

tae know till the gloamin' come. Gither us in then, we pray Thee, and a' we luve, no a bairn missin', and may we sit doon for ever in oor ain Father's House. Amen."

As Burnbrae said Amen, Carmichael opened his eyes, and had a vision which will remain with him until the day break and the shadows flee away.

The six elders—three small farmers, a tailor, a stonemason, and a shepherd—were standing beneath the lamp, and the light fell like a halo on their bent heads. That poor little vestry had disappeared, and this present world was forgotten. The sons of God had come into their heritage, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

## THE CUNNING SPEECH OF DRUMTOCHTY.

Speech in Drumtochty distilled slowly, drop by drop, and the faces of our men were carved in stone. Visitors, without discernment, used to pity our dullness and lay themselves out for missionary work. Before their month was over they spoke bitterly of us, as if we had deceived them, and departed with a grudge in their hearts. When Hillocks scandalized the Glen by letting his house and living in the bothie, —through sheer greed of money,—it was taken by a fussy little man from the South, whose control over the letter "h" was uncertain, but whose self-confidence bordered on the miraculous. As a deacon of the **Social Religionists**, —a new denomination, which had made an 'it with Sunday Entertainments,—and Chairman of the Amalgamated Sons of Rest,—a society of persons with conscientious objections to work between meals,—he was horrified at the primeval simplicity of the Glen, where no meeting of protest had been held in the memory of living man, and the ministers preached from the Bible. It was understood that he was to do his best for us, and there was curiosity in the kirkyard.

"Whatna like man is that English veesitor ye've got, Hillocks? a' hear he's fleein' ower the Glen, yammerin' and haverin' like a startlin'."

"He's a gabby [talkative] body, Drumsheugh, there's nae doot o' that, but terrible ignorant."

"Says he tae me nae later than yesterday, 'That's a fine field o' barley ye've there, Maister Harris,' an' as sure as deith a' didna ken whaur tae luik, for it was a puckle aits."

"Keep's a'," said Whinnie; "he's been awfu' negleckit when he was a bairn, or maybe there's a want in the puir cratur."

Next Sabbath Mr. Urijah Hopps appeared in person among the fathers—who looked at each other over his head—and enlightened them on supply and demand, the Game Laws, the production of cabbages for towns, the iniquity of an Established Church, and the bad metre of the Psalms of David.

"You must 'ave henterprise, or it's hall hup with you farmers."

"Ay, ay," responded Drumsheugh, after a long pause, and then every man concentrated his attention on the belfry of the kirk.

"Is there onything ava' in the body, think ye, Domsie," as Mr. Hopps bustled into kirk, "or is't a' wind?"

"Three wechtfu's o' naething, Drumsheugh; a' peety the puir man if Jamie Soutar gets a haud o' him."

Jamie was the cynic of the Glen—who had pricked many a wing bag—and there was a

general feeling that his meeting with Mr. Hopps would not be devoid of interest. When he showed himself anxious to learn next Sabbath, any man outside Drumtochty might have been deceived, for Jamie could withdraw every sign of intelligence from his face, as when shutters close upon a shop window. Our visitor fell at once into the trap, and made things plain to the meanest capacity, until Jamie elicited from the guileless Southron that he had never heard of the Act of Union; that Adam Smith was a new book he hoped to buy; that he did not know the difference between an Arminian and a Calvinist, and that he supposed the Confession of Faith was invented in Edinburgh. This in the briefest space of time, and by way of information to Drumtochty. James was making for general literature, and had still agriculture in reserve, when Drumsheugh intervened in the humanity of his heart:

"A' dinna like tae interrupt yir conversation, Maister Hopps, but it's no verra safe for ye tae be stannin' here sae lang. Oor air hes a bit nip in't, and is mair searchin' than doon Sooth. Jamie 'ill be speirin' a' mornin' gin ye'll answer him, but a'm thinkin' ye'll be warmer in the kirk."

And Drumsheugh escorted Mr. Hopps to cover, who began to suspect that he had been turned inside out, and found wanting.

Drumtochty had listened with huge delight, but without a trace of expression, and, on Mr.

Hopps reaching shelter, three boxes were offered Jamie.

The group was still lost in admiration when Drumsheugh returned from his errand of mercy.

"Sall, ye've dune the job this time, Jamie. Ye're an awfu' creetic. Yon man 'ill keep a quiet cheep till he gets Sooth. It passes me hoo a body wi' sae little in him hes the face tae open his mooth."

"Ye did it weel, Jamie," Domsie added, "a clean furrow frae end tae end."

"Toots, fouk, yir makin' ower muckle o' it. It wes licht grund, no worth puttin' in a ploo."

