JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE

When A Man's Single - A Tale Of Literary Life

J. M. Barrie

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James Matthew Barrie – A Personal Sketch By Hattie Tyng Griswold

IAN MACLAREN recently related the following incident, illustrating the pride of the common people of Scotland in their most popular author. He said :

" Not long ago, I was travelling from Aberdeen to Perth. A man sitting opposite studied me for a minute, and then, evidently being convinced that I had average intelligence, and could appreciate a great sight if I saw it, he said, ' If you will stand up with me at the window, I will show you something in a minute ; you will only get a glimpse suddenly and for an instant.' I stood. He said, ' Can you see that ? ' I saw some smoke, and said so. ' That 's Kirriemuir,' he answered. I sat down, and he sat opposite me, and

watched my face to see that the fact that I had had a glimpse of Kirriemuir, or rather of its smoke, was one I thoroughly appreciated, and would carry in retentive memory for the rest of my life. Then I said, ' Mr. Barrie was born there.' ' Yes,' he said, ' he was ; and I was born there myself.' "

This intense loyalty to every thing Scotch, this pride in the achievements of any countryman, this appreciation of the national element in literature, is one of the most pleasing traits of the Scotch character, though it has. its humorous side, and has roused inextinguishable laughter in its day. Much as the outside world praises and prizes the best work of such men as Stevenson, Barrie, Ian MacLaren, and others, it is only people who have lived with and loved the bracken and the heather, who feel its subtlest charm. This fragrance is in every leaf of these Scottish stories, and it cannot stir the alien heart as it does that of the native. What a classic land its writers have made of Scotland, the wild and rugged, and barren little spot ! The land touched by the pen of Scott is as classic as Greece, that connected with the life of Burns no less so, and the home and haunts of Carlyle, if loved by a lesser number, are loved just as passionately. And now we have a new Delphian vale in Thrums or Kirriemuir, and still another in Drumtochty. Time will test the fame of these new men, and prove their staying qualities, but at present they really seem to have made a high bid for continued favor, in the hearts of so steadfast a people as the Scotch.

James Matthew Barrie was born in Kirriemuir on May 9, 1860. Kirriemuir is sixty miles north of Edinburgh, and Mr. Barrie has made all the world familiar with the little secluded hamlet, by his descriptions of Thrums and its inhabitants. We know these people as we do our personal friends, and if we could but sit at the window in Thrums we

could call many of their names as they pass by. Leeby and Jess, alas ! we should not see; they are asleep under the brachen and the moss on the hill overlooking Kirriemuir, and that little burgh seems thinly inhabited now that they are gone.

The day of James Barrie's birth was always remembered in his family by the fact that six hair-bottomed chairs were brought into the house upon that day, chairs which had been longed for, and waited and worked for, by that capable and ambitious woman, Margaret Ogilvie, his mother. He heard the description of the coming of the chairs so often afterwards, and shared in the toil and saving to get other things to place beside the chairs, for so long a time, that he feels as if he remembered the event for himself; and this is the case with many of the incidents of his mother's life which had been conned over so often in his hearing. From six years old he takes up the thread of memory for himself, and sees his mother's face, and knows that God sent her into the world to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful thoughts. His life was very closely bound up with hers from this time on, and the history of the one is that of the other. What she had been and what he should be, were the great subjects between them in his boyhood, and the stories she told him, for she was a born storyteller, took such hold on his memory, and so stirred his imagination, that they afterward laid the foundations of his fame, when he published them in his first volume of " Auld Licht Idylls." Never were such friends as he and his mother all through his youth, and her mark was indelibly set upon him by that time. She had a numerous family of children, but Jamie seemed to be different to her from the others. Some peculiar mystic grace had made him only the child of his mother," and it was a worshipful love on the part of both that held them together. This mother was a great reader, and they read many books together when he was a boy, "

Robinson Crusoe ' being the first. This led to his writing stories himself, and reading them to her. She was a sharp critic, and he served his apprenticeship under her. They were all tales of adventure, he tells us ; the scene lay in unknown parts, desert islands, and enchanted gardens, and there were always knights in armor riding on black chargers at full tilt. At the age of twelve he made up his mind to be an author, and she aided and abetted him in all the ways known to a loving mother's heart. About this time, or a little later, he was sent to the Dumfries Academy, where his brother was Inspector of Schools. He was a bright scholar, and very happy there, where he made unusual progress in his studies.

