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SCOTTISH SKETCHES

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CRAWFORD'S SAIR STRAIT.

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CHAPTER I.

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Alexander Crawford sat reading a book which he studied frequently with a profound interest. Not the Bible: that volume had indeed its place of honor in the room, but the book Crawford read was a smaller one; it was stoutly bound and secured by a brass lock, and it was all in manuscript. It was his private ledger, and it contained his bank account. Its contents seemed to give him much solid satisfaction; and when at last he locked the volume and replaced it in his secretary, it was with that careful respect which he considered due to the representative of so many thousand pounds.

He was in a placid mood, and strangely inclined to retrospection. Thoughtfully fingering the key which locked up the record of his wealth, he walked to the window and looked out. It was a dreary prospect of brown moor and gray sea, but Crawford loved it. The bare land and the barren mountains was the country of the Crawfords. He had a fixed idea that it always had been theirs, and whenever he told himself—as he did this night—that so many acres of old Scotland were actually his own, he was aggressively a Scotchman.

"It is a bonnie bit o' land," he murmured, "and I hae done as my father Laird Archibald told me. If we should meet in another warld I'll be able to gie a good account o' Crawford and Traquare. It is thirty years to-night since he gave me the ring off his finger, and said, 'Alexander, I am going the way o' all flesh; be a good man, and *grip tight*.' I hae done as he

bid me; there is #80,000 in the Bank o' Scotland, and every mortgage lifted. I am vera weel pleased wi' mysel' to-night. I hae been a good holder o' Crawford and Traquare."

His self-complacent reflections were cut short by the entrance of his daughter. She stood beside him, and laid her hand upon his arm with a caressing gesture. No other living creature durst have taken that liberty with him; but to Crawford his daughter Helen was a being apart from common humanity. She was small, but very lovely, with something almost Puritanical in her dainty, precise dress and carefully snooded golden hair.

"Father!"

"Helen, my bird."

"Colin is coming home. I have just had a letter from him. He has taken high honors in Glasgow. We'll both be proud of Colin, father."

"What has he done?"

"He has written a prize poem in Latin and Greek, and he is second in mathematics."

"Latin and Greek! Poor ghostlike languages that hae put off flesh and blood lang syne. Poetry! Warse than nonsense! David and Solomon hae gien us such sacred poetry as is good and necessary; and for sinfu' love verses and such vanities, if Scotland must hae them, Robert Burns is mair than enough. As to mathematics, there's naething against them. A study that is founded on figures is to be depended upon; it has nae flights and fancies. You ken what you are doing wi' figures. When is this clever fellow to be here?"

"He is coming by the afternoon packet to-morrow. We must send the carriage to meet it, for Colin is bringing a

stranger with him. I came to ask you if I must have the best guest-room made ready."

"Wha for?"

"He is an English gentleman, from London, father."

"And you would put an Englishman in the room where the twa last Stuarts slept? I'll not hear tell o' it. I'm not the man to lift a quarrel my fathers dropped, but I'll hae no English body in Prince Charlie's room. Mind that, noo! What is the man's name?"

"Mr. George Selwyn."

"George Selwyn! There's nae Scotch Selwyns that I ken o'. He'll be Saxon altogether. Put him in the East room."

Crawford was not pleased at his son bringing any visitor. In the first place, he had important plans to discuss and carry out, and he was impatient of further delay. In the second, he was intensely jealous of Helen. Every young man was a probable suitor, and he had quite decided that Farquharson of Blair was the proper husband for her. Crawford and Blair had stood shoulder to shoulder in every national quarrel, and a marriage would put the two estates almost in a ring fence.

But he went the next day to meet the young men. He had not seen his son for three years, and the lad was an object very near and dear to his heart. He loved him tenderly as his son, he respected him highly as the future heir of Crawford and Traquare. The Crawfords were a very handsome race; he was anxious that this, their thirteenth representative, should be worthy, even physically, of his ancestors. He drew a long sigh of gratification as young Colin, with open hands, came up to him. The future laird

was a noble-looking fellow, a dark, swarthy Highlandman, with glowing eyes, and a frame which promised in a few years to fill up splendidly.

His companion was singularly unlike him. Old Crawford had judged rightly. He was a pure Saxon, and showed it in his clear, fresh complexion, pale brown hair, and clear, wide-open blue eyes. But there was something about this young man which struck a deeper and wider sympathy than race—he had a heart beating for all humanity. Crawford looked at him physically only, and he decided at once, "There is no fear of Helen." He told himself that young Farquharson was six inches taller and every way a far "prettier man." Helen was not of this opinion. No hero is so fascinating to a woman as the man mentally and spiritually above her, and whom she must love from a distance; and if Crawford could have known how dangerous were those walks over the springy heather and through the still pine woods, Mr. Selwyn would have taken them far more frequently alone than he did.

