

A DOCTOR OF THE OLD SCHOOL.	
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ACERVO DE LITERATURA

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DOMSIE.

I.

A LAD O' PAIRTS.

The Revolution reached our parish years ago, and Drumtochty has a School Board, with a chairman and a clerk, besides a treasurer and an officer. Young Hillocks, who had two years in a lawyer's office, is clerk, and summons meetings by post, although he sees every member at the market or the kirk. Minutes are read with much solemnity, and motions to expend ten shillings upon a coal-cellar door passed, on the motion of Hillocks, seconded by Drumsheugh, who are both severely prompted for the occasion, and move uneasily before speaking.

Drumsheugh was at first greatly exalted by his poll, and referred freely on market days, to his "plumpers," but as time went on the irony of the situation laid hold upon him.

"Think o' you an me, Hillocks, veesitin' the schule and sittin' wi' bukes in oor hands watchin' the Inspector. Keep's a', it's eneuch to mak' the auld Dominie turn in his grave. Twa meenisters cam' in his time, and Domsie

put Geordie Hoo or some ither gleg laddie, that was makin' for college, thro' his facin's, and maybe some bit lassie brocht her copy-buke. Syne they had their dinner, and Domsie tae, wi' the Doctor. Man, a've often thocht it was the prospeck o' the Schule Board and its weary bit rules that feenished Domsie. He wasna maybe sae shairp at the elements as this pirjinct body we hae noo, but a'body kent he was a terrible scholar and a credit tae the parish. Drumtochty was a name in thae days wi' the lads he sent tae college. It was maybe juist as weel he slippit awa' when he did, for he wud hae taen ill with thae new fikes, and nae college lad to warm his hert."

The present school-house stands in an open place beside the main road to Muirtown, treeless and comfortless, built of red, staring stone, with a playground for the boys and another for the girls, and a trim, smug-looking teacher's house, all very neat and symmetrical, and well regulated. The local paper had a paragraph headed "Drumtochty," written by the Muirtown architect, describing the whole premises in technical language that seemed to compensate the ratepayers for the cost, mentioning the contractor's name, and concluding that "this handsome building of the Scoto-Grecian style was one of the finest works that had ever come from the accomplished architect's hands." It has pitch-pine benches and map-cases, and a thermometer to be kept at not less than 58 degrees and not more than 62 degrees, and ventilators which the Inspector

is careful to examine. When I stumbled in last week the teacher was drilling the children in Tonic Sol-fa with a little harmonium, and I left on tiptoe.

It is difficult to live up to this kind of thing, and my thoughts drift to the auld schule-house and Domsie. Some one with the love of God in his heart had built it long ago, and chose a site for the bairns in the sweet pine woods at the foot of the cart road to Whinnie Knowe and the upland farms. It stood in a clearing with the tall Scotch firs round three sides, and on the fourth a brake of gorse and bramble bushes, through which there was an opening to the road. The clearing was the playground, and in summer the bairns annexed as much wood as they liked, playing tig among the trees, or sitting down at dinner-time on the soft, dry spines that made an elastic carpet everywhere. Domsie used to say there were two pleasant sights for his old eyes every day. One was to stand in the open at dinner-time and see the fitting forms of the healthy, rosy, sonsie bairns in the wood, and from the door in the afternoon to watch the schule skail till each group was lost in the kindly shadow, and the merry shouts died away in this quiet place. Then the Dominie took a pinch of snuff and locked the door, and went to his house beside the school. One evening I came on him listening bare-headed to the voices, and he showed so kindly that I shall take him as he stands. A man of middle height, but stooping below it, with sandy hair turning to gray, and bushy

