

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF LACHLAN CAMPBELL.

### CHAPTER I.

#### A GRAND INQUISITOR.

The Free Kirk of Drumtochty had no gallery, but a section of seats at the back was raised two feet, and anyone in the first pew might be said to sit in the "briest o' the laft." When Lachlan Campbell arrived from the privileged parish of Auchindarroch, where the "Men" ruled with iron hand and no one shaved on Sabbath, he examined the lie of country with the eye of a strategist, and seized at once a corner seat on the crest of the hill. From this vantage ground, with his back to the wall and a clear space left between himself and his daughter Flora, he had an easy command of the pulpit, and within six months had been constituted a court of review neither minister nor people could lightly disregard. It was not that Lachlan spoke hastily or at length, for his policy was generally a silence pregnant with judgment, and his deliverances were for the most part in parables, none the less awful because hard of interpretation. Like every true

Celt, he had the power of reserve, and knew the value of mystery. His voice must not be heard in irresponsible gossip at the Kirk door, and he never condescended to the level of Mrs. MacFadyen, our recognized sermon taster, who criticized everything in the technique of the pulpit, from the number of heads in a sermon, to the air with which a probationer used his pocket-handkerchief. She lived in the eye of the public, and gave her opinions with the light heart of a newspaper writer; but Lachlan kept himself in the shadow and wore a manner of studied humility as became the administrator of the Holy Office in Drumtochty.

Lachlan was a little man, with a spare, wiry body, iron-gray hair and whiskers carefully arranged, a keen old-fashioned face sharpened by much spiritual thinking, and eyes that looked at you from beneath shaggy eyebrows as from some other world. His face had an irresistible suggestion of a Skye terrier, the most serious of animals, with the hair reduced, and Drumsheugh carried us all with him when, in a moment of inspiration, he declared that "the body looks as if he hed juist come oot o' the Ark." He was a shepherd to trade, and very faithful in all his work, but his life business was theology, from Supralapsarianism in Election to the marks of faith in a believer's heart. His library consisted of some fifty volumes of ancient divinity, and lay on an old oak kist close to his hand, where he sat beside the fire of a winter night. When the sheep were safe and his day's labor was over, he read by



the light of the fire and the "crusie" (oil-lamp) overhead, Witsius on the Covenants, or Rutherford's "Christ Dying," or Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," or Owen's "130th Psalm," while the colliers slept at his feet, and Flora put the finishing stroke to some bit of rustic finery. Worship was always colored by the evening's reading, but the old man never forgot to pray that they both might have a place in the everlasting covenant, and that the backslidings of Scotland might be healed.

As our inquisitor, Lachlan searched anxiously for sound doctrine and deep experience, but he was not concerned about learning, and fluency he regarded with disgust. When a young minister from Muirtown stamped twice in his prayer at the Drumtochty Fast, and preached with great eloquence from the words, "And there was no more sea," repeating the text at the end of each paragraph, and concluding the sermon with "Lord Ullin's Daughter," the atmosphere round Lachlan became electric, and no one dared to speak to him outside. He never expressed his mind on this melancholy exhibition, but the following Sabbath he explained the principle on which they elected ministers at Auchindarroch, which was his standard of perfection.

"Six young men came, and they did not sing songs in the pulpit. Oh, no, they preached fery well, and I said to Angus Bain, 'They are all goot lads, and there is nothing wrong with their doctrine.'

"Angus wass one of the 'Men,' and saw what

wass hidden from me, and he will be saying, 'Oh, yes, they said their lesson fery pretty, but I did not see them tremble, Lachlan Campbell. Another iss coming, and seven is a goot number.'

"It wass next Sabbath that he came, and he wass a white man, giving out his text, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb,' and I wass thinking that the Lord had laid too great a burden on the lad, and that he could not be fit for such a work. It wass not more than ten minutes before he will be trying to tell us what he wass seeing, and will not hef the words. He had to go down from the pulpit as a man that had been in the heavenly places, and wass stricken dumb.