At eighteen years of age he entered the University at Edinburgh, and devoted himself especially to the study of literature. He went but little into the society of the place, and made but few friends among the students, being considered " reserved." But he had opportunity for more reading than ever before, and became quite absorbed in the multitude of books to which he had access for the first time. He also began the writing of literary criticisms for the " Edinburgh Courant ' at this time. He showed a true touch even in his first writing, which may have been owing somewhat to his years of practice in the garret at home, on stories which must be made to please his mother. Carlyle, whom he had sometimes seen while at Dumfries, and who became his hero, exerted a great influence upon him at this time. He began to look upon life through the eyes of his mentor, and to value the sturdy virtues which form so large a part of his discourse. He caught some of his phrases, which were a stumbling-block to his mother, although she too was an ardent admirer of the rugged Scotchman. Sincerity, truth, courage, strength, these became his watchwords, and their influence can be seen in his writings to this day. The poetry of common life, the hardy virtues of

the humble, the sweetness of the domestic life in many lowly cottages, the humorous side of petty religious controversy, these became his theme, and the world turned away from the conventional novel about Lady Arabella and Lord Vincent Vere de Vere, and the vicar and the curate, and the old family solicitor of the Tulkinghorn type, to read about " The Courting of T'nowhead's Bell." He heeded Longfellow's advice, although very likely he had never heard of it, in the verse which says,

" That is best which lieth nearest,
Shape from this thy work of art."

How many times of late we have seen the wisdom of this course exemplified ! Instead of going back to the past, or flying to the ends of the earth for some new and impossible theme, we have seen our most popular writers sitting down on their own doorsteps, and describing what actually passed before their eyes, with the result that the whole reading world wanted to see just what they saw, and with their eyes. Miss Murfree among the Tennessee mountains, Miss Wilkins in hackneyed New England, Olive Schreiner on a South African Farm, Mr. Cable among the Creoles of Louisiana, Kipling with the British army in India, Thomas Nelson Page in the New South, Mary Hallock Foote in the Western mining-camps, and many others who have achieved late successes, have done so on their own ground, in reporting the actual life of the people with whom they were familiar. That repulsive realism which concerns itself only with disease and vice and abnormal conditions will be crowded out by the better realism of the new school. While we have among the younger writers a few who follow the lead of Ibsen and of Zola, and insist upon dragging into the light all the hidden things of life, and whose writings consequently are redolent of decay, this newer group give us novels of character, and our interest lies in its

development amid the varied circumstances depicted, and not in some hidden crime or adulterous amour, which is exploited with all its disgusting details, till the revolted reader throws it into the fire, which alone can purify its poisonous pages. That our presses have teemed with this kind of books for a few years past, is a well-known fact. About them we could say as Thoreau said about certain poems of Walt Whitman,

" He does not celebrate love at all. It is as if the beasts spoke. I think that men have not been ashamed of themselves without reason. No doubt there have always been dens where such deeds were unblushingly recited, and it is no merit to compete with their inhabitants."

But in the very midst of this passing phase of the gospel of dirt, were flung such books as " A Window in Thrums " and " The Bonnie Brier Bush," and their reception proved that the heart of the reading world is sound, although it is sometimes beguiled into the haunts of leprosy for a season.

Graduating from the University in Edinburgh in 1882, Barrie necessarily began to look at once for work, for his father had already done perhaps more than he was able to do for him, and there was a numerous family whose needs had to be considered. The famous managing of Mrs. Barrie had been put to many hard tests in its time, and her son knew too well the inner details of the home life, to wish to live a moment longer than was necessary at the expense of his parents. He tells us in one place about the little parlor which was the pride of his mother's heart:

" Every article of furniture, from the chairs that came into the world with me, and have worn so much better, though I was new and they were second-hand, to the mantel-border of fashionable design which she sewed in her seventieth

year, having picked up the stitch in half a lesson, has its story of fight and attainment for her; hence her satisfaction."

The furnishing of the family wardrobe also had been with her a series of skirmishes, in which she had plucked from every well-dressed person she had chanced to see, ideas for the making or re-making of garments for one or another of the family. And she made very good imitations indeed of the clothing of the better dressed people, out of the poorer resources of her cottage. She would imitate the cut of a garment, if only she could get one long satisfying look at it, in a manner that would have been the envy of some famous dressmakers. And as to patterns and colors her taste was perfect. Her son dwells lovingly on all these details, in his memorial of her, which is in part a history of his own life, so interwoven were their existences. He made what haste he could to earn money for himself and her. For the greatest of his pleasures in the earning came to be what he could do for her to gratify her innocent pride and her generous impulses toward others. At this time his sister saw an advertisement for a leader-writer by the Nottingham " Daily Journal," and with great trepidation and excitement the family awaited the result of his application for the place. Great was the rejoicing when he received the appointment, at what seemed to them the magnificent salary of three guineas a week. For this sum he was to write an article, and notes on political and social topics every day. This journalistic training was doubtless of great value to him, and he describes it somewhat in a novel written some years afterward, called " When a Man 's Single." In it he narrates how the young man, who had accepted a place on the paper, first appeared at the office of the " Daily Mirror." He says:

