, when the supply from that town was discontinued. For the part that I took in this matter, the inhabitants got up a public subscription, and resolved to present me with a silver snuff-box. The presentation took place in the Commercial Hall, in the presence of a large number of the inhabitants, consisting principally of the working classes. Mr John Dick was called to preside, and after a few appropriate remarks from him, Mr Robert Arthur, weaver, made the presentation, which he did in a neat and suitable speech. After I had made a few remarks in acknowledgment of the

gift, Mr William Taylor was called upon to address the meeting, which he did in very felicitous terms. The rest of the evening was filled up with songs and speechifying—the songs being given in an admirable manner by a number of females.

ANOTHER PRESENTATION.

Another gentleman of my acquaintance was presented with a silver snuff-box lately, in recognition of the prominent part he took in procuring an abundant supply of good water; and of this presentation also I may be allowed to give a brief notice here. The gentleman in question possesses considerable literary ability, and a production from his pen recently appeared in the *Dundee Courier* which attracted much notice in Alyth. This article had reference to the gift bestowed upon the town by the late Hon. Captain Ogilvie, of Loyal, and the writer complained that it had so long been shut up from public view, and was now, so far as the people of Alyth were concerned, a sealed book. The men of Alyth should feel proud to have such a gentleman living in their midst, not only on account of his literary abilities, but from his readiness at all times to aid the people in every movement that is for the general good. The article in question was first pointed out to me by Mr David Lindsay, now residing in Forfar, late of Kirriemuir—a gentleman who is also possessed of some literary attainment, and who has done much good to his fellow men in his time. Mr Lindsay, I understand, is again shortly to appear as an author—this time as a writer of various miscellaneous pieces, both in prose and poetry.

Without further remark, I would now simply state, that the gentleman who received the presentation to which I refer was Mr Robert Monro, boot and shoemaker, Alyth; and I trust he may long be spared to continue in the same honourable course for which he is now so well known.

ALYTH INSTRUMENTAL MUSICAL SOCIETY.

I will now record an event of some local interest, in which I was concerned—the formation of the first Instrumental

Musical Society in Alyth. This band was raised during the agitation which preceded the passing of the first Reform Bill. I was appointed to collect subscriptions towards the purchase of instruments, and defraying the necessary expenses which would be incurred; and in this I was exceedingly successful, both in town and country. Noblemen, gentlemen, and clergymen, as well as the working classes, all contributed with cheerfulness to the undertaking; so that we not only had a sufficiency of funds with which to purchase instruments, but also as much as would equip the band in a full military uniform. The band consisted of fourteen members; and when we were sufficiently advanced to make our first public appearance in the streets of Alyth, we had a large crowd of admiring followers.

Our musical teacher was the late Mr Andrew Neave, of Forfar—a gentleman in every way well qualified for the task. As regarded the purchase of the instruments, it may be mentioned that Mr James Duncan, manufacturer, kindly requested a friend in Edinburgh to purchase for us a bass drum of the best make to be had there. The request was duly attended to; for, according to the opinion given by the drummer, Mr William Butter, it was the best looking and best toned drum that he ever had before him. Butter, poor fellow, is now gone. He was one of the handomest men to be seen anywhere—good looking, well formed, and standing fully six feet high. As a fancy drummer, he was excelled by none in the neighbourhood.

RECOLLECTIONS OF GEORGE KINLOCH.

The mention of the manner in which the instruments for our band were procured, brings to my recollection the fact that one of the parties from whom we made purchases was no less a personage than George Kinloch, Esq., of Kinloch. Mr Kinloch was a good musician, and we bought from him his keyed bugle, and also a clarionet in C. He then sent to London for the rest of our instruments to correspond. I had a number of interviews with Mr Kinloch, and a good deal of correspondence with him, arising out of this transaction. On the occasions of these interviews, he entered very freely with

me into the discussion of the various social and political questions which were then agitating the country, and on which he expressed himself with great freedom. Our discussions also included musical subjects, on which Mr Kinloch displayed a refined taste and an enlightened judgment. The last interview I had with him took place at Kinloch House. He wrote to me, shortly after his election as the first parliamentary representative of Dundee, requesting me to come and see him before he left for London, to take his seat in the first Reformed Parliament. We talked upon a variety of topics, and before we parted, it was arranged that our band should meet and welcome him upon his return from London, at the close of the session.

The occasion of Mr Kinloch's return was looked forward to with much joyful anticipation by the members of our band; but, alas! they were doomed to sad disappointment, for it was ordered that we should never meet again in this world. The unexpected death of the great and good Kinloch was a great blow to the whole of our band, and especially to me, who had come so frequently in contact with him. The people of Dundee have done credit to themselves in having erected so handsome a monument to perpetuate the memory of so worthy a man.

SUCCESS OF THE ALYTH BAND.

Our band made great progress when fairly established, and in a short time it was second to no provincial band in the kingdom in point of efficiency. One circumstance in its history is worth mention here. We were very anxious to procure a trumpet, but did not know very well how to get it, as our funds were exhausted, and the gentry in the neighbourhood had already subscribed so liberally, that we had not the conscience to call upon them again. There was one gentleman in the neighbourhood, however, who had refused to subscribe when he was waited upon, because, as he alleged, it was a Whig band. Several of our members had repeatedly endeavoured to enlist his sympathies, but unsuccessfully. However, as I saw no other means of raising the needful for our trumpet, I resolved to see what could be done with the

old gentleman myself. I accordingly went to Bamff House, and was introduced to Sir James in the library. To my allusion to the claims of the Alyth Band, however, there was at first the same answer as had been given to all previous appeals—it was a Whig band, and Sir James was too good a Tory to give any countenance or support to any concern of the kind.

I assured him that he was mistaken in supposing that the band had any connection with politics whatever; and to show him the feeling which we entertained towards him and his family, I mentioned that, to perpetuate the memory of Bamff and the family of Bamff, I had learned a tune named 'Bonnie Bamff and Isla Water.' This tune I had got from my mother, who had got it from my grandfather. This tune I had now got set to music, and arranged in parts, for the purpose of practising it in our band.

'What was your mother's name?' Sir James asked.

'Lilias Forrester,' I replied.

'And what was your grandfather's name?' he continued.

'James Forrester,' I replied; and I believe our family had their residence on the Bamff estate for nearly two hundred years.'

'Really!' said Sir James in surprise.

'So far as I could learn,' I continued, 'my father's family were pendiclers under the house of Airlie for about that period.'

Sir James then said: 'I am quite satisfied with your statement. I have a distinct recollection of having heard of the family of Forrester as having long been resident on our estate.'

Sir James then left the library for a little, and on his return he gave me two pounds as his subscription, and also a very kind invitation to the band to visit Bamff House that same night, and bring with us a copy of the music of the tune referred to.