But Crawford had other things to employ his attention at that time, and indeed the young English clergyman was far beyond his mental and spiritual horizon; he could not judge him fairly. So these young people walked and rode and sailed together, and Selwyn talked like an apostle of the wrongs that were to be righted and the poor perishing souls that were to be redeemed. The spiritual warfare in which he was enlisted had taken possession of him, and he spoke with the martial enthusiasm of a young soldier buckling on his armor.

Helen and Colin listened in glowing silence, Helen showing her sympathy by her flushing cheeks and wet eyes,

and Colin by the impatient way in which he struck down with his stick the thistles by the path side, as if they were the demons of sin and ignorance and dirt Selwyn was warring against. But after three weeks of this intercourse Crawford became sensible of some change in the atmosphere of his home. When Selwyn first arrived, and Crawford learned that he was a clergyman in orders, he had, out of respect to the office, delegated to him the conduct of family worship. Gradually Selwyn had begun to illustrate the gospel text with short, earnest remarks, which were a revelation of Bible truth to the thoughtful men and women who heard them.

The laird's "exercises" had often been slipped away from, excuses had been frequent, absentees usual; but they came to listen to Selwyn with an eagerness which irritated him. In our day, the gospel of Christ has brought forth its last beautiful blossom—the gospel of humanity. Free schools, free Bibles, Tract and City Missions, Hospitals and Clothing Societies, loving helps of all kinds are a part of every church organization. But in the time of which I am writing they were unknown in country parishes, they struggled even in great cities for a feeble life.

The laird and his servants heard some startling truths, and the laird began to rebel against them. A religion of intellectual faith, and which had certain well-recognized claims on his pocket, he was willing to support, and to defend, if need were; but he considered one which made him on every hand his brother's keeper a dangerously democratic theology.

"I'll hae no socialism in my religion, any more than I'll hae it in my politics, Colin," he said angrily. "And if yon Mr. Selwyn belongs to what they call the Church o' England, I'm mair set up than ever wi' the Kirk o' Scotland! God bless her!"

They were sitting in the room sacred to business and to the memory of the late Laird Archibald. Colin was accustomed to receive his father's opinions in silence, and he made no answer to this remark. This time, however, the laird was not satisfied with the presumed assent of silence; he asked sharply, "What say ye to that, son Colin?"

"I say God bless the Kirk of Scotland, father, and I say it the more heartily because I would like to have a place among those who serve her."

"What are ye saying now?"

"That I should like to be a minister. I suppose you have no objections."

"I hae vera great objections. I'll no hear tell o' such a thing. Ministers canna mak money, and they canna save it. If you should mak it, that would be an offence to your congregation; if ye should save it, they would say ye ought to hae gien it to the poor. There will be nae Dominie Crawford o' my kin, Colin. Will naething but looking down on the warld from a pulpit sarve you?"

"I like art, father. I can paint a little, and I love music."

"Art! Painting! Music! Is the lad gane daft? God has gien to some men wisdom and understanding, to ithers the art o' playing on the fiddle and painting pictures. There shall be no painting, fiddling Crawford among my kin, Colin."

The young fellow bit his lip, and his eyes flashed dangerously beneath their dropped lids. But he said calmly enough,

"What is your own idea, father? I am twenty-two, I ought to be doing a man's work of some kind."

"Just sae. That is warld-like talk. Now I'll speak wi' you anent a grand plan I hae had for a long time." With these words he rose, and took from his secretary a piece of parchment containing the plan of the estate. "Sit down, son Colin, and I'll show you your inheritance." Then he went carefully over every acre of moor and wood, of moss and water, growing enthusiastic as he pointed out how many sheep could be grazed on the hills, what shooting and fishing privileges were worth, etc. "And the best is to come, my lad. There is coal on the estate, and I am going to open it up, for I hae the ready siller to do it."

Colin sat silent; his cold, dissenting air irritated the excited laird very much.

"What hae ye got to say to a' this, Colin?" he asked proudly, "for you'll hae the management o' everything with me. Why, my dear son, if a' goes weel—and it's sure to—we'll be rich enough in a few years to put in our claim for the old Earldom o' Crawford, and you may tak your seat in the House o' Peers yet. The old chevalier promised us a Dukedom," he said sadly, "but I'm feared that will be aboon our thumb—"

"Father, what are you going to do with the clansmen? Do you think Highlandmen who have lived on the mountains are going to dig coal? Do you imagine that these men, who, until a generation or two ago, never handled anything but a

claymore, and who even now scorn to do aught but stalk deer or spear salmon, will take a shovel and a pickaxe and labor as coal-miners? There is not a Crawford among them who would do it. I would despise him if he did."