" During the time the boy took to light Mr. Licquarish's fire, a young man in a heavy overcoat knocked more than once at the door in the alley, and then moved off as if somewhat relieved that there was no response. He walked round and round the block of buildings, gazing upward at the windows of the composing-room ; and several times he ran against other pedestrians, on whom he turned fiercely, and would then have begged their pardons had he known what to say. Frequently he felt in his pocket to see if his money was still there, and once he went behind a door and counted it. There were three pounds seventeen shillings altogether, and he kept it in a linen bag that had been originally made for carrying worms when he went fishing. . . . Rob had stopped at the door a score of times and then turned away. He had arrived in Silchester in the afternoon, and come straight to the ' Mirror ' office to look at it. Then he had set out in quest of lodgings, and having got them, had returned to the passage. He was not naturally a man crushed by a sense of his own unworthiness, but looking up at these windows and at the shadows that passed them every moment, he felt far away from his saw-mill. What a romance to him, too, was in the glare of the gas, and in the ' Mirror ' bill that was being reduced to pulp on the wall at the mouth of the close ! It had begun to rain heavily, but he did not feel the want of an umbrella, never having possessed one in Thrums."

The new reporter finally made his way in, and was introduced by the editor to the reporters' room, where the following conversation took place :

" ' What do you think of George Frederick (the editor) ? ' asked the chief, after he had pointed out to Rob the only chair that such a stalwart reporter might safely sit on. ' He was very pleasant,' said Rob. 'Yes,' said Billy Kirker, thoughtfully, ' there 's nothing George Frederick wouldn't

do for any one if it could be done gratis.' ' And he struck me as an enterprising man.' ' Enterprise without outlay, is the motto of this office,' said the chief. 'But the paper seems to be well conducted,' said Rob, a little crestfallen. 'The worst conducted in England,' said Kirker, cheerfully. Rob asked how the ' Mirror ' compared with the ' Argus.' ' They have six reporters to our three,' said Kirker, ' but we do double work and beat them.' ' I suppose there is a great deal of rivalry between the staffs of the two papers ? ' Rob asked, for he had read of such things. ' Oh, no,' said Kirker, ' we help each other. For instance, if Daddy Welsh, the " Argus " chief, is drunk, I help him ; and if I 'm drunk, he helps me.' "

This initiatory conversation was closed by Kirker asking Rob to lend him five bob, and after that Rob took two books, which had been handed him for review, arid made his way to his lodgings. He sat up far into the night reading one of the books, " The Scorn of Scorns," and writing a murderous review of it, and upon the effect of that review hangs the rest of the story.

However literal this description of his first adventures as a journalist may or may not be, there he was, at last, engaged in the profession of literature. No prouder or happier man walked the earth. He remained in Nottingham about two years, and during that time he began sending articles to various London publications. The first paper to accept any of these contributions was the " Pall Mall Gazette." But others were accepted after a while, and the young man began to think seriously of leaving his position in Nottingham and going up to London. The great city was calling to him, as it calls to so many young men of talent and ambition every year. He began to hear his days before him, and the music of his life. He was

" Yearning for the large excitement which the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field."

And it was not long after he began hearing the voices, before he " saw the lights of London flaring in the dreary dawn." The " St. James Gazette " accepting a couple of articles was the decisive event with him. After that he concluded to make the rash venture, although his mother gave way to her fears, and protested earnestly against it, fearing he would have to sleep in the parks, and be robbed or murdered whatever way he might turn. Mr. Barrie says :

" While I was away at college she drained all available libraries for books about those who go to London to live by the pen, and they all told the same shuddering tale. London, which she never saw, was to her a monster that licked up country youths as they stepped from the train ; there were the garrets in which they sat abject, and the park seats where they passed the night. Those park seats were the monster's glaring eyes to her, and as I go by them now she is nearer to me than when I am in any other part of London. I dare say that when night comes, this Hyde Park, which is so gay by day, is haunted by the ghosts of many mothers, who run, wild-eyed, from seat to seat looking for their sons. ..." If you could only be sure of as much as would keep body and soul together,' my mother would say with a sigh. 'With something over to send to you.' ' You couldn't expect that at the start.' "

He says further of this time :

"In an old book I find columns of notes about works projected at this time, nearly all to consist of essays on deeply uninteresting subjects ; the lightest was to be a

volume on the older satirists, beginning with Skelton and Tom Nash the half of that manuscript still lies in a dusty chest. The only story was one about Mary Queen of Scots, who was also the subject of many unwritten papers. Queen Mary seems to have been luring me to my undoing ever since I saw Holyrood, and I have a horrid fear that I may write that novel yet. That anything could be written about my native place never struck me."