I returned home highly elated with the success of my visit. The band accepted of Sir James's invitation, and marched to Bamff by torchlight, it being winter. Our march was really an imposing sight. When we arrived within a short distance of the Castle, we struck up 'Bonnie Bamff,' which we played

with great vigour. When we reached the Castle, we sat down to a sumptuous supper, which Sir James had caused to be provided for us; and after due justice had been done to the good things with which we were so abundantly supplied, we entertained the household with music, and such a merry night as we had! The Alyth Band did not spend a night like it during the whole period of their corporate existence, and they spent many a night in mirth, music, dancing, and festivity.

The Alyth Band continued in existence for about twelve years and a half, and was in a state of high efficiency during the greater part of that period. While the band continued, I played Mr Kinloch's keyed bugle—an instrument which I held in the deepest veneration for the sake of its former owner.

THE SECOND ALYTH BAND.

Another instrumental band was formed in Alyth after the first one had ceased to exist, which was under the tuition of Mr James Anderson, of Forfar; and although he was as able a teacher as was to be found, yet this band never could distinguish themselves as efficient performers, except when they were led by Mr Anderson himself. When that gentleman left them, they endeavoured for some time afterwards to do the best they could without him; but they did not attain eminence as musicians, so that an early dissolution was their fate.

A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP.

I come now to speak of my business connection with Mr John Fenton, grocer and spirit merchant, Dundee. Being slightly acquainted with me, and knowing of my connection with the Alyth Co-operative Society, he took the liberty of asking me to send him a bag of fine flour from our stock. The sanction of the committee was given to his request, and a bag of fine flour was sent to him at cost price. No sooner was this bag sold, than he sent for another. Some negotiations subsequently took place between us, the result of which

was that we resolved to go into partnership, under the firm of 'Chalmers & Fenton'—he to sell wholesale, and I to purchase wheat and get it manufactured into flour.

We entered into partnership accordingly, and for a time did a very fair business. Unfortunately, however, the years 1846 and 1847 brought the disastrous potato blight, and this proved a sad blow to our business. Grain rose to almost famine prices, and we continued to purchase both wheat and barley to a considerable extent, expecting that prices would still keep going up. We continued to purchase until we had a pretty large stock in hand, and then prices came down very suddenly, causing us, and many others in the trade, to lose to a very serious extent. However, when we came to the end of the panic, and had settled our transactions in full, we found that we had £70 left over. For this sum, although so small, we were very thankful, when there were so many others in the trade who were completely prostrated by the panic.

We still went on with our trade, and continued to do a little in pot barley and barley meal, as well as in flour; and shortly after this we took an old plash mill belonging to the Earl of Airlie, and converted it into a barley mill. Attached to this mill were between 200 and 300 acres of land, so that it was considered we had a very good bargain of the place. After a time, Mr Fenton decided to remove from Dundee to Quich, where this mill was situated, and took up his residence in the upper story of the building, while I occupied the lower rooms. Soon after this, misunderstandings arose between us, into the details of which it is not necessary here to enter. Suffice it to say, that it was agreed I should retire from the concern, under conditions that were mutually assented to, and Mr Fenton got the business entirely into his own hands. He did not very long continue it afterwards, however, for he ultimately sold the tack to Mr Saddler, and came to Alyth, where he opened a grocer's shop, which he carries on to the present time.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS.

From the length to which this autobiography has already extended, I find that I shall be under the necessity of omitting

a number of incidents in my history, which it had otherwise been my intention to give. To do so, however, would swell the volume to greater dimensions than the price at which it has been promised to subscribers will permit; and I must therefore be as careful as possible of my remaining space.

I may say, however, that I took an active part in all matters of public interest that took place in Alyth during the time I resided there. Amongst other things, I remember that I had the honour to preside at a public meeting held in the town for the purpose of memorialising her Majesty's Government in behalf of Kossuth and the other Hungarian patriots who were suffering from the tyranny of the Austrian Government. Meetings of this nature were held in all the principal towns and cities throughout the kingdom. Lord John Russell was at that time Prime Minister, and the country felt confident that he would interfere, and that successfully, on behalf of the illustrious Hungarian and his compatriots. Nor was this hope vain, for every one now knows what was the result. The letter that I received from Lord John Russell, acknowledging the receipt of the Alyth memorial, was the first communication that I had from Downing Street; the second I received from Mr Gladstone on December 7th, 1871, in which he acknowledged and thanked me for a letter I had sent him respecting the speech he had just delivered at Aberdeen.

WEAVERS' GRIEVANCES.

Before I left Alyth, a feeling of strong discontent had arisen among the weavers in the town, in consequence of the manufacturers having lengthened their webs to an extraordinary extent, much to the detriment of the weavers. This discontent showed itself throughout the counties of Fife, Forfar, and the east of Perthshire. The weavers of Forfar came to the resolution to convene a delegated conference of weavers, to be held in that town; and for the purpose of making this conference as influential as possible, two of their number were sent to agitate the grievance through the various towns in Forfarshire and Perthshire, in order to induce them to send delegates to the conference. The two weavers sent out on this mission were Mr William Tittler and Mr John

Masterton. After these two gentlemen had visited Cupar-Angus and Blairgowrie, they called upon me at Alyth. Although it was the harvest time, and a very busy season, I gave both of the delegates a very hearty welcome, and called a public meeting of weavers, which was held in the Commercial Hotel that same evening. This meeting was attended by a large number of weavers, but I could not notice any of the manufacturers present, although they had been specially invited to attend. I was called upon to preside; and after I had made a few introductory remarks, the meeting was addressed by the two delegates from Forfar on the various grievances of which the weavers had to complain at the hands of their employers. Mr Tittler, a calm, calculating man, went very minutely into the grievance of which the weavers complained, and which, he alleged, was owing to the employers having surreptitiously, from time to time, added to the length of the webs. This injustice had become so oppressive, that the weavers could stand it no longer, and they were therefore now determined to raise their voices in solemn protest against so flagrant a wrong. Mr Masterton delivered a most stirring speech, in which he strongly denounced the conduct of the employers, and urged the weavers to unite as one man and demand justice at the hands of the manufacturers. Before the meeting separated, it was agreed that a delegate should be sent to the conference at Forfar, and I was unanimously selected as the delegate for Alyth.

The conference accordingly assembled at Forfar, the meeting-place being Waterston's Hotel. The assembly was certainly a most remarkable one, for I do not remember ever having seen such an array of earnest, anxious-looking countenances anywhere. Every person seemed to be fully aware that they had met for business of the most vital importance, and all appeared well qualified to enter into the serious business for which they were met. After some little preliminaries had been gone through, which enabled the various delegates to be introduced to each other, all took their seats. The first business was the appointment of a chairman; and in this business the conference seemed to me to manifest a little unnecessary hesitation. My own opinion

was that it would have been better for the honour to have been conferred upon one of the Forfar delegates ; but just as I was thinking of making this proposal, one of the Forfar delegates himself rose, and proposed that Mr Robert Chalmers, delegate from Alyth, should take the chair. This proposal having been duly seconded, was put to the meeting, and at once agreed to. I took the chair accordingly, and in thanking the conference for the honour that had been conferred upon me, jocularly remarked that, in my opinion, they could not have made a better choice, inasmuch as they had taken from their ranks the most weakly deliberative mind in the whole assembly, and conferred upon him a very easy task indeed, as it appeared to me not likely that I should have to call any one to order during the whole sitting of the conference. Before sitting down, I proposed that Mr John Tittler should be appointed secretary to the conference, which was agreed to.