Mr. Hopps explained to me, before leaving, that he had been much pleased with the scenery of our Glen but disappointed in the people.

"They may not be hignorant," said the little man doubtfully, "but no man could call them haffable."

It flashed on me for the first time that perhaps there may have been the faintest want of geniality in the Drumtochty manner, but it was simply the reticence of a subtle and conscientious people. Intellect with us had been brought to so fine an edge by the Shorter Catechism that it could detect endless distinctions, and was ever on the watch against inaccuracy. Farmers who could state the esoteric doctrine of "spiritual independence" between the stilts of the plough, and talked familiarly of "co-ordinate jurisdiction with mutual subordination," were not likely to fall into the vice of generalization. When James Soutar was in

good fettle, he could trace the whole history of Scottish secession from the beginning, winding his way through the maze of Original Seceders and Cameronians, Burghers and Anti-Burghers—there were days when he would include the Glassites—with unfaltering step; but this was considered a feat even in Drumtochty, and it was admitted that Jamie had "a gift o' discreemination." We all had the gift in measure, and dared not therefore allow ourselves the expansive language of the South. What right had any human being to fling about superlative adjectives, seeing what a big place the world is, and how little we know? Purple adjectives would have been as much out of place in our conversation as a bird of paradise among our muirfowl.

Mr. Hopps was so inspired by one of our sunsets—to his credit let that be told—that he tried to drive Jamie into extravagance.

"No bad!" I call it glorious, and if it hisn't, then I'd like to know what his."

"Man," replied Soutar austerely, "ye'll surely keep ae word for the twenty-first o' Reevelation."

Had any native used "magnificent," there would have been an uneasy feeling in the Glen; the man must be suffering from wind in the head, and might upset the rotation of crops, sowing his young grass after potatoes, or replacing turnip with beetroot. But nothing of that sort happened in my time; we kept ourselves well in hand. It rained in torrents elsewhere, with us it only "threatened tae be weet"

—some provision had to be made for the deluge. Strangers, in the pride of health, described themselves as "fit for anything," but Hillocks, who died at ninety-two, and never had an hour's illness, did not venture, in his prime, beyond "Gaein' aboot, a'm thankfu' to say, gaein' aboot."

When one was seriously ill, he was said to be "gey an' sober," and no one died in Drumtochty—"he slippit awa."

Hell and heaven were pulpit words; in private life we spoke of "the ill place" and "oor lang hame."

When the corn sprouted in stooks one late wet harvest, and Burnbrae lost half his capital, he only said, "It's no lichtsome," and no congratulations on a good harvest ever extracted more from Drumsheugh than "A' daurna complain."

Drumsheugh might be led beyond bounds in reviewing a certain potato transaction, but, as a rule, he was a master of measured speech. After the privilege of much intercourse with that excellent man, I was able to draw up his table of equivalents for the three degrees of wickedness. Where there was just a suspicion of trickiness—neglecting the paling between your cattle and your neighbor's clover field—"He's no juist the man for an elder." If it deepened into deceit—running a "greasy" horse for an hour before selling—"He wud be better o' anither dip." And in the case of downright fraud—finding out what a man had offered for his farm and taking it over his

head—the offender was "an ill gettit wratch." The two latter phrases were dark with theology, and even the positive degree of condemnation had an ecclesiastical flavor.

When Drumsheugh approved any one, he was content to say, "He micht be waur," a position beyond argument. On occasion he ventured upon bolder assertions: "There's nae mischief in Domsie;" and once I heard him in a white heat of enthusiasm pronounce Dr. Davidson, our parish minister, "A graund man ony wy ye tak him." But he seemed ashamed after this outburst, and "shooed" the crows off the corn with needless vigor.

No Drumtochty man would commit himself to a positive statement on any subject if he could find a way of escape, not because his mind was confused, but because he was usually in despair for an accurate expression. It was told for years in the Glen, with much relish and almost funereal solemnity, how a Drumtochty witness held his own in an ecclesiastical court.

"It's a fac'," after a long pause and a careful review of the whole situation.

"You remember that Sabbath when the minister of Netheraird preached."

"Weel, a'll admit that," making a concession to justice.

"Did ye see him in the vestry?"

"A' canna deny it."

"Was he intoxicated?"

The crudeness of this question took away Drumtochty's breath, and suggested that some-

thing must have been left out in the creation of that advocate. Our men were not bigoted abstainers, but I never heard any word so coarse and elementary as intoxicated used in Drumtochty. Conversation touched this kind of circumstance with delicacy and caution, for we keenly realized the limitations of human knowledge.

"He hed his mornin'," served all ordinary purposes, and in cases of emergency, such as Muirtown market:

"Ye cud see he hed been tastin'."