The " St. James Gazette " continued to take his articles after he went up to London, though the editor had advised him not to come, and he began writing his " Auld Licht Idylls." The first book which he put forth was a satire on London life, called "Better Dead," which was not a success. But his newspaper articles had begun to attract attention, and by the time " Auld Licht Idylls ' appeared, he had achieved a reputation, at least a local one. This book had an immediate success, and ran rapidly through several editions. His mother had been an Auld Licht in her youth. They were a very small but fierce sect who had seceded from the Presbyterian church, and maintained themselves in isolation from all other Christians for some time. Mrs. Barrie, knowing them from the inside, could tell all sorts of quaint and marvellous tales about them, whose humor was sure to please. It was from her stories that the Idylls were mainly drawn, so she was in a sense a collaborator with her son in their production. But she had no faith in them as literature, and considered an editor who would publish them as " rather soft." When she read the first one she was quite alarmed, and, fearing the talk of the town, hid the paper from all eyes. While her son thought of her as showing them proudly to all their friends, she was concealing them fearfully in a bandbox on the garret stair. It amused her greatly, from that time on, that the editors preferred the Auld Licht articles to any others, and she racked her brain constantly for new details. Once she said

to her son : " I was fifteen when I got my first pair of elastic-sided boots. Tell the editor that my charge for this important news is two pounds ten." And she made brave fun of those easily fooled editors day after day. The publishers were very shy of the book when it was offered to them, and it went the round of their offices before it found a purchaser. But at last a firm sufficiently daring was found by a good friend, an editor, and Mrs. Barrie had the great satisfaction of seeing her son's name really on a book-cover, and in knowing in her inmost heart that the book was largely her own, though that she would never admit, even in the home circle.

When the next book was ready, there was no looking for a publisher, all were eager now to use his material. A few months only elapsed before the second successful book was published. It had run serially through a weekly paper, and was republished from that. It was called " When a Man 's Single," and embodied some of his journalistic experiences, as has been told. In rapid succession came " A Window in Thrums," " My Lady Nicotine," and " The Little Minister." In the first-named he went back to his childhood's home, and gave pictures of the life in it and in the village, with his mother and sister for two of its leading characters. He opens it with a description of the House on the Brae :

" On the bump of green ground which the brae twists, at the top of the brae, and within cry of T'nowhead Farm, still stands a one-story house, whose whitewashed walls, streaked with the discoloration that rain leaves, look yellow when the snow comes. In the old days the stiff ascent left Thrums behind, and where is now the making of a suburb was only a poor row of dwellings and a manse, with Hendry's house to watch the brae. The house stood bare, without a shrub, in a garden whose paling did not go all the way round, the potato pit being only kept out of the road,

that here sets off southward, by a broken dyke of stones and earth. On each side of the slate-colored door was a window of knotted glass. Ropes were flung over the thatch to keep the roof on in wind.

" Into this humble abode I would take any one who cares to accompany me. But you must not come in a contemptuous mood, thinking that the poor are but a stage removed from beasts of burden, as some cruel writers of these days say ; nor will I have you turn over with your foot the shabby horse-hair chairs that Leeby kept so speckless, and Hendry weaved for years to buy, and Jess so loved to look on."

The window at Thrums was that of Jess :

" For more than twenty years she had not been able to go so far as the door, and only once while I knew her was she ben in the room. With her husband, Hendry, and her only daughter, Leeby, to lean upon, and her hand clutching her staff, she took twice a day, when she was strong, the journey between her bed and the window where stood her chair."

Again he writes :

" Ah, that brae ! The history of tragic little Thrums is sunk into it like the stones it swallowed in winter. We have all found the brae long and steep in the spring of life. Do you remember how the child you once were sat at the foot of it and wondered if a new world began at the top ? It climbs from a shallow burn, and we used to sit on the brig a long time before venturing to climb. As boys,' we ran up the brae. As men and women, young and in our prime, we almost forgot that it was there. But the autumn of life comes, and the brae grows steeper ; then the winter, and once again we are as the child, pausing apprehensively on

the brig. Yet we are no longer the child ; we look now for no new world at the top, only for a little garden, and a tiny house, and a hand loom in the house. It is only a garden of kail and potatoes, but there may be a line of daisies, white and red, on each side of the narrow footpath, and honeysuckle over the door. Life is not always hard, even after backs grow bent, and we know that all braes lead only to the grave."