eye-brows covering keen, shrewd gray eyes. You will notice that his linen is coarse, but spotless, and that, though his clothes are worn almost threadbare, they are well brushed and orderly. But you will be chiefly arrested by the Dominie's coat, for the like of it was not in the parish. It was a black dress coat, and no man knew when it had begun its history; in its origin and its continuance it resembled Melchisedek. Many were the myths that gathered round that coat, but on this all were agreed, that without it we could not have realized the Dominie, and it became to us the sign and trappings of learning. He had taken a high place at the University, and won a good degree, and I've heard the Doctor say that he had a career before him. But something happened in his life, and Domsie buried himself among the woods with the bairns of Drumtochty. No one knew the story, but after he died I found a locket on his breast, with a proud, beautiful face within, and I have fancied it was a tragedy. It may have been in substitution that he gave all his love to the children, and nearly all his money, too, helping lads to college, and affording an inexhaustible store of peppermints for the little ones.

Perhaps one ought to have been ashamed of that school-house, but yet it had its own distinction, for scholars were born there, and now and then to this day some famous man will come and stand in the deserted playground for a space. The door was at one end, and stood open in summer so that the boys saw the rab-

bits come out from their holes on the edge of the wood, and birds sometimes flew in unheeded. The fireplace was at the other end, and was fed in winter with the sticks and peats brought by the scholars. On one side Domsie sat with the half-dozen lads he hoped to send to college, to whom he grudged no labor, and on the other gathered the very little ones, who used to warm their bare feet at the fire, while down the sides of the room the other scholars sat, at their rough old desks, working sums and copying. Now and then a class came up and did some task, and at times a boy got the tawse for his negligence, but never a girl. He kept the girls in as their punishment, with a brother to take them home, and both had tea in Domsie's house, with a bit of his best honey, departing much torn between an honest wish to please Domsie and a pardonable longing for another tea.

"Domsie," as we called the schoolmaster, behind his back in Drumtochty, because we loved him, was true to the tradition of his kind, and had an unerring scent for "pairs" in his laddies. He could detect a scholar in the egg, and prophesied Latinity from a boy that seemed fit only to be a cowherd. It was believed that he had never made a mistake in judgment, and it was not his blame if the embryo scholar did not come to birth. "Five and thirty years have I been minister at Drumtochty," the Doctor used to say at school examinations, "and we have never wanted a student at the University, and while Dominie Jamieson lives,

we never shall." Whereupon Domsie took snuff, and assigned his share of credit to the Doctor, "who gave the finish in Greek to every lad of them, without money and without price, to make no mention of the higher mathematics." Seven ministers, four schoolmasters, four doctors, one professor, and three civil service men had been sent out by the auld schule in Domsie's time, besides many that "had given themselves to mercantile pursuits."

He had a leaning to classics and the professions, but Domsie was catholic in his recognition of "pairs," and when the son of Hillocks' foreman made a collection of the insects of Drumtochty, there was a council at the manse. "Bumbee Willie," as he had been pleasantly called by his companions, was rescued from ridicule and encouraged to fulfil his bent. Once a year a long letter came to Mr. Patrick Jamieson, M.A., Schoolmaster, Drumtochty, N. B., and the address within was the British Museum. When Domsie read this letter to the school, he was always careful to explain that "Dr. Graham is the greatest living authority on beetles," and, generally speaking, if any clever lad did not care for Latin, he had the alternative of beetles.

But it was Latin Domsie hunted for as for fine gold, and when he found the smack of it in a lad he rejoiced openly. He counted it a day in his life when he knew certainly that he had hit on another scholar, and the whole school saw the identification of George Howe. For a winter Domsie had been "at point,"

racing George through Cæsar, stalking him behind irregular verbs, baiting traps with tit-bits of Virgil. During these exercises Domsie surveyed George from above his spectacles with a hope that grew every day in assurance, and came to its height over a bit of Latin prose. Domsie tasted it visibly, and read it again in the shadow of the firs at meal-time, slapping his leg twice.

"He'll dae! he'll dae!" cried Domsie, aloud, lading in the snuff. "George, ma mannie, tell yir father that I am comin' up to Whinnie Knowe the nicht on a bit o' business."