"'It iss the Lord that has put me to shame this day,' he said to the elders, 'and I will nefer show my face again in Auchindarroch, for I ought not to have meddled with things too high for me.'

"'You will show your face here every Sabbath,' answered Angus Bain, 'for the Lord said unto me, "Wait for the man that trembles at the Word, and iss not able to speak, and it will be a sign unto you," 'and a fery goot minister he wass, and made the hypocrites in Zion to be afraid.'

Lachlan dealt tenderly with our young Free Kirk minister, for the sake of his first day, and passed over some very shallow experience without remark, but an autumn sermon roused him to a sense of duty. For some days a storm of



wind and rain had been stripping the leaves from the trees and gathering them in sodden heaps upon the ground. The minister looked out on the garden where many holy thoughts had visited him, and his heart sank like lead, for it was desolate, and of all its beauty there remained but one rose clinging to its stalk, drenched and faded. It seemed as if youth, with its flower of promise and hope, had been beaten down, and a sense of loneliness fell on his soul. He had no heart for work, and crept to bed, broken and dispirited. During the night the rain ceased, and the north wind began to blow, which cleanses nature in every pore, and braces each true man for his battle. The morrow was one of those glorious days which herald winter, and as the minister tramped along the road, where the dry leaves crackled beneath his feet, and climbed to the moor with head on high, the despair of yesterday vanished. The wind had ceased, and the glen lay at his feet, distinct in the cold, clear air, from the dark mass of pines that closed its upper end to the swelling woods of oak and beech that cut it off from the great Strath. He had received a warm welcome from all kinds of people, and now he marked with human sympathy each little homestead with its belt of firs against the winter's storms, and its stackyard where the corn had been gathered safe; the ploughman and his horses cutting brown ribbons in the bare stubble; dark squares where the potato stalks have withered to the ground, and women are raising the

roots, and here and there a few cattle still out in the fields. His eyes fell on the great wood through which he had rambled in August, now one blaze of color, rich green and light yellow, with patches of fiery red and dark purple. God seemed to have given him a sermon, and he wrote that evening, like one inspired, on the same parable of nature Jesus loved, with its subtle interpretation of our sorrow, joys, trust, and hope. People told me that it was a "rael bonnie sermon," and that Netherton had forgotten his after-sermon snuff, although it was his turn to pass the box to Burnbrae.

The minister returned to his study in a fine glow of body and soul, to find a severe figure standing motionless in the middle of the room.

"Wass that what you call a sermon?" said Lachlan Campbell, without other greeting.

John Carmichael was still so full of joy that he did not catch the tone, and explained with college pedantry that it was hardly a sermon, nor yet a lecture.

"You may call it a meditation."

"I will be calling it an essay without one bite of grass for starving sheep."

Then the minister awoke from a pleasant dream, as if one had flung cold water on his naked body.

"What was wrong?" with an anxious look at the stern little man who of a sudden had become his judge.

"There wass nothing right, for I am not thinking that trees and leaves and stubble fields will save our souls, and I did not hear



about sin and repentance and the work of Christ. It iss sound doctrine that we need, and a great peety you are not giving it."

The minister had been made much of in college circles, and had a fair idea of himself. He was a kindly lad, but he did not see why he should be lectured by an old Highland an who read nothing except Puritans, and was blind with prejudice. When they parted that Sabbath afternoon, it was the younger man that had lost his temper, and the other did not offer to shake hands.

Perhaps the minister would have understood Lachlan better if he had known that the old man could not touch food when he got home, and spent the evening in a fir wood praying for the lad he had begun to love. And Lachlan would have had a lighter heart if he had heard the minister questioning himself whether he had denied the Evangel or sinned against one of Christ's disciples. They argued together; they prayed apart.

Lachlan was careful to say nothing, but the congregation felt that his hand was against the minister, and Burnbrae took him to task.

"Ye maunna be ower hard on him, Maister Campbell, for he's but young, and comin' on fine. He hes a hearty word for ilka body on the road, and the sicht o' his fresh young face in the poopit is a sermon itsel'."