These preliminaries having been arranged, the conference proceeded, in the first instance, to ascertain the prices that were actually being paid for weaving the various fabrics of cloth that were made in each of the districts represented. This was obtained, at my suggestion, by the Forfar delegates first submitting a statement of their prices, after which all the other delegates handed in a written list of the prices paid in their districts. This proceeding occupied a considerable time, and when it was completed, the dinner hour had arrived, when an adjournment would have to take place. This we managed by partaking of a 'Forfar Bridie' each, without having to retire from the hotel. Having reassembled, we compared the list of prices which had been given in, and it was then found that Alyth, Blairgowrie, and Cupar-Angus were the lowest paid places in the district.

The next matter for consideration was the means by which a stop might be put to the practice which the manufacturers had adopted to so ruinous an extent, of lengthening the webs, and making no addition to the price paid for weaving the lengthened web. Considerable discussion took place on this subject, and various opinions respecting it were very freely expressed. Ultimately, it was considered that we had no course open to us but to memorialise the manufacturers in

our various districts, and ask them, instead of paying us by the piece, as formerly, to pay by spindle rate, as being the most equitable; and if this plan were adopted, the longer we got the chain the better. It was accordingly agreed to memorialise the manufacturers to this effect.

When this course had been resolved upon, I directed the attention of the conference to the benefits of co-operation, which might be advantageously tried by the weavers. I gave it as my opinion, that I did not believe the weavers would ever get justice until they were able to conduct their own labour through the instrumentality of combined co-operation. I further suggested that Forfar was the most likely place in which to commence operations in this respect. They all gave their assent to the principle, but seemed to be more willing, in the meantime, to devote their attention more especially to the best means of securing the new system of payment which had been agreed to. This closed the business of the conference.

The delegates had arranged to have a social meeting in the evening, which was accordingly held in Waterston Hall; and I never before saw so large an assembly crowded into so small a space. The Kirriemuir Instrumental Band was in attendance, and, being placed in the orchestra, had ample room, and on the platform erected immediately in front of the band, there was also room; but every other portion of the hall was inconveniently crowded. However, the company were exceedingly harmonious, and beyond the inconvenience which was experienced, no disturbance was occasioned. Mr M'Hardie, one of the delegates from Kirriemuir, was first called upon to address the meeting, which he did in a very effective manner, explaining what had taken place at the conference in the earlier part of the day. When he had concluded, the band struck up 'The Honourable Weavers,' after which I was called upon for a song. In response, I stood up, and gave the martial song, 'The Garb of Old Gaul,' altering some of the words slightly, so as to be more appropriate to the particular occasion, as I am frequently in the habit of doing. Instead of—

We'll defy the French, with all their arts,
To alter our laws,

I sung—

We'll defy the manufacturers, with all their arts,
To alter our laws.

This adaptation seemed to take remarkably well with the audience, and elicited hearty applause. The band then struck up the same tune, which was also very warmly applauded. Mr M'Hardie was called upon to sing the next song, for there appeared to be no other singers on the platform but him and me. However, we two, with the occasional performances of the band, appeared to be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the audience for the rest of the night; and when the proceedings of the evening were brought to a close, every one left highly delighted.

DON'S FACTORY, IN FORFAR.

On the following morning, before leaving Forfar, I called at Don's Factory, with a view to seeing through the establishment, and also to obtain a list of the prices paid for weaving the various fabrics wrought there, taken from the manufacturer's own books. Not that I had not learned this on the previous day; but I was desirous, if possible, to have an authentic document, whose veracity could not be challenged. I fortunately happened to see Mr Don personally, and when I explained to him the nature of my errand, he received me with great courtesy and kindness, and instructed his clerk to furnish me with a list of prices from his books, and to sign it as correct. Mr Don then asked me to read over to him our list of prices, which I did; and after doing so, he said: 'This conduct on the part of the manufacturers is most extraordinary. They are neither doing justice to us nor to you; for we have all the same market to sell our cloth in.'

After this interview, I left the factory highly satisfied; but I may here remark, that I afterwards saw Forfar to be a much better labour field for the hand-loom weaver than many other places, and this afterwards fully determined me to remove to it with my whole family.

CO-OPERATION IN FORFAR.

I then called upon Mr John Findlay, who, I thought, was a gentleman who would be able to give me some information respecting the state of co-operation in the town. He was indeed able to give me very full information upon the subject. From what he stated to me, there appeared to be no fewer than six quite separate and distinct co-operative bodies in the burgh, all of which had from time to time broken off from one original stock. These different societies, also, were very restrictive in their nature and constitution—so much so, that no person could manage to become a member of any one of them unless he possessed interest with some of the leading members. The titles which some of these societies had assumed was very ludicrous. Thus, there was 'The Defiance,' 'The California,' 'The Free Trader,' &c.; and when told that the whole constituency of all the six societies did not exceed 500 members, I came to the conclusion that they must be anything but free traders. I remarked with regret to Mr Findlay, that there must be something rotten at the very core; and if they were to be made useful to the community in general, they would require to be reconstituted, and constructed on a principle which would be truly beneficial to the best interests of all classes. Mr Findlay acknowledged the truth of this remark, but said it was more easily said than done.

EARLY DAYS OF CO-OPERATION IN FORFAR.

Since writing the above, I have derived a good deal of information respecting the origin of co-operation in Forfar from the present president—Mr John Gellatly. This gentleman informs me that the society in the east end of the town, which is the one with which he is connected, was the first to commence to carry out practically the principles of co-operation. At the commencement of their career, their aspirations certainly were not very great. The highest object of their ambition at that time was to make wholesale purchases of tallow for the use of weavers, and retail it out in small quantities to themselves for their own benefit. This scheme

prospered; and, encouraged by their success, and by the increase of their members, they were induced to extend the sphere of their operations. As the subscription was only a penny a week, it was necessarily a considerable time before they had a sufficient capital with which to carry on anything like a business; but they appeared to act upon the principle, that patience and perseverance would overcome every obstacle. Amidst the other obstacles they had to encounter was the opposition of the shopocracy of the burgh, which was at times very strong indeed. The shopkeepers at first affected to 'pooh-pooh' the movement, and said: 'Poor fellows, they will not be able, with their pennies, to buy even beams and scales for themselves, far less to give us a serious opposition.' However, the co-operators continued their contributions until they were able to purchase a hogshead of sugar. When this made its appearance, the shopkeepers felt really alarmed, and began to bully and bluster like madmen, and even talked of prosecuting these innovators for having dared to interfere with their legitimate business! The co-operative principle being then but in its infancy, the threats of the shop-keepers had a very depressing effect upon the minds of its early pioneers in Forfar, and was like to have caused them to abandon their enterprise altogether. At this critical juncture, however, Provost Methven came to their aid. Mr Methven was a gentleman who always espoused the cause of the poor and the distressed, and who rarely pleaded their cause in vain. Most appropriately may the people of Forfar now inscribe to his memory: 'Blessed is he that considereth the cause of the poor and the oppressed.' Provost Methven gave these early co-operators much-needed encouragement and assistance, so that they felt emboldened to proceed with their praiseworthy undertaking, despite the threats and opposition of the shop-keepers.