Then the "schule" knew that Geordie Hoo was marked for college, and pelted him with fir cones in great gladness of heart.

"Whinnie" was full of curiosity over the Dominie's visit, and vexed Marget sorely, to whom Geordie had told wondrous things in the milk-house. "It canna be coals 'at he's wantin' frae the station, for there's a fell puckle left."

"And it'll no be seed taties," she said, pursuing the principle of exhaustion, "for he hes some Perthshire reds himsel'. I doot it's somethin' wrang with Geordie," and Whinnie started on a new track.

"He's been playin' truant maybe. A' mind gettin' ma paiks for birdnestin' masel. I'll wager that's the verra thing."

"Weel, yir wrang, Weelum," broke in Marget, Whinnie's wife, a tall, silent woman, with a speaking face; "it's nather the ae thing nor the ither, but something I've been prayin' for

since Geordie was a wee bairn. Clean yirsel' and meet Domsie on the road, for nae man deserves more honour in Drumtochty, naither laird nor farmer."

Conversation with us was a leisurely game, with slow movements and many pauses, and it was our custom to handle all the pawns before we brought the queen into action.

Domsie and Whinnie discussed the weather with much detail before they came in sight of George, but it was clear that Domsie was charged with something weighty, and even Whinnie felt that his own treatment of the turnip crop was wanting in repose.

At last Domsie cleared his throat and looked at Marget, who had been in and out, but ever within hearing.

"George is a fine laddie, Mrs. Howe."

An ordinary Drumtochty mother, although bursting with pride, would have responded, "He's weel enouch, if he hed grace in his heart," in a tone that implied it was extremely unlikely, and that her laddie led the reprobates of the parish. As it was, Marget's face lightened, and she waited.

"What do you think of making him?" and the Dominie dropped the words slowly, for this was a moment in Drumtochty.

There was just a single ambition in those humble homes, to have one of its members at college, and if Domsie approved a lad, then his brothers and sisters would give their wages, and the family would live on skim milk and oat cake, to let him have his chance.

Whinnie glanced at his wife and turned to Domsie.

"Marget's set on seein' Geordie a minister, Dominie."

"If he's worthy o't, no otherwise. We haena the means, though; the farm is highly rented, and there's barely a penny over at the end o' the year."

"But you are willing George should go and see what he can do. If he disappoint you, then I dinna know a lad o' pairts when I see him, and the Doctor is with we."

"Maister Jamieson," said Marget, with great solemnity, "ma hert's desire is to see George a minister, and if the Almichty spared me to hear my only bairn open his mooth in the Evangel, I wud hae naething mair to ask—but I doot sair it canna be managed."

Domsie had got all he asked, and he rose in his strength.

"If George Howe disna get to college, then he's the first scholar I've lost in Drumtochty—ye 'ill manage his keep and sic like?"

"Nae fear o' that," for Whinnie was warming "tho' I haena a steek [stitch] o' new claithes for four years. But what aboot his fees and ither ootgaeins?"

"There's ae man in the parish can pay George's fees without missing a penny, and I'll warrant he 'ill dae it."

"Are ye meanin' Drumsheugh?" said Whinnie, "for ye 'ill never get a penny piece oot o' him. Did ye no hear hoo the Frees wiled him intae their kirk, Sabbath past a week, when

Nether-ton's sister's son frae Edinboro' wes preaching the missionary sermon, expectin' a note, and if he didna change a shillin' at the public-hoose and pit in a penny. Sall, he's a lad Drumsheugh; a'm thinking ye may save yir journey, Dominie."

But Marget looked away from her into the past, and her eyes had a tender light. "He hed the best hert in the pairish aince."

Domsie found Drumsheugh inclined for company, and assisted at an exhaustive and caustic treatment of local affairs. When the conduct of Piggie Walker, who bought Drumsheugh's potatoes and went into bankruptcy without paying for a single tuber, had been characterized in language that left nothing to be desired, Drumsheugh began to soften and show signs of reciprocity.