When an advocate forgot himself so far as to say intoxicated, a Drumtochty man might be excused for being upset.

"Losh, man," when he had recovered, "hoo cud ony richt-thinkin' man sweer tae sic an awfu' word? Na, na; a' daurna use that kin' o' langidge; it's no cannie."

The advocate tried again, a humbler, wiser man.

"Was there a smell of drink on him?"

"Noo, since ye press me, a'll juist tell ye the hale truth; it wes doonricht stupid o' me, but, as sure as a'm livin', a' clean forgot to try him."

Then the chastened council gathered himself up for his last effort.

"Will you answer one question, sir? you are on your oath. Did you see anything unusual in Mr. MacOmish's walk? Did he stagger?"

"Na," when he had spent two minutes in

recalling the scene. "Na, I cudna say stagger, but he micht gie a bit trimmil."

"We are coming to the truth now; what did you consider the cause of the trimmiling, as you call it?" and the innocent young advocate looked round in triumph.

"Weel," replied Drumtochty, making a clean breast of it, "since ye maun hae it, a' heard that he wes a very learned man, and it cam' intae ma mind that the Hebrew, which, a'm telt, is a very contrairy langidge, had gaen doon and settled in his legs."

The parish of Netheraird was declared vacant, but it was understood that the beadle of Pitscourie had not contributed to this decision.

His own parish followed the trial with intense interest, and were much pleased with Andra's appearance.

"Sall," said Hillocks, "Andra has mair gumption than ye wud think, and yon advocat didna mak muckle o' him. Na, na; Andra wesna brocht up in the Glen for naethin'. Maister MacOmish may hae taen his gless atween the Hebrew and the Greek, and it's no verra suitable for a minister, but that's anither thing frae bein' intoxicat."

"Keep's a', if ye were tae pit me in the box this meenut, a' cudna sweer a' hed ever seen a man intoxicat in ma life, except a puir body o' an English bag-man at Muirtown Station. A' doot he hed bin meddlin' wi' speerits, and they were wheelin' him tae his kerridge in a lug-gage-barrow. It wes a fearsome sicht, and

eneugh tae keep ony man frae speakin' aboot intoxicat in yon loose wy."

Archie Moncur fought the drinking customs of the Glen night and day with moderate success, and one winter's night he gave me a study in his subject which, after the lapse of years, I still think admirable for its reserve power and Dantesque conclusion.

"They a' begin in a sma' wy," explained Archie, almost hidden in the depths of my reading chair, and emphasizing his points with a gentle motion of his right hand; "naethin' tae mention at first, juist a gless at an orra time—a beerial or a merridge—and maybe New Year. That's the first stage; they ca' that moderation. After a while they tak a mornin' wi' a freend, and syne a gless at the public-hoose in the evenin', and they treat ane anither on market days. That's the second stage; that's 'tastin'.' Then they need it reg'lar every day, nicht an' mornin', and they'll sit on at nicht till they're turned oot. They'll fecht ower the Confession noo, and laist Sabbath's sermon, in the Kildrummie train, till it's clean reediklus. That's drammin', and when they've hed a year or twa at that they hee their first spatie (spate is a river flood), and that gives them a bit fricht. But aff they set again, and then comes anither spatie, and the doctor hes tae bring them roond. They ca' (drive) cannie for a year or sae, but the feein' market puts the feenishin' titch. They slip aff sudden in the end, and then they juist gang plunk—ay," said Archie in a tone of

gentle meditation, looking, as it were, over the edge, "juist plunk."

Nothing ever affected my imagination more powerfully than the swift surprise and gruesome suggestion of that "plunk."

But the literary credit of Drumtochty rested on a broad basis, and no one could live with us without having his speech braced for life. You felt equal to any emergency, and were always able to express your mind with some degree of accuracy; which is one of the luxuries of life. There is, for instance, a type of idler who exasperates one to the point of assault, and whom one hungers to describe after a becoming manner. He was rare in the cold air of the North, but we had produced one specimen, and it was my luck to be present when he came back from a distant colony, and Jamie Soutar welcomed him in the kirkyard.

"Weel, Chairlie," and Jamie examined the well-dressed prodigal from top to toe, "this is a prood moment for Drumtochty, and an awfu' relief tae ken yir safe. Man, ye hevna wanted meat nor claites; a' tak it rael neeburly o' ye tae speak ava wi' us auld-fashioned fouk.

"Ye needna look soor nor cock yir nose in the air, for you an' me are auld freends, and yir puir granny wes na mair anxious aboot ye than a' wes.

"A'm feared that laddie o' Bell's 'ill kill himsel' oot in Ameriky," were ma verra words tae Hillocks here; 'he'll be slavin' his flesh aff his banes tae mak a fortune and keep her comfortable.'