A shop was opened for the sale of groceries in the year 1829, so that the men of Forfar are justly entitled to be regarded as the pioneers of co-operation in Scotland; and so well was the society conducted, that for many years it was held up as a model worthy of imitation by all other societies. Shortly after the grocery shop was opened, the business of baking was added, and both concerns prospered amazingly.

PRESENT STATE OF CO-OPERATION IN FORFAR.

Before leaving the subject of co-operation in Forfar, I may just state, that the descendants of these original co-operators are now in the possession of extensive premises which they acquired by purchase, and are not only able to accommodate themselves, but have also put in excellent repair a flesher's shop upon the same premises. Whatever may be thought of the divisions that have sprung up in the family of co-operators, the venerable parent of the family should be spoken of in terms of becoming respect. Let us earnestly hope that she, and all her children in this town, may yet see eye to eye, and unite together in one common bond of brotherhood, working together for the general extension of our principles, so that they may prove a blessing to all who choose to adopt them.

PROPOSED REMOVAL TO FORFAR.

After my return to Alyth, from the conference of weavers held at Forfar, I continued to reside for a year or two longer in Alyth. Ultimately, however, as I could see no prospect of bettering my own circumstances, or of being helpful to others, I resolved to leave the town of which I had so long been an inhabitant, and take up my abode in Forfar. When I first intimated this intention to a few friends in Alyth, they endeavoured to dissuade me from it, but in vain. I had made up my mind to go, and would on no account be turned from my determination. At the same time, I said that if the time should ever come when I would have it in my power to help to benefit my fellow working men in Alyth, I would consider this a call to appear once more among them ; for I must confess that it was with a feeling of deep regret that I felt constrained to leave them.

When my friends saw that I was fully determined to leave Alyth, they very kindly made arrangements to have a farewell supper with me previous to my departure. This supper was attended by nearly all the commercial and general public men in the town ; and when the company had assembled, they called my employer, David Smith, Esq., manufacturer, to fill

the chair, with which request he at once complied. An excellent supper was served, to which all did ample justice; and after that the convivialities of the evening commenced in right earnest. What with speeches, toast, song, and sentiment, I believe that a happier meeting could not have been wished, and everybody appeared to be thoroughly well pleased with the whole of the proceedings. My two great literary friends, Messrs Peterkin and Monro, delivered very brilliant speeches on the occasion, which reflected much credit on themselves; and I remember that, at the close of the evening's entertainment, my friend Mr Leighton remarked that he had never spent a happier evening in his life.

ROCHDALE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.

A short time previous to my departure from Alyth, I communicated with Mr Samuel Ashworth, the manager of the Rochdale Pioneer Co-operative Society, soliciting information from him as to the manner in which the business of that society was conducted. That gentleman, in reply, wrote me a lengthy and detailed statement of all the operations of the society, fully explaining the equitable system which they had adopted, which consisted in giving checks to the members and all who patronised their shop. He also explained the mode of dividing the profits among the members and non-members, and stated that at that time there was a profit of 3s. per pound to members, and of 1s. 6d. to non-members. He also sent me a copy of their rules and regulations, which we afterwards found to be very useful.

CO-OPERATION IN FORFAR.

When I had settled down in Forfar, and had obtained employment for myself and family, my next endeavour was to find out and endeavour to make myself acquainted with a few of the men of mark belonging to my own order—the working classes. This was not a difficult matter to accomplish. A few such men met along with me in the house of Mr Findley, now grocer, spirit, and wine merchant. We then and there went thoroughly into the principles of the equitable

system, and after mature consideration, we unanimously agreed that it was preferable to the system which had previously prevailed in Forfar. We then resolved to call a public meeting of co-operators in the North Burgh School, at which I delivered an address explaining the principles of equitable co-operation as practised in the town of Rochdale. The principle met with very strong opposition, chiefly from the families of small households, who were in the habit of receiving the same amount of profit as larger households. I endeavoured to show the folly of having six different establishments in the town, all working on the same principle, and pointed out the great waste of money that was thereby occasioned. I also pointed out the absurdity of their system of excluding all those who were willing to become members.

FORFAR EQUITABLE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.

I found, however, that they would not listen to reason, and there was therefore no alternative but to endeavour to establish a seventh co-operative body, founded upon the principles of equity. We therefore called a public meeting for this purpose, which was held in Mr Burns's school-house. At that meeting, a man stood up, and mockingly inquired: 'What do you intend to deal in when you get that formidable society of yours established?'

Before I had time to answer, Mr Peterson, town surveyor, took speech in hand, and replied: 'We mean to deal in everything, from a needle to an anchor.'

From the hearty applause which greeted this reply, I was led to believe that we had a good many friends in the meeting, who were likely to join us in this undertaking; and I was not disappointed, for we then and there formed the Forfar Equitable Co-operative Society.

I do not remember the names of the gentlemen who were appointed on the first committee that was then formed, but they were all printed at the end of our rules and regulations, which have the sanction of A. Carnegie Ritchie, Esq., of Edinburgh Registrar-General of Friendly Societies for Scotland. I recollect, however, that Mr Burns, schoolmaster, was elected secretary, and that I was appointed chairman. When

we were met in committee, however, I observed that we should not by any means lose sight of Mr Peterson, as I believed him to be a gentleman of no ordinary force of character, and one, too, who, from his position, might be able to induce many to join our infant institution. 'I would propose,' I said, 'that I should vacate the chair in favour of him. As you know, I am a comparative stranger in Forfar, and have raised a good deal of opposition among the members of these old societies. Believe me, gentlemen, we should use every means in our power to promote the prosperity of our concern. As for myself, I shall be quite willing to take any subordinate office in which my services may be of use to the society.'

These reasonings had some weight with the committee; and when they were presented to Mr Peterson, he was induced, though very reluctantly, to take the chair. We then commenced to take the names of those who were willing to join—the entry money being fixed at one shilling, and the weekly subscription at threepence. The shares were fixed at from £1 to £100—the members receiving at all times five per cent. on whatever money they had deposited when the sum of £1 was reached; and when a member had paid five shillings, he was entitled to all the privileges of membership. When the society had obtained a sum which appeared to the committee sufficient, they determined to commence practical operations.

EXTENSION OF THE EQUITABLE SYSTEM.