"You are wrong, Burnbrae, if you will be thinking that my heart iss not warm to the minister, for it went out unto him from the day

he preached his first sermon. But the Lord regardeth not the countenance of man."

"Nae doot, nae doot! but I canna see onything wrang in his doctrine; it wudna be reasonable tae expect auld-fashioned sermons frae a young man, and I wud coont them barely honest. A'm no denying that he gaes far afield, and tak's us tae strange lands when he's on his travels, but ye'll acknowledge that he gaithers mony treasures, and he aye comes back tae Christ."

"No, I will not be saying that John Carmichael does not love Christ, for I hef seen the Lord in his sermons like a face through a lattice. Oh, yes! and I hef felt the fragrance of the myrrh. But I am not liking his doctrine, and I wass thinking that some day there will be no original sin left in the parish of Drumtochty."

It was about this time that the minister made a great mistake, although he was trying to do his best for the people, and always obeyed his conscience. He used to come over to the Cottage for a ramble through my books, and one evening he told me that he had prepared what he called a "course" on Biblical criticism, and was going to place Drumtochty on a level with Germany. It was certainly a strange part for me to advise a minister, but I had grown to like the lad, because he was full of enthusiasm and too honest for this world, and I implored him to be cautious. Drumtochty was not anxious to be enlightened about the authors of the Pentateuch, being quite satisfied with Moses,



and it was possible that certain good men in Drumtochty might resent any interference with their hereditary notions. Why could he not read this subject for his own pleasure, and teach it quietly in classes? Why give himself away in the pulpit? This worldly counsel brought the minister to a white heat, and he rose to his feet. Had he not been ordained to feed his people with truth, and was he not bound to tell them all he knew? We were living in an age of transition, and he must prepare Christ's folk that they be not taken unawares. If he failed in his duty through any fear of consequences, men would rise afterward to condemn him for cowardice, and lay their unbelief at his door. When he ceased, I was ashamed of my cynical advice, and resolved never again to interfere with "courses" or other matters above the lay mind. But greater knowledge of the world had made me a wise prophet.

Within a month the Free Kirk was in an uproar, and when I dropped in one Sabbath morning the situation seemed to me a very pathetic tragedy. The minister was offering to the honest country-folk a mass of immature and undigested details about the Bible, and they were listening with wearied, perplexed faces. Lachlan Campbell sat grim and watchful, without a sign of flinching, but even from the Manse pew I could detect the suffering of his heart. When the minister blazed into polemic against the bigotry of the old school, the iron face quivered as if a father had been

struck by his son. Carmichael looked thin and nervous in the pulpit, and it came to me that if new views are to be preached to old-fashioned people it ought not to be by lads, who are always heady and intolerant, but by a stout man of middle age, with a rich voice and a good-natured manner. Had Carmichael rasped and girded much longer, one would have believed in the inspiration of the vowel points, and I left the church with a low heart, for this was a woeful change from his first sermon.

Lachlan would not be pacified, not even by the plea of the minister's health.

"Oh, yes, I am seeing that he is ill, and I will be as sorry as any man in Drumtochty. But it iss not too much work, as they are saying; it iss the judgment of God. It iss not goot to meddle with Moses, and John Carmichael will be knowing that. His own sister wass not respectful to Moses, and she will not be feeling fery well next day."

But Burnbrae added that the "auld man cudna be mair cast doon if he hed lost his dochter."

The peace of the Free Kirk had been broken, and the minister was eating out his heart, when he remembered the invitation of Marget Howe, and went one sweet spring day to Whinnie Knowe.

Marget met him with her quiet welcome at the garden gate.

"Ye hae done me a great kindness in comin', Maister Carmichael, and if ye please we'll sit



in this sunny corner which is dear tae me, and ye'll tell me yir troubles."

So they sat down together beside the brier bush, and after one glance at Marget's face the minister opened his heart, and told her the great controversy with Lachlan.