"It was a rael satisfaction tae read yir letter frae the backwoods—or was't a public-hoose in New York? ma memory's no what it used ta be—tellin' hoo ye were aye thinkin' o' yer auld granny, and wantin' tae come hame and be a comfort tae her if she wud send ye oot twenty pund.

"The bit that affeckit me maist wes the text frae the Prodigal Son—it cam' in sae natural. Mony a broken hert hes that story bund up, as we ken weel in this Glen; but it's dune a feck o' mischief tae—that gude word o' the Maister. Half the wastrels in the warld pay their passage hame wi' that Parable, and get a bran new outfit for anither start in the far country.

"Noo dinna turn red, Chairlie, for the neeburs ken ye were tae work yir wy hame hed it no been for yir health. But there's a pack of rascals 'ill sorn on their father as lang as he's livin', and they'll stairve a weedowed mither, and they'll take a sister's wages, and if they canna get ony better a dune body o' eighty 'ill serve them.

"Man, Chairlie, if a' hed ma wull wi' thae wawfies, I wud ship them aff tae a desert island, wi' ae sack o' seed potatoes and anither o' seed corn, and let them work or dee. A' ken yir wi' me there, for ye aye hed an independent spirit, and wesna feared tae bend yir back.

"Noo, if a' cam' across ane o' thae meeserable objects in Drumtochty, div ye ken the advice I wud gie him?

"A' wud tell the daidlin', thowless, feckless, fusionless wratch o' a cratur tae watch for the first spate and droon himsel' in the Tochty.

"What's he aff through the graves for in sic a hurry?" and Jamie followed Charlie's retreating figure with a glance of admirable amazement; "thae's no very gude mainners he's learned in Ameriky."

"Thank ye, Jeemes, thank ye; we're a' obleeged tae ye," said Drumsheugh. "A' wes ettlin' tae lay ma hands on the whupma-denty (fop) masel', but ma certes, he's hed his kail het this mornin'. Div ye think he'll tak yir advice?"

"Nae fear o' him; thae neer-dae-weels haena the spunk; but a'm expeekin' he'll flee the pairish."

Which he did. Had you called him indolent or useless he had smiled, but "daidlin', thowless, feckless, fusionless wratch," drew blood at every stroke, like a Russian knout.

We had tender words also, that still bring the tears to my eyes, and chief among them was "couthy." What did it mean? It meant a letter to some tired townsman, written in homely Scotch, and bidding him come to get new life from the Drumtochty air; and the grip of an honest hand on the Kildrummie platform, whose warmth lasted till you reached the Glen; and another welcome at the garden gate that mingled with the scent of honeysuckle, and moss-roses, and thyme, and carnations; and the best of everything that could be given you; and motherly nursing in illness,

with skilly remedies of the olden time; and wise, cheery talk that spake no ill of man or God; and loud reproaches if you proposed to leave under a month or two; and absolute conditions that you must return; and a load of country dainties for a bachelor's bare commons; and far more, that cannot be put into words, of hospitality, and kindness, and quietness, and restfulness, and loyal friendship of hearts now turned to dust in the old kirkyard.

But the best of all our words were kept for spiritual things, and the description of a godly man. We did not speak of the "higher life," nor of a "beautiful Christian," for this way of putting it would not have been in keeping with the genius of Drumtochty. Religion there was very lowly and modest—an inward walk with God. No man boasted of himself, none told the secrets of the soul. But the Glen took notice of its saints, and did them silent reverence, which they themselves never knew. Jamie Soutar had a wicked tongue, and, at a time, it played round Archie's temperance scheme, but when that good man's back was turned Jamie was the first to do him justice.

"It wud set us better if we did as muckle gude as Archie; he's a richt livin' man and weel prepared."

Our choicest tribute was paid by general consent to Burnbrae, and it may be partiality, but it sounds to me the deepest in religious speech. Every cottage, strangers must understand, had at least two rooms—the kitchen where the work was done, that we called the "But," and

there all kinds of people came; and the inner chamber which held the household treasures, that we called the "Ben," and there none but a few honored visitors had entrance. So we imagined an outer court of the religious life where most of us made our home, and a secret place where only God's nearest friends could enter, and it was said of Burnbrae, "He's far ben." His neighbors had watched him, for a generation and more, buying and selling, ploughing and reaping, going out and in the common ways of a farmer's life, and had not missed the glory of the soul. The cynic of Drumtochty summed up his character: "There's a puckle gude fouk in the pairish, and ane or twa o' the ither kind, and the maist o' us are half and between," said Jamie Soutar, "but there's ae thing ye may be sure o'—Burnbrae is 'far ben.'"