We opened our first shop in nearly the centre of the town, and soon after we opened another in the West end. When we had got a site for an oven and a bakehouse, also near the centre of the town, some of us thought we might establish a third shop in the East end of the town. This was agreed to in committee, though it displeased a few of the leading members of the society. These members were so much offended at our proceeding, that they threatened to unite at the annual meeting, and turn me out of office. This threat they put into execution, and succeeded in their object. This shop was placed under the management of Mr Adamson; and

so well did he attend to it, that it prospered remarkably well. In point of fact, I may say here that, instead of my friends obtaining the victory over me—for they really, after all, were my true friends—I got the victory over them, as this third shop was so prosperous.

Seeing that the East shop was doing so well, and that the others were also in a thriving condition, two or three of us laid our heads together for the purpose of establishing a fourth shop in Castle Street, which we effected in the following manner:—I drew up a memorial upon the subject to the committee, and got an influential member of the society—a Mr Watson by name—who resided in Castle Street, to take it to all the members who resided in that neighbourhood, and to other persons, who were willing to become members if a shop were opened in that street for their accommodation. This memorial was pretty largely signed, and presented to the committee. It had the desired effect, for a fourth shop was soon established there, and then I thought we were entitled to the name we had assumed—the Forfar Equitable Co-operative Society.

Mr Adamson—who, as already stated, was the manager—by this time sent one of his men—Mr Plofit—to superintend this shop; and I am sure he could not have made a better selection, for Mr Plofit is not only a dexterous and expert salesman, but he has also a very amiable disposition, which endears him to all his numerous customers. Indeed, I may say, that the whole of the young men connected with this large and increasing society are entitled to the utmost respect. The society are equally fortunate with respect to Mr M'Pherson, who has the charge of the baking department; for a better tradesman, or one who pays more attention to his business, could not be found anywhere.

I must also say something respecting the character of Mr Adamson as manager. He has conducted the largest trade in his line that was ever carried on within the burgh of Forfar; and the superiority of his management has shown itself in the increasing numbers who have from time to time joined the society. Those heads of families who join the society of which he has the oversight see, first, that the articles of consumption vended there are, to say the least,

highly satisfactory; and secondly, that those who have families consisting of even four persons, or at all events six, can assuredly calculate on the profits derivable from their trade to be enabled to pay their rents punctually at the time appointed; so that, in this respect, the co-operative tenant has the advantage over his landlord, that he has not the property to keep in repair. I may observe here, that there are no fewer than 1500 heads of families connected with these societies in Forfar, who are all enabled to sit rent free, and many of them are enabled to do considerably more than this. What a blessing, then, is this to both landlords and tenants!

BENEFITS OF CO-OPERATION.

I may further mention here, that I am acquainted with all the managers of the various societies in the town, and with some of them intimately; and I would say, respecting these gentlemen, that while they may not all be reckoned as men of superior intellectual attainments, yet they all seem to be well versed in the philosophy of their own business. This may be deemed a digression in speaking of the character of Mr Adamson; but I will return to it by asking the question, why he is so much believed in and followed after by so many in Forfar? The answer is, because he gives them a penny-worth of bread which, for size and quality, can nowhere else be found in the town, or in the county either. Nay, I would go further, and affirm without hesitation, that the same amount of bread for one penny cannot be obtained in any other place in all Scotland. No wonder, then, that Mr Adamson should be a very popular man indeed amongst the old wives of Forfar, and that many such make their appearance before him, demanding a penny butter biscuit for their breakfast, as they can now eat such pleasantly without a particle of butter spread upon it—surely no ordinary saving in these times of dear butter, when you have to pay for it at the rate of one penny per ounce. This practice alone is enough to make him popular. There are many other qualities, however, he possesses, which give him a superiority over many other persons. One of these is, that he seems to be

uncommonly well versed in the principles of progressive co-operation—even more so than most persons I have met with in this town.

A CO-OPERATIVE SUGGESTION.

Mr Adamson told me that he agreed perfectly with me in the principle I had laid down in my recently published pamphlet, with regard to the erection here of a co-operative factory, and at the same time stated that, independently of any other persons taking shares in such an undertaking, the present co-operators of Forfar were fully able of themselves, in a very short time, to accomplish this end. When he mentioned the means by which he proposed this should be done, I could not but admire their simplicity and efficiency. I would observe, in the first place, that if the people generally are to rise in their social condition, they must raise themselves. I can show very easily how this may be accomplished. The annual profits arising from the various societies in the town cannot be reckoned at a less sum than £6000. I would say, then, that in three years' time, if the members of these various bodies are really anxious to better their condition, by becoming their own employers, and are willing to unite for this purpose, they would be possessed of no less than £18,000—a pretty respectable sum with which to commence operations. Besides, the younger branches of their families, who are employed at the works, might take shares of £1 each.

In conclusion, on this matter, I would say, that a gentleman who has the ability to produce such arguments and facts as I have here adduced, is well worthy of the position in society which he holds, and ought to be held in respect and veneration by every working man in this town.

TRIUMPH OF THE EQUITABLE PRINCIPLE.

All that I would say with regard to myself in these affairs is, that I was the person who first introduced the equitable system of co-operation into this town; and the other six co-operative bodies had soon to follow in the footsteps of the Forfar Equitable, or be left to perish in their rottenness.

Now, however, although they are distinct bodies from each other, they live together in harmony. When I first came to this town—about eleven years ago—if I am rightly informed, the whole number of co-operators in Forfar did not exceed 300 ; but now they have increased to such an extent, that they amount to upwards of 1500.

A WORD TO CO-OPERATORS.

To the co-operators in Forfar, I would say, in a word, are you really in earnest in desiring to better your circumstances ? If so, then I would urge you to show your earnestness by acting upon the principles I have already indicated. I beseech you to remember this, that although you were the foremost town in Scotland to commence the grand work of co-operation, yet you are now lagging far behind other places which have not seen half your age.

THE CO-OPERATIVE HEARSE.

I must now advert briefly to another scheme with which I was connected, and which had for its object to effect a saving to the public, and especially to the poor. This was no other than a plan to procure a cheap hearse, to be used at funerals. From the peculiar manner in which this undertaking was carried out, the reader will perhaps excuse me for going a little into detail respecting it. The circumstances were as follow :—

Some time after I had settled in Forfar, I happened to be invited to attend two different funerals, the one very shortly after the other. So far as I can now remember, the whole time occupied in attending these two funerals was not more than an hour and a half. In coming home from the second one, I was led to ponder upon the fact that the sum of seven shillings and sixpence—so I was informed—had to be paid upon each occasion for the use of the hearse for so short a period. I felt grieved to think that two poor families should have been subjected to such an exorbitant charge—a charge, too, which neither of the families could very well afford to

pay. I suppose my reflections, tinged as they were by the sorrowful nature of the occasion which had given rise to them, had given me a feeling of great depression, which must have manifested itself in my countenance, for my wife at once remarked my downcast expression when I had reached home.

'Why, Robert,' she said, 'what is the matter with you—you look so melancholy?'

'O,' I said, 'I have just been thinking of the great expense to which these poor people are put for a hearse in conducting their funerals;' and I told her the whole train of thought upon the subject that had been passing through my mind as I had been coming home.

'Well,' she said, 'couldn't you get a cheap hearse for the people?'