It was the plainest and simplest of books, all about a handful of peasants who spoke in broad Scotch, which many times the reader did not fully understand, but it caught the eye of the world, and it went to its heart. It was the literary success of the year, and Margaret Ogilvie should have been satisfied. But there was a thorn in her side, and that was the name of Robert Louis Stevenson. She had great fear that he was still considered the superior of her Jamie. At first she refused to read a word he had written, deriding him every time his name was mentioned. Then, her curiosity getting the better of her prejudice, she read him secretly, to convince herself of her son's superiority, but not getting great comfort from the experiment. Then she scoffed more than ever at "that Stevenson man," and tossed her head, and her soft tender face became hard. " I could never thole his books," she would say vindictively. But at last she was caught in the act of reading " The Master of Ballantrae ' by her son, who peeped through the keyhole, and " muttering the music to herself, nodding her head in approval, and taking a stealthy glance at the foot of each page before she began at the top." But that was nothing to the enchantment which " Treasure Island " had for her, when once she had opened its fascinating pages. They had not dared to laugh at her, for fear she would give up her pleasure entirely, and so it was understood in the family that she only read him to make sure of his unworthiness. But the night when she

became so absorbed in it that she did not know when bedtime came, and they remonstrated with her, and coaxed her to give it up and go to bed, she exclaimed quite passionately, " I dinna lay my head on a pillow this night till I see how that laddie got out of the barrel; ' and the secret was told, and they knew that Stevenson had conquered his last enemy. But never in words did she admit it. To the last she disliked to see letters come to her son with the Vailima postmark on them.

" The Little Minister " came as a revelation of Mr. Barrie's sustained power, to many people who had read his sketches. It is probably his finest piece of work thus far. Its success was overwhelming ; many people were fascinated with it who cared little for his first efforts. One must be something of a humorist himself to thoroughly appreciate his earlier work, and all readers are not endowed with that quality. But most readers enjoyed the new story, and its author became the drawing card in periodical literature. Suddenly in the midst of his fame, and a young man's delight in it, he left London and went back to Kirriemuir to remain. The long invalidism of his mother had taken on dangerous symptoms, and the faithful daughter, who had no breath, no being, but in hers, could not care for her alone, for she was herself smitten with a lingering but fatal disease. For a long time the two faithful watchers tended the dying mother, doing everything themselves, for she would not allow any one else even to touch her, and at last the worn-out daughter --as her brother describes it " died on foot," three days before the mother. They were buried together, on her seventy-sixth-birthday. Her son writes : " I think God was smiling when He took her to Him, as He had so often smiled at her during those seventy-six years."

Mr. Barrie continued to live on at Viewmount House, the little villa built in recent years on the outskirts of

Kirriemuir. It was there that he was married, in 1894, to Miss Mary Ansell, an English girl, and really began life for himself, at the age of thirty-four. His last novel, " Sentimental Tommy," deals largely with the boyhood of the hero, and the scene is laid in London and in Thrums alternately. Whether that locality will serve much longer as literary material is a question which readers will answer differently, according to whether they really belong to the Barrie cult or not. On those who worship at the inner shrine it never palls, but the general reader may perhaps complain of monotony, and yearn for a new setting for the coming tales.

His work " Margaret Ogilvie," is a memorial of his mother from which we have quoted largely in this article.

WHEN A MAN'S SINGLE - A TALE OF LITERARY LIFE

CHAPTER I. ROB ANGUS IS NOT A FREE MAN.

ONE still Saturday afternoon some years ago a child pulled herself through a small window into a kitchen in the kirk-wynd of Thrums. She came from the old graveyard, whose only outlet, when the parish church gate is locked, is the windows of the wynd houses that hoop it round. Squatting on a threelegged stool she gazed wistfully at a letter on the chimney-piece, and then, tripping to the door, looked up and down the wynd.

Snecky Hobart, the bellman, hobbled past, and, though Davy was only four years old, she knew that as he had put on his blue top-coat he expected the evening to be fine. Tammas McQuhatty, the farmer of T'nowhead, met him at the corner, and they came to a standstill to say, " She's nard. Sneck," and " She is so, T'nowhead," referring to the weather. Observing that they had stopped they moved on again.