"Hoo's yir laddies, Dominie?" whom the farmers regarded as a risky turnip crop in a stiff clay that Domsie had "to fecht awa in." "Are any o' them shaping weel?"

Drumsheugh had given himself away, and Domsie laid his first parallel with a glowing account of George Howe's Latinity, which was well received.

"Weel, I'm gled tae hear sic accoonts o' Marget Hoo's son; there's naething in Whinnie but what the spun puts in."

But at the next move Drumsheugh scented danger and stood at guard. "Na, na, Dominie, I see what yir aifter fine; ye mind hoo ye got three notes oot o' me at Perth market Martinmas a year past for ane o' yir college laddies.

Five punds for four years; my word, yir no blate [modest.] And what for sud I educat Marget Hoo's bairn? If ye kent a' ye wudna ask me; it's no reasonable, Dominie. So there's an end o't."

Domsie was only a pedantic old parish school-master, and he knew little beyond his craft, but the spirit of the Humanists awoke within him, and he smote with all his might, bidding good-bye to his English as one flings away the scabbard of a sword.

"Ye think that a'm asking a great thing when I plead for a pickle notes to give a puir laddie a college education. I tell ye, man, a'm honourin' ye and givin' ye the fairest chance ye'll ever hae o' winning wealth. Gin ye store the money ye hae scrapit by mony a hard bargain, some heir ye never saw 'ill gar it flee in chambering and wantonness. Gin ye hed the heart to spend it on a lad o' pairts like Geordie Hoo, ye wud hae twa rewards nae man could tak fra ye. Ane wud be the honest gratitude o' a laddie whose desire for knowledge ye hed satees-fied, and the second wud be this—anither scholar in the land; and a'm thinking with auld John Knox that ilka scholar is something added to the riches of the commonwealth. And what 'ill it cost ye? Little mair than the price o' a cattle beast. Man, Drumsheugh, ye poverty-stricken cratur, I've naethin' in this world but a handfu' o' books and a ten-pound note for my funeral, and yet, if it wasna I have all my brither's bairns tae keep, I wud pay every penny mysel'! But I'll no see Geordie

sent to the plough, tho' I gang frae door to door. Na, na, the grass 'ill no grow on the road atween the college and the schule-hoose o' Drumtochty till they lay me in the auld kirkyard!"

"Sall, Domsie was roosed," Drumsheugh explained in the Muirtown inn next market. "'Misely wratch' was the ceevilest word on his tongue. He wud naither sit nor taste, and was half-way doon the yard afore I cud quiet him. An' a'm no sayin' he hed na reason if I'd been meanin' a' I said. It would be a scan'al to the parish if a likely lad cudna win tae college for the want o' siller. Na, na, neeburs, we hae oor faults, but we're no sae dune mean as that in Drumtochty."

As it was, when Domsie did depart, he could only grip Drumsheugh's hand, and say **Maece-nas**, and was so intoxicated, but not with strong **drink**, that he explained to Hillocks on the way home that Drumsheugh would be a credit to Drumtochty, and that his Latin style reminded him of Cicero. He added as an afterthought that Whinnie Knowe had promised to pay Drumsheugh's fees for four years at the **University of Edinburgh**.

II.

HOW WE CARRIED THE NEWS TO WHINNIE

KNOWE.

Domsie was an artist, and prepared the way for George's University achievement with much cunning. Once every Sabbath in the kirkyard, where he laid down the law beneath an old elm tree, and twice between Sabbaths, at the post-office and by the wayside, he adjured us not to expect beyond measure, and gave us reasons.

"Ye see, he has a natural talent for learning, and took to Latin like a duck to water. What could be done in Drumtochty was done for him, and he's working night and day, but he'll have a sore fight with the lads from the town schools. Na, na, neighbors," said the Dominie, lapsing into dialect, "we daurna luik for a prize. No the first year, at ony rate."