'Well,' I replied, 'I am very happy indeed to hear you make that suggestion. I will not delay in calling a general meeting of the inhabitants, and, if possible, induce them to get a hearse for themselves.'

I called upon several of the leading men in the town, and laid the subject before them. They told me that an attempt had been made some time previously to get a public hearse provided, but had not succeeded, and they feared that another attempt would prove equally abortive.

I then called upon my old friend, the late Mr John Adam, and laid before him a plan I had formed, and which, if adopted, might prove successful. After hearing my statement of the plan, he expressed his general approval of it, and said he thought it at least worth a trial. He said he would be willing to give me all the assistance in his power to carry out the proposal, and I therefore resolved that the attempt should be made.

A general meeting of the inhabitants was accordingly held, when the object was stated, and very generally approved of. This being the case, a large committee was appointed, by whom it was agreed that the town should be thoroughly canvassed, the town being divided into districts, and two members being assigned to each district, with instructions to wait upon every inhabitant in each district—the poor as well as the rich—for subscriptions. This committee went to work

with a hearty good will, and the result of their labours was, so far as I can remember, that in two nights they obtained no less a sum than £110. This sum was found to be amply sufficient for all the purposes required. Another general meeting was then called, and the result was laid before it. A committee was then appointed, to whom was entrusted the procuring of a hearse, with the necessary appurtenances, also the duty of superintending and making proper arrangements for bringing the hearse into public use when required. The committee, it was agreed, should be chosen annually from among the subscribers.

All I need say further on this subject is, that this hearse is arranged for two horses, and all who require the use of it within the parliamentary boundary of the burgh may have it for 4s. 6d. per funeral; and persons outside the boundary have to pay 1s. 6d. per mile additional to the undertaker for the use of his horses, and 4d. per mile for the use of the hearse. The people of Forfar and the surrounding district consider this a great boon, and now avail themselves of it to a large extent.

PROPOSED FLESHING COMPANY.

My next endeavour was to try to establish a Fleshing Company; and this, I must observe, proved to be one of the most short-lived and abortive affairs with which I was ever connected. However, I will briefly state the circumstances connected with it.

In the first place, then, I collected the sum of £20 from a few wealthy gentlemen in the town, as a nucleus with which to commence operations. I knew that this sum was quite inadequate to carry on the trade; but the flesher who was engaged to carry it on having some capital, was willing to embark it all in the trade. It was therefore agreed that the experiment should be attempted. The concern was accordingly commenced; and as it was intended to carry on trade in dried fish along with it, I was advised to go to the North, to a fishing village named Gemrie, and there purchase a quantity of fish, which, it was said, I could do to much better advantage than I could do nearer home. I accordingly set

off on this long journey, and when I arrived at my destination, what was my mortification to find that there was not a single fish in the village! I had no alternative but to return home, which I did in a very dejected and sorrowful frame of mind.

When I returned home from this wild-geese chase, I found the flesher waiting for me, he having disengaged himself from his former master in order to commence along with us. I explained to him the position in which we were placed, and that unless his money was forthcoming, it would be needless for us to proceed. I said, however, that I would first consult one or two influential gentlemen who had lent their aid in the undertaking. I did so; and the first gentleman I consulted ordered me to do nothing further in the fish business, but to proceed without further delay with the fleshing department.

I accordingly proceeded to act upon these instructions; and I am sorry to have to confess, that my first purchase turned out to be one of the most ridiculous blunders, I believe, that ever was committed by any man who ever ventured to purchase a live beast. This will be understood when I mention that we lost no less a sum than £5 on it! Of course, we bought no more from that gentleman. I went next to Mr Reoch, of Glamis, to purchase an animal from him; and as he was the last employer of our flesher, I thought it would be better to depend upon him. We were certainly better as regards our purchase from him; but after all, whatever might be the cause, we found it impossible to make both ends meet.

We purchased other two animals, but found ourselves equally unsuccessful. When I came to purchase the last one, I asked Mr Reoch about the money belonging to our flesher, which I understood he had in his possession; but he told us that he would not give it up, as he knew that, if he did so, he would soon go through it. Upon this, I immediately brought the concern to a close, having lost the whole cash that was subscribed, and something more. Thus ended this ill-fated concern. However, it was some consolation to me to know that no poor man would suffer loss through it but myself.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

My next action of any public interest was of a political nature. It having been resolved that a meeting of delegates should be held in Dundee, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of establishing a society for the promotion of Parliamentary Reform, to be denominated 'The East of Scotland Parliamentary Reform Association,' accordingly, upon the day appointed, delegates assembled in Dundee from the counties of Forfar, Fife, Perth, &c.; and along with these there was one gentleman from Glasgow—James Moir, Esq., town councillor there. I may also mention that W. E. Baxter, Esq., the Member of Parliament for the Montrose district of burghs, was also present, as was, likewise, the Hon. Mr Carnegie, our county member. There was a large number of delegates from the various towns and villages represented; and I was selected to represent the Radical burgh of Forfar.

When the delegates were all assembled, Provost Parker, of Dundee, was chosen to preside; and after he had made a few introductory remarks, he called upon Mr Baxter to address the meeting. Mr Baxter did so briefly, stating that he thought the time had now come when a moderate measure of reform should be introduced into the House of Commons; but this 'moderate measure,' so far as I recollect, he did not explain. Mr Carnegie followed in a similar strain. I must say that I was miserably disappointed with both of these speeches, as there was not a principle laid down in them for our future guidance. For this would-be great East of Scotland Reform Association to propose to ask a 'moderate' measure of reform from the legislature, without coming to some definite understanding as to what this reform should consist of, appeared to me perfectly ridiculous. Indeed, I never heard such miserable twaddle proceed from the lips of rational men.

However, after a good deal of palaver to this effect, a gentleman from Montrose proposed that, in accordance with the views which had been expressed by the previous speakers, Parliament should be petitioned for a moderate measure of

reform. This proposal was duly seconded by one of the other delegates.

Mr Moir, from Glasgow, then rose, and animadverted in very strong terms upon the speeches by the two honourable members for thus dilly-dallying with the question of reform. In fact, he gave the two members the most thorough cutting up I ever heard any two men get in my life. 'The two honourable gentlemen,' he said, 'have prated a good deal about what they have been pleased to term a "moderate" measure of reform; but what,' he asked indignantly, 'would we think of a man who spoke of another as a "moderately" honest man, or of a woman as a "moderately" virtuous female?' This severe hit at the phraseology employed by the two principal speakers was very warmly applauded. Mr Moir concluded by proposing an amendment to the effect that, as a meeting of delegates from all the large towns in the kingdom had been arranged to be held in London on the same subject, the East of Scotland Reform Association should wait until the London conference had pronounced upon the subject.

I seconded this amendment; but upon being put to the vote, the original resolution was carried by a majority of only three. However, the majority did not carry their unmeaning nonsense any further. It died as it lived—a poor, pitiful abortion.