Women and children and a few men squeezed through their windows into the kirk-yard, the women to knit stockings on fallen tombstones, and the men to dander pleasantly from grave to grave reading the inscriptions. All the men were well up in years, for though, with the Auld Lichts, the Sabbath began to come on at six o'clock on Saturday evening, the young men were now washing themselves cautiously in tin basins before going into the square to talk about women.

The clatter of more than one loom could still have been heard by Davy had not her ears been too accustomed to the sound to notice it. In the adjoining house Bell Mealmaker was peppering her newly washed floor with sand, while her lodger, Hender Robb, with a rusty razor in his hand, looked for his chin in a tiny glass that was peeling on the wall. Jinny Tosh had got her husband, Aundra Lunan, who always spoke of her as She, ready, so to speak, for church eighteen hours too soon, and Aundra sat stiffly at the fire, putting his feet on the ribs every minute, to draw them back with a scared look at Her as he remembered that he had on his blacks. In a bandbox beneath the bed was his silk hat, which had been knocked down to him at Jamie Ramsay's roup, and Jinny had already put his red handkerchief, which was also a pictorial history of Scotland, into a pocket of his coat-tails, with a corner hanging gracefully out. Her puckered lips signified that, however much her man might

desire to do so, he was not to carry his handkerchief to church in his hat, where no one could see it. On working-days Aundra held his own, but at six o'clock on Saturday nights he passed into Her hands.

Across the wynd, in which a few hens wandered, Pete Todd was supping in his shirt-sleeves. His blacks lay ready for him in the coffin-bed, and Pete, glancing at them at intervals, supped as slowly as he could. In one hand he held a saucer, and in the other a chunk of bread, and they were as far apart as Pete's outstretched arms could put them. His chair was a yard from the table, on which, by careful balancing, he rested a shoeless foot, and his face was twisted to the side. Every time Easie Whamond, his wife, passed him she took the saucer from his hand, remarking that when a genteel man sat down to tea he did not turn his back on the table. Pete took this stolidly, like one who had long given up trying to understand the tantrums of women, and who felt that, as a lord of creation, he could afford to let it pass.

Davy sat on her three-legged stool keeping guard over her Uncle Rob the saw-miller's letter, and longing for him to come. She screwed up her eyebrows as she had seen him do when he read a letter, and she felt that it would be nice if every one would come and look at her taking care of it. After a time she climbed up on her stool and stretched her dimpled arms toward the mantelpiece. From a string suspended across this, socks and stockings hung drying at the fire, and clutching one of them Davy drew herself nearer. With a chuckle, quickly suppressed, lest it should bring in Kitty Wilkie, who ought to have been watching her instead of wandering down the wynd to see who was to have salt fish for supper, the child clutched the letter triumphantly, and, toddling to the door, slipped out of the house.

For a moment Davy faltered at the mouth of the wynd. There was no one there to whom she could show the letter. A bright thought entered her head, and immediately a dimple opened on her face and swallowed all the puckers. Rob had gone to the Whunny muir for wood, and she would take the letter to him. Then when Rob saw her he would look all around him, and if there was no one there to take note he would lift her to his shoulder, when they could read tiie letter together.

Davy ran out of the wynd into the square, thinking she heard Kitty's Sabbath voice, which reminded the child of the little squeaking saw that Rob used for soft wood. On week-days Kitty's voice was the big saw that pulled and rasped, and Mag Wilkie shivered at it. Except to her husband Mag spoke with her teeth closed, so politely that no one knew what she said.

Davy stumbled up the steep brae down which men are blown in winter to their work, until she reached the rim of the hollow in which Thrums lies. Here the road stops short, as if frightened to cross the common of whin that bars the way to the north. On this common there are many cart-tracks over bumpy sward and slippery roots, that might be the ribs of the earth showing, and Davy, with a dazed look in her eyes, ran down one of them, the whins catching her frock to stop her, and then letting go, as if, after all, one child more or less in the world was nothing to them.

By and by she found herself on another road, along which Rob had trudged earlier in the day with a saw on his shoulder, but he had gone east, and the child's face was turned westward. It is a muddy road even in summer, and those who use it frequently get into the habit of lifting their legs high as they walk, like men picking their way through

beds of rotting leaves. The light had faded from her baby face now, but her mouth was firm-set, and her bewildered eyes were fixed straight ahead.

The last person to see Davy was Tammas Haggart, who, with his waistcoat buttoned over his jacket, and garters of yarn round his trousers, was slowly breaking stones, though the road swallowed them quicker than he could feed it. Tammas heard the child approaching, for his hearing had become very acute, owing to his practice when at home of listening through the floor to what the folks below were saying, and of sometimes joining in. He leaned on his hammer and watched her trot past.