"Man, Dominie. A'm clean astonished at ye," Drumsheugh used to break in, who, since he had given to George's support, outran us all in his faith, and had no patience with Domsie's devices; "a'tell ye if Geordie disna get a first in every class he's entered for, the judges 'ill be a puir lot," with a fine confusion of circumstances.

"Losh, Drumsheugh, be quiet, or ye'll dae the laddie an injury," said Domsie, with genuine alarm. "We maunna mention prizes, and first is fair madness. A certificate of honor, now, that will be about it, may be next to the prizemen."

Coming home from market he might open his heart. "George 'ill be amang the first sax, or my name is no Jamieson," but generally he prophesied a moderate success. There were times when he affected indifference, and talked cattle. We then regarded him with awe, because this was more than mortal.

It was my luck to carry the bulletin to Domsie, and I learned what he had been enduring. It was good manners in Drumtochty to feign amazement at the sight of a letter, and to insist that it must be intended for some other person. When it was finally forced upon one, you examined the handwriting at various angles and speculated about the writer. Some felt emboldened, after these precautions, to open the letter, but this haste was considered indecent. When Posty handed Drumsheugh the factor's letter, with the answer to his offer for the farm, he only remarked, "It 'll be frae the factor," and harked back to a polled Angus bull he had seen at the show. "Sall," said Posty in the kirkyard with keen relish, "ye'll never flurry Drumsheugh." Ordinary letters were read in leisurely retirement, and, in case of urgency, answered within the week.

Domsie clutched the letter, and would have torn off the envelope. But he could not; his

hand was shaking like an aspen. He could only look, and I read:

"DEAR MR. JAMIESON:

"The class honor lists are just out, and you will be pleased to know that I have got the medal both in the Humanity and the Greek."

There was something about telling his mother, and his gratitude to his school-master, but Domsie heard no more. He tried to speak and could not, for a rain of tears was on his hard old face. Domsie was far more a pagan than a saint, but somehow he seemed to me that day as Simeon, who had at last seen his heart's desire, and was satisfied.

When the school had dispersed with a joyful shout, and disappeared in the pine woods, he said, "Ye'll come too," and I knew he was going to Whinnie Knowe. He did not speak one word upon the way, but twice he stood and read the letter, which he held fast in his hand. His face was set as he climbed the cart track. I saw it set again as we came down that road one day, but it was well that we could not pierce beyond the present.

Whinnie left his plough in the furrow, and came to meet us, taking two drills at a stride, and shouting remarks on the weather yards off.

Domsie only lifted the letter. "Frae George."

"Ay, ay, and what's he gotten noo?"

Domsie solemnly unfolded the letter, and brought down his spectacles. "Edinburgh,

April 7th." Then he looked at Whinnie and closed his mouth.

"We'll tell it first to his mither."

"Yer richt, Dominie. She weel deserves it. A'm thinking she's seen us by this time." So we fell into a procession, Dominie leading by two yards; and then a strange thing happened. For the first and last time in his life Domsie whistled, and the tune was "A hundred pipers and a' and a'," and as he whistled he seemed to dilate before our eyes, and he struck down thistles with his stick—a thistle at every stroke.

"Domsie's fair carried," whispered Whinnie, "it coves a'."

Marget met us at the end of the house beside the brier bush, where George was to sit on summer afternoons before he died, and a flash passed between Domsie and the lad's mother. Then she knew that it was well, and fixed her eyes on the letter, but Whinnie, his thumbs in his armholes, watched the wife.

Domsie now essayed to read the news, but between the shaking of his hands and his voice he could not.

"It's nae use," he cried, "he's first in the Humanity oot o' a hundred and seeventy lads, first o' them a', and he's first in the Greek too; the likes o' this is hardly known, and it hasna been seen in Drumtochty since there was a schule. That's the word he's sent, and he bade me tell his mother without delay, and I am here as fast as my old feet could carry me."