On the evening of the same day, a public meeting of the inhabitants of Dundee was held on the Magdalen Green, and such a meeting, as regards numbers, I had never before seen in Dundee. The Green was not capable of containing the vast number of persons who had assembled. Provost Parker was again called to preside; and, now that he is gone, I will say this of him, that he appeared to me to be a very honest man, and, from the remarks which he made, well affected to the cause of reform. The speeches here were characterised by a much more Liberal tone than those which had been delivered in the earlier part of the day. In fact, Mr Disraeli, the renegade Radical, shortly after this put our pretended Radicals completely to the blush, by introducing a measure of reform based upon the principle of household suffrage. I believe this measure went further than he

intended ; but, thanks to him, it was the means of establishing the present Government in power, of which it may be truly said, that even with all their faults and shortcomings, they are the best Government that ever was formed in this mighty empire, for the purpose of carrying out the principles of sound legislation and progressive reform.

THE ENGLISH CONFERENCE.

Soon after this reform gathering in Dundee, the National Delegated Conference was held in London ; and they gave no uncertain sound, for they at once agreed to form themselves into a National Reform League, based upon the principle of manhood suffrage, &c. ; and it was also agreed that branch societies, in connection with the League, should be formed in all the cities, towns, and villages throughout the kingdom.

FORFAR REFORM LEAGUE.

In accordance with the recommendation from the central League in London, we formed a branch League in Forfar, of which I was chosen President.

MEETING WITH MESSRS JONES AND BEALES.

In carrying out the programme of the League, it was resolved to have a delegate conference in Dundee, for the purpose of reporting progress, and hearing addresses in the evening from Messrs Edmund Beales and Ernest Jones. I was appointed the delegate from Forfar, and was accompanied by our secretary, Mr George Donald, also by Mr Alexander Lowson (now Councillor Lowson), and a few others. These gentlemen went at their own expense, from a desire to hear Messrs Beales and Jones in the evening.

Previous to the evening meeting, the delegates met in a side-room, where they were introduced to Messrs Beales and Jones, before accompanying these two gentlemen to the platform. I was introduced to Mr Jones as 'Mr Chalmers, from Forfar.'

Mr Jones looked a little disappointed at this, and said: 'I had hoped to be introduced to Mr Robert Chalmers, from Alyth.'

'I am one and the same person,' I said to him.

Mr Jones, being assured that I was the person he desired to see, turned to those standing beside him, and said: 'I knew this gentleman long ago, although this is the first time I have ever seen him. I recollect having received a letter from him when I was lying in jail for advocating the cause of the people—just in the same strain as I do now. That letter was couched in the most sympathetic language that was ever addressed to me by any one. I have that letter yet, and I mean to preserve it while I live.'

These remarks of Mr Jones rather astonished me, and, coming from so eminent a man, I felt highly flattered by them.

The meeting in the Kinnaird Hall was a very successful one, and I was particularly well pleased with the speech by Mr Jones. But, alas! this great champion of popular rights is now removed from our midst, and we can never hear the voice of the charmer more. Still, it is a fact that he, being dead, yet speaketh.

PHRENOLOGICAL MATTERS.

There is an incident in my life, connected with Alyth, which I think worth mentioning, before I bring this autobiography to a close. It has reference to a Phrenological Society which was formed there under the presidency of Dr Fenton. This society was attended by a good many of the respectable gentlemen in the town; and, besides phrenology, the members studied the principles of chemistry and comparative anatomy, in which sciences we had several instructive lectures by our worthy president. In connection with this society, we had a pretty respectable library, consisting of standard works in mental science. These books were lent out to the members as they required them.

My cousin, Robert Forbes, and I had a longing desire to visit Edinburgh, in order to have an interview with George

Combe, and especially with Dr Andrew Combe, as the latter was about to proceed to Belgium, having just received the appointment of head physician to the King of the Belgians. Before setting out on our journey, we thought it desirable to endeavour to procure something as a contribution to their Phrenological Museum. We thought, therefore, that we could not do better than pay a visit to Bewlome's Howe, and dig up the skulls of two well-known suicides who had been interred there many years previously—indeed, long before we were born. It may be remarked here, that at that time, persons who took away their own lives were not granted the usual rites of Christian burial, but were generally carried to a place where two lairds' lands met, and, without ceremony of any kind, the corpses, with the clothes on, and without coffins, were thrown into a hole—just as a dead dog might be buried.

Well, off we set in open day to this local Golgotha ; and after some digging and delving, we succeeded in disinterring two skulls, which we got a woman named Catherine Melville to carry home in her lap. We also procured the skull of a local genius of some celebrity in his day. These we packed up carefully, and took them with us when we set out for Edinburgh.

After we had arrived in the Metropolis, our first concern was to procure lodgings. This we easily managed ; and having found a suitable place, we engaged it for a week, as we were well aware that we would require all that time to visit the various places of interest in and around the city. On the following morning, after breakfast, our first call was at the house of Mr George Combe. We were fortunate in finding him at home, and we received a very warm welcome from him. He inquired very kindly respecting our society in Alyth, and after Dr Fenton, our president. He then told us we might meet with his brother, Dr Andrew, in the evening, with which we were well pleased. While he was examining the skulls we had brought, Dr Cox came in, to whom we were introduced ; and after a short time spent in conversation with the Dr, he took us along to the Phrenological Museum, where we deposited the skulls, and where, for anything I know to the contrary, they remain to this day.

We met Dr Andrew Combe in the evening, and enjoyed our interview very much.

With so many objects of interest to be seen, our week in Edinburgh passed away very rapidly, and we returned home highly pleased with all that we had witnessed.

AN ALYTH CHARACTER.

As I have reverted to some of my Alyth experiences, I will here introduce an account of a singular Alyth character that appeared in the *Dundee Advertiser* of Friday, May 21, 1819, and which has been furnished to me by a friend:—

‘When great men (which too often means *great rogues*) die, biographers start up in every quarter to trumpet forth their virtues—if perchance they had any—to extenuate their faults, and to record, to all who are anxious to learn the important facts, that they were born in such a place, and died in such another, aged so and so. While truth is distorted to blazon forth *their* deeds, the useful but unassuming man of genius is allowed to depart unnoticed, except by his nearest neighbours, and unrecorded, except in the fleeting discussions of the village alehouse. Such has been the case with James Sandy, of Alyth; a man of great but untutored genius in mechanics, who died there about the beginning of last month. At twelve years of age, he had the misfortune to injure one of his legs by a fall from a tree; and having the additional misfortune to apply to a quack-doctor, he entirely lost the use of it, after a confinement of some years. At this period, he set about making a violin; in which he succeeded wonderfully well, considering that his only tools were a gouge and a knife. He persevered in this employment for some time; and having procured better tools, he became more perfect in his employment, and finished his violins in a very neat style. He next made flutes, clarionets, bagpipes, fishing-rods, &c., in the same superior manner; every part of the work being performed by himself. He also amused himself in taming various kinds of birds, which gave rise to a report that he hatched geese by the heat of his body. This is one of those vague reports which it behoves the candid historian to correct: for the fact is simply this,—that a gosling, which had been hatched by a

hen, having been left an *orphan* at a very tender age, James took compassion on it, and reared it till it became a *perfect goose*; and it afterwards lived with him for eight or nine years, always evincing the greatest attachment to its kind protector.