The strength went gradually from Tammas' old arms, and again resting on his hammer he removed his spectacles and wiped them on his waistcoat. He took a comprehensive glance around at the fields, as if he now had an opportunity of seeing them for the first time during his sixty years' pilgrimage in these parts, and his eyes wandered aimlessly from the sombre firs and laughing beeches to the white farms that dot the strath. In the foreground two lazy colts surveyed him critically across a dyke. To the north the frowning Whunny hill had a white scarf round its neck.

Something troubled Tammas. It was the vision of a child in a draggled pinafore, and stepping into the middle of the road he looked down it in the direction in which Davy had passed.

"Chirsty Angus' lassieky," he murmured.

Tammas sat down cautiously on the dyke and untied the red handkerchief that contained the remnants of his dinner. When he had smacked his lips over his flagon of cold kail,

and seen the last of his crumbling oatmeal and cheese, his uneasiness returned, and he again looked down the road.

"I maun turn the bairn," was his reflection.

It was now, however, half an hour since Davy had passed Tammas Haggart's cairn.

To Haggart, pondering between the strokes of his hammer, came a mole-catcher, who climbed the dyke and sat down beside him.

"Ay, ay," said the new-comer; to which Tammas replied abstractedly:

"Jamie."

"Hae ye seen Davy Dundas?" the stone-breaker asked, after the pause that followed this conversation.

The mole-catcher stared heavily at his corduroys.

"I dinna ken him," he said, at last, "but I hae seen naebody this twa 'oors. "

" It's no a him, it's a her. Ye canna hae been a winter here withoot kennin' Rob Angus."

"Ay, the saw-miller. He was i' the wud the day. I saw his cart gae hame. Ou, in coorse I ken Rob. He's an amazin' crittur."

Tammas broke another stone as carefully as if it were a nut.

"I dinna deny," he said, "but what Rob's a curiosity. So was his faither afore 'im."

"I've heard auld Rob was a queer body," said Jamie, adding incredulously, "they say he shaved twice i' the week an' wore a clean dicky ilka day."

" No what ye wad say ilka day, but oftener than was called for. Rob wasna naturally ostentatious; na, it was the wife 'at insistit on't. Nanny was a terrible tid for cleanness. Ay, an' it's a guid thing in moderation, but she juist overdid it; yes, she overdid it. Man, it had sic a baud on her 'at even on her death-bed they had to bring a basin to her to wash her hands in."

"Ay, ay? When there was sic a pride in her I wonder she didna lat young Rob to the college, an' him sae keen on't."

" Ou, he was gaen, but ye see auld Rob got gey dottle after Nanny's death, an' so young Rob stuck to the saw-mill. It's curious hoo a body misses his wife when she's gone. Ay, it's like the clock stoppin'."

" Weel, Rob's no gettin' to the college hasna made 'im humble."

" Ye dinna like Rob?"

"Hoo did ye find that oot?" asked Jamie, a little taken aback. "Man, Tammas," he added, admiringly, "ye're michty quick i' the uptak."

Tammas handed his snuff-mull to the mole-catcher, and then helped himself.

"I daursay, I daursay," he said thoughtfully.

"I've naething to say agin the saw -miller," continued Jamie, after thinking it out, "but there's something in's face 'at's

no sociable. He looks as if he was takkin' ye aff in's inside."

" Ay, auld Rob was a sarcestic stock too. It rins i' the blood."

" I prefer a mair common kind o' man, bein' o' the common kind myseF."

"Ay, there's naething sarcestic about you, Jamie," admitted the stone-breaker.

" I'm an ord'nar man, Tammas."

"Ye are, Jamie, ye are."

" Maybe no sae oncommon ord'nar either."

"Middlin' ord'nar, middlin' ord'nar."

"I'm thinkin' ye're braw an' sarcestic yersel', Tammas?"

"I'd aye that repootation, Jeames. Am no an every-day sarcesticist, but juist noos an' nans. There was ae time I was speakin' tae Easie Webster, an' I said a terrible sarcestic thing. Ay, I dinna mind what it was, but it was michty sarcestic."

"It's a gift," said the mole-catcher.

"A gift it is," said Tammas.

The stone-breaker took his flagon to a spring near at hand, and rinsed it out. Several times while pulling it up and down the little pool an uneasy expression crossed his face as he remembered something about a child, but in washing his hands, using sand for soap, Davy slipped his memory, and he returned cheerfully to the cairn. Here Jamie was

wagging his head from side to side like a man who had caught himself thinking.