I glanced round, although I did not myself see very clearly.

Marget was silent for the space of five seconds; she was a good woman, and I knew that better afterward. She took the Dominie's hand, and said to him, "Under God this was your doing, Maister Jamieson, and for your reward ye'll get naither silver nor gold, but ye hae a mither's gratitude."

Whinnie gave a hoarse chuckle and said to his wife, "It was frae you, Marget, he got it a'."

When we settled in the parlor Domsie's tongue was loosed, and he lifted up his voice and sang the victory of Geordie Hoo.

"It's ten years ago at the brak up o' the winter ye brought him down to me, Mrs. Hoo, and ye said at the schule-house door, 'Dinna be hard on him, Maister Jamieson, he's my only bairn, and a wee thingie quiet.' Div ye mind what I said, 'There's something ahint that face,' and my heart warmed to George that hour. Two years after the Doctor examined the schule, and he looks at George. 'That's a likely lad, Dominie. What think ye?' And he was only eight years auld, and no big for his size. 'Doctor, I daurna prophesy till we turn him into the Latin, but a've my thoughts.' So I had a' the time, but I never boasted; na, na, that's dangerous. Didna I say, 'Ye hev a promisn' laddie, Whinnie,' ae day in the market?"

"It's a fac," said Whinnie, "it wes the day I bocht the white coo." But Domsie swept on.

"The first year o' Latin was enough for me. He juist nippet up his verbs. Cæsar couldna keep him going; he wes into Vergil afore he wes eleven, and the Latin prose, man, as sure as a'm living, it tasted o' Cicero frae the beginning."

Whinnie wagged his head in amazement.

"It was the verra nicht o' the Latin prose I cam up to speak about the college, and ye thocht Georgie hed been playing truant."

Whinnie laughed uproariously, but Domsie heeded not.

"It was awfu' work the next twa years, but the Doctor stood in weel wi' the Greek. Ye mind hoo Georgie tramped ower the muir to the manse thro' the weet an' the snaw, and there wes aye dry stockings for him in the kitchen afore he had his Greek in the Doctor's study."

"And a warm drink tae," put in Margaret, "and that's the window I pit the licht in to guide him hame in the dark winter nights, and mony a time when the sleet played swish on the glass I wes near wishin'——" Domsie waved his hand.

"But that's dune wi' noo, and he was worth a' the toil and trouble. First in the Humanity, and first in the Greek, sweepit the field, Lord preserve us! A' can hardly believe it. Eh, I was feared o' thae High School lads. They had terrible advantages. Maisters frae England, and tutors, and whatna', but Drumtochty carried aff the croon. It'll be fine reading in the papers:

"Humanity.—First Prize (and Medal), George Howe, Drumtochty, Perthshire.

"Greek.—First Prize (and Medal), George Howe, Drumtochty, Perthshire."

"It'll be mighty," cried Whinnie, now fairly on fire.

"And Philosophy and Mathematics to come. Georgie's no bad at Euclid. I'll wager he'll be first there too. When he gets his hand in there's naething he's no fit for wi' time. My ain laddie—and the Doctor's—we maunna forget him—it's his classics he hes, every book o' them. The Doctor'll be lifted when he comes back on Saturday. A'm thinkin' we'll hear o't on Sabbath. And Drumsheugh, he'll be naither to had nor bind in the kirk-yard. As for me, I wadna change places wi' the Duke o' Athole," and Domsie shook the table to its foundation.

Then he awoke, as from a dream, and the shame of boasting that shuts the mouths of self-respecting Scots descended upon him.

"But this is fair nonsense. Ye'll no mind the havers o' an auld dominie."

He fell back on a recent roup, and would not again break away, although sorely tempted by certain of Whinnie's speculations.

When I saw him last, his coat-tails were waving victoriously as he leaped a dyke on his way to tell our Drumtochty Maecenas that the judges knew their business.