‘One would have thought that a man who had been confined to one spot for about five years, ran very little risk of more accident to his limbs. But it happened, that one winter, when the ice on the Burn of Alyth broke up, it gorged at the Bridge; and caused the water to rise so very high as to inundate the lower part of the house where sat the unfortunate James. As he was totally unable to move, his mother endeavoured to drag him up stairs, beyond the reach of the flood; and, in the attempt, unluckily broke the sound leg. Poor James was thus rendered a complete cripple; and, during the rest of his life, he sat constantly during the day on what served him for a bed at night. Now applying himself wholly to mechanics, he made several eight-day clocks; one of which played twelve tunes on bells. He afterwards studied optics; and made several telescopes, both plain and reflecting; casting and turning the brasswork, making and polishing the speculums, grinding the glasses, and wholly finishing them, without any assistance; except occasionally that of a person to turn his lathe, when the work was too heavy for his hand. He made artificial teeth; and a weaver in the neighbourhood having lost his arm by a threshing-mill, James made an artificial one, jointed so that the man could continue to work at his trade. For this he received a reward of ten guineas from the Trustees for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures. He excelled in making wooden snuff-boxes, such as are made at Laurencekirk; painted and varnished them himself; constructed a most ingenious machine for cutting their hinges; made circular saws, and every other kind of tool necessary for his various occupations. He knew a little of music; and could play on the violin, flute, and clarionet. He made several electrical machines; was an engraver, carver, and gilder, and was armourer to the Volunteers while they continued embodied. In short, there was no piece of mechanism, however ingenious, but James Sandy could copy; and that very often in a manner superior to the original. He had a manly, expressive countenance, and was extremely civil and courteous to his visitors,

among whom he could reckon most people of rank or fortune in his neighbourhood, and frequently strangers from a distance, attracted by curiosity to see so extraordinary a genius. His townspeople often intruded upon him to while away a leisure hour. The conversation was apt to get dry. Whisky was sent for to enliven it ; and James sometimes partook of it to a greater extent than was good for him. He long laboured under an asthmatic complaint, which, if not brought on by his social habits, was certainly no better for them. Fancying that a more elevated situation than that which he then occupied would be favourable towards his complaint, he obtained from Lord Airly a site, on which he built a small house ; and, desirous of having a trusty companion when about to remove from his old friends, he married, on the 14th of March. But the last notch in James's wheel had been out ; and he was destined never to occupy his new habitation, but to exchange it for one much smaller—though large enough, withal, for the greatest king that ever existed, when obliged to doff the mockery of royalty, and to return to that dust from which he sprung. He died on the 3d of April, regretted by all that knew him, for his place will not easily be supplied. Peace to his ashes !'

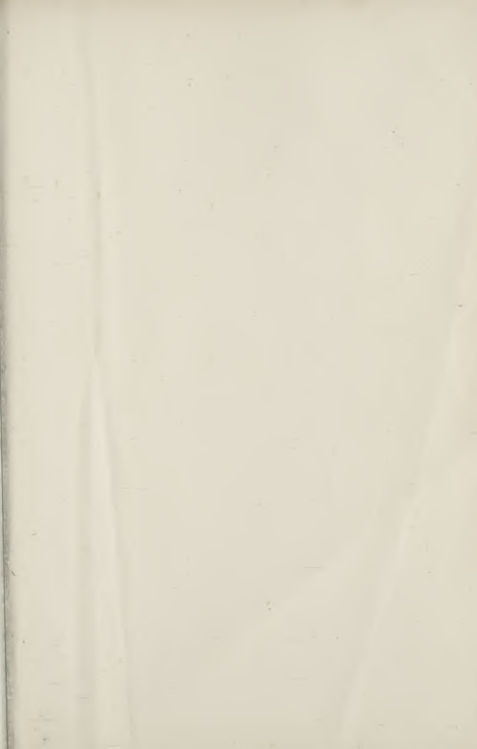
CONCLUDING REMARKS.

I must now draw this autobiography to a close. It is true, there are other subjects, upon which I could have liked to have made some remarks, had time and space permitted ; but these I must reserve to some other occasion. From what has been recorded in this narrative, the reader will perceive that I have, through a long life, devoted a good deal of my attention to political and social reform. A few concluding observations upon these subjects, and my task shall have been accomplished.

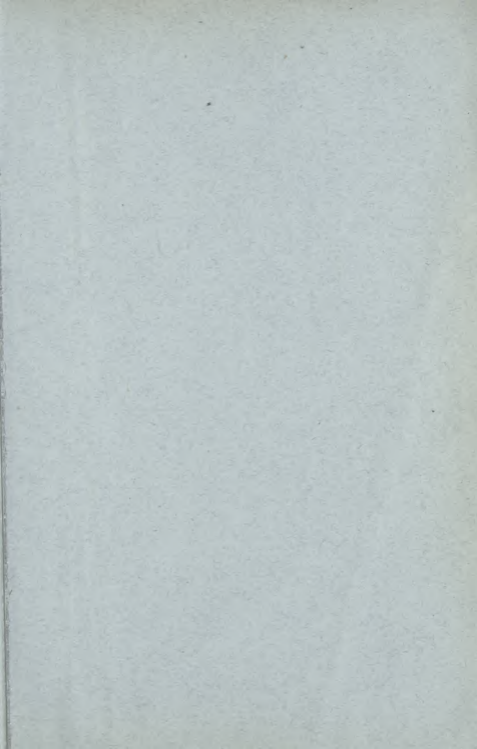
First, as regards politics, I would observe that we have at present one of the best Governments at the head of affairs that ever swayed the destinies of this mighty empire. Having such an excellent Government in power, let the just, the wise, and the good men in the nation rally round them, strengthening their hands in every measure they bring forward that

has for its object the improvement of the condition of the people, either physically, mentally, or morally. We know well the difficult position in which the Government is placed, when battling with the various conflicting interests with which it has to deal. Let all who are well disposed adhere closely to each other, walking in the path of truth and righteousness, and verily they will have their reward. Thanks to the Right Hon. Robert Lowe for his late speech on national education. Let him steadfastly adhere to the principles which he then enunciated, and on that question he will prove himself to be a blessing to the whole nation. The people are fast growing in intelligence, and legislation that would have passed current in former times would not now be tolerated.

With regard to social reform, the people have this very much in their own hands. In many cases, the people have it in their own power to better their condition by co-operating together for this purpose; and when a man, or a number of men, can effect this for themselves, it is vain for them to look for aid from those above them in worldly circumstances. Besides, it appears to me that there is something mean in such a thing, when people have it in their own power to elevate themselves in the social scale. I think I have fully demonstrated this in my autobiography; and in bidding adieu to the reader, I would simply express my wish that he may be guided with wisdom and prudence until he attain the consummation of all his wishes.







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