"I'll warrant, Tammas," he said, "ye cudna tell's what set's on to speak aboot Rob Angus?"

" Na, it's a thing as has often puzzled me hoo we select wan topic mair than anither. I suppose it's like shootin'; ye juist blaze awa' at the first bird 'at rises."

" Ye was sayin', had I seen a lass wi' a lad's name. That began it, I'm thinkin'."

" A lass wi' a lad's name? Ay, noo, that's oncommon. But rnebbe ye mean Davy Dundas?"

"That's the name."

Tammas paused in the act of buttoning his trouser pocket.

" Did ye say ye'd seen Davy?" he asked.

" Na, it was you as said 'at ye had seen her."

" Ay, ay, Jamie, ye're richt. Man, I fully meant to turn the bairn, but she ran by at sic a steek 'at there was nae stoppin' her. Rob'll mak an awfu' ring-ding if onything comes ower Davy."

" Is't the litlin 'at's aye wi' Rob?"

" Ay, it's Chirsty Angus' bairn, her 'at was Rob's sister. A' her fowk's deid but Rob. "

"I've seen them i' the saw-mill thegither. It didna strick me 'at Rob cared muckle for the crittury."

" Ou, Rob's a reserved stock, but he's michty fond o' her when iiaebody's lookin'. It doesna do, ye ken, to lat on afore company at ye've a kind o' regaird for yere ain fowk. Na, it's lowerin'. But if it wasna afore your time, ye'd seen the cradle i' the saw-mill."

" I never saw ony cradle, Tammas."

" Weel, it was unco' ingenious o' Rob. The bairn's father an' mither was baith gone when Davy was nae age, an' auld Rob passed awa' sune efter. Rob had it all arranged to ging to the college ay, he'd been workin' far on into the nicht the hale year to save up siller to keep 'imsel' at Edinbory, but ye see he promised Chirsty to look after Davy an' no' send her to the parish. He took her to the saw-mill an' brocht her up 'imsel'. It was a terrible disappointment to Rob, his mind bein' bent on becomin' a great leeterary genius, but he's been michty guid to the bairn. Ay, she's an extror'nar takkin' dawty, Davy, an' though I wudna like it kent, I've a fell notion o' her mysel'. I mind ance gaen in to Rob's, an', wud ye believe, there was the bit lassieky sittin' in the airmchair wi' ane o' Rob's books open on her knees, an' her pertendin' to be readin' oot in't to Rob. The tiddy had watched him readin', ye unerstan', an', man, she was mimickin' 'im to the life. There's nae accountin' for thae things, but ondootedly it was attractive."

" But what aboot a cradle?"

"Ou, as I was sayin', Rob didna like to lat the bairn oot o' his sicht, so he made a queer cradle 'imsel', an' put it ower the burn. Ye'll mind the burn rins through the saw-mill? Ay, weel, Davy's cradle was put across't wi' the paddles sae arranged 'at the watter rocked the cradle. Man, the burn

was juist like a mither to Davy, for no' only did it rock her to sleep, but it sang to the bairn the hale time."

"That was an ingenious contrivance, Tammas; but it was juist like Rob Angus' ind'pendence. The crittur aye perseests in doin' a'thing for 'imsel'. I mind ae day seein' Cree Deuchars puttin' in a window into the saw-mill hoose, an' Rob's fingers was fair itchin' to do't quick 'imsel'; ye ken Cree's fell slow? 'See baud o' the potty,' cries Rob, an' losh, he had the window in afore Cree cud hae cut the glass. Ay, ye canna deny but what Rob's fearfu' independent."

" So was his faither. I call to mind auld Rob an' the minister haen a termendous debate aboot justification by faith, an' says Rob i' the tail o' the day, gettin' passionate-like, 'I tell ye flat, Hester Byars,' he says, 'if I dinna ging to heaven in my ain wy, I dinna ging aval' "

" Losh, losh! he wudna hae said that, though, to oor minister; na, he wudna hae daured. "

"Ye're a IT. P., Jamie?" asked the .stonebreaker.

"I was born IT. P.," replied the mole-catcher firmly, "an' U. P. I'll die."

"I say naething agin yer releegion," replied Tammas, a little contemptuously, " but to compare yer minister to oors is a haver. Man, when Mester Byars was oor minister, Sanders Dobie, the wricht, had a standin' engagement to mend the poopit ilka month."

"We'll no' speak o' releegion, Tammas, or we'll be quarrellin'. Ye micht tell' a, though, hoo they cam to gie a lassieky sic a man's name as Davy."