Marget lifted her head as one who had heard of some brave deed, and there was a ring in her voice.

"It mak's me prood before God that there are twa men in Drumtochty who follow their conscience as king, and coont truth dearer than their ain freends. It's peetiful when God's bairns fecht through greed and envy, but it's hertsome when they are wullin' tae wrestle about the Evangel, for surely the end o' it a' maun be peace.

"A've often thocht that in the auld days baith the man on the rack and the inqueesitor himself might be gude men and accepted o' God, and maybe the inqueesitor suffered mair than the martyr. A'm thinkin', Maister Carmichael, that it's been hardest on Lachlan."

The minister's head was buried in his hands, but his heart was with Marget.

"It's a strange buik the Bible, and no the buik we wud hae made, tae judge by oor bit creeds and confessions. It's like a head o' aits in the harvest time. There's the ear that hauds the grain and keeps it safe, and that's the history, and there's often no mickle nutriment in it; then there's the corn lying in the ear, which is the Evangel frae Eden tae Revelation, and that is the bread o' the soul. But

the corn maun be threshed first and the cauf [chaff] cleaned aff. It's a bonnie sicht tae see the pure grain fallin' like a rinnin' burn on the corn-room floor, and a glint o' the sun through the window turning it intae gold. But the stour [dust] o' the cauf room is mair than onybody can abide, and the cauf's worth naethin' when the corn's awa."

"Ye mean," said the minister, "that my study is the threshin' mill, and that some of the chaff has got into the pulpit."

"Yir no offended," and Marget's voice trembled.

Then the minister lifted his head and laughed aloud with joy, while a swift flash of humor lit up Marget's face.

"You've been the voice of God to me this day, Mrs. Howe. But if I give up my 'course,' the people will misunderstand, for I know everything I gave was true, and I would give it all again, if it were expedient."

"Nae fear, Maister Carmichael; naebody misunderstands that laves, and the fouk all luve ye, and the man that hauds ye dearest is Lachlan Campbell. I saw the look in his een that canna be mista'en."

"I'll go to him this very day," and the minister leaped to his feet.

"Ye'll no regret it," said Marget, "for God will give ye peace."

Lachlan did not see the minister coming, for he was busy with a lamb that had lost its way and hurt itself. Carmichael marked with a growing tenderness at his heart how gently



the old man washed and bound up the wounded leg, all the time crooning to the frightened creature in the sweet Gaelic speech, and also how he must needs give the lamb a drink of warm milk before he set it free.

When he rose from his work of mercy, he faced the minister.

For an instant Lachlan hesitated, and then at the look on Carmichael's face he held out both his hands.

"This iss a goot day for me, and I bid you ten thousand welcomes."

But the minister took the first word.

"You and I, Lachlan, have not seen eye to eye about some things lately, and I am not here to argue which is nearer the truth, because perhaps we may always differ on some lesser matters. But once I spoke rudely to you, and often I have spoken unwisely in my sermons. You are an old man and I am a young, and I ask you to forgive me and to pray that both of us may be kept near the heart of our Lord, whom we love, and who loves us."

No man can be so courteous as a Celt, and Lachlan was of the pure Highland breed, kindest of friends, fiercest of foes.

"You hef done a beautiful deed this day, Maister Carmichael; and the grace of God must hef been exceeding abundant in your heart. It iss this man that asks your forgiveness, for I wass full of pride, and did not speak to you as an old man should; but God iss my witness that I would hef plucked out my right eye for your sake. You will say every word God

gives you, and I will take as much as God gives me, and there will be a covenant between us as long as we live."

They knelt together on the earthen floor of that Highland cottage, the old school and the new, before one Lord, and the only difference in their prayers was that the young man prayed they might keep the faith once delivered unto the saints, while the burden of the old man's prayer was that they might be led into all truth.

Lachlan's portion that evening ought to have been the slaying of Sisera, from the Book of Judges, but instead he read, to Flora's amazement—it was the night before she left her home—the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, and twice he repeated to himself, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."