"There is a glimmer o' good sense in what you say, Colin. I dinna intend any Crawford to work in my coal mine. Little use they would be there. I'll send to Glasgow for some Irish bodies."

"And then you will have more fighting than working on the place; and you'll have to build a Roman-catholic chapel, and have a Roman priest in Crawford, and you ken whether the Crawfords will thole *that* or not."

"As to the fighting, I'll gie them no chance. I'm going to send the Crawfords to Canada. I hae thought it all out. The sheilings will do for the others; the land I want for sheep grazing. They are doing naething for themsel's, and they are just a burden to me. It will be better for them to gang to Canada. I'll pay their passage, and I'll gie them a few pounds each to start them. You must stand by me in this matter, for they'll hae to go sooner or later."

"That is a thing I cannot do, father. There is not a Laird of Crawford that was not nursed on some clanswoman's breast. We are all kin. Do you think I would like to see Rory and Jean Crawford packed off to Canada? And there is young Hector, my foster-brother! And old Ailsa, your own foster-sister! Every Crawford has a right to a bite and a sup from the Crawford land."

"That is a' bygane nonsense. Your great-grandfather, if he wanted cattle or meal, could just take the clan and go and harry some Southern body out o' them. That is beyond

our power, and it's an unca charge to hae every Crawford looking to you when hunting and fishing fails. They'll do fine in Canada. There is grand hunting, and if they want fighting, doubtless there will be Indians. They will hae to go, and you will hae to stand by me in this matter."

"It is against my conscience, sir. I had also plans about these poor, half-civilized, loving kinsmen of ours. You should hear Selwyn talk of what we might do with them. There is land enough to give all who want it a few acres, and the rest could be set up with boats and nets as fishers. They would like that."

"Nae doubt. But I don't like it, and I wont hae it. Mr. Selwyn may hae a big parish in London, but the Crawfords arena in his congregation. I am king and bishop within my ain estate, Colin." Then he rose in a decided passion and locked up again the precious parchment, and Colin understood that, for the present, the subject was dismissed.

CHAPTER II.

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At the very time this conversation was in progress, one strangely dissimilar was being carried on between George Selwyn and Helen Crawford. They were sitting in the sweet, old-fashioned garden and Selwyn had been talking of the work so dear to his heart, but a silence had fallen between them. Then softly and almost hesitatingly Helen said "Mr. Selwyn, I cannot help in this grand evangel, except with money and prayers. May I offer you #300? It is entirely my own, and it lies useless in my desk. Will you take it?"

"I have no power to refuse it. 'You give it to God, durst I say no?' But as I do not return at once, you had better send it in a check to our treasurer." Then he gave her the necessary business directions, and was writing the address of the treasurer when the laird stopped in front of them.

"Helen, you are needed in the house," he said abruptly; and then turning to Selwyn, he asked him to take a walk up the hill. The young man complied. He was quite unconscious of the anger in the tone of the request. For a few yards neither spoke; then the laird, with an irritable glance at his placid companion, said, "Mr. Selwyn, fore-speaking saves after-speaking. Helen Crawford is bespoke for young Farquharson of Blair, and if you have any hopes o' wiving in my house—"

"Crawford, thank you for your warning, but I have no thoughts of marrying any one. Helen Crawford is a pearl among women; but even if I wanted a wife, she is unfit for my helpmate. When I took my curacy in the East End of

London I counted the cost. Not for the fairest of the daughters of men would I desert my first love—the Christ-work to which I have solemnly dedicated my life."

His voice fell almost to a whisper, but the outward, upward glance of the inspired eyes completely disconcerted the aggressive old chieftain. His supposed enemy, in some intangible way, had escaped him, and he felt keenly his own mistake. He was glad to see Colin coming; it gave him an opportunity of escaping honorably from a conversation which had been very humiliating to him. He had a habit when annoyed of seeking the sea-beach. The chafing, complaining waves suited his fretful mood, and leaving the young men, he turned to the sea, taking the hillside with such mighty strides that Selwyn watched him with admiration and astonishment.

"Four miles of that walking will bring him home in the most amiable of moods," said Colin. And perhaps it would, if he had been left to the sole companionship of nature. But when he was half way home he met Dominie Tallisker, a man of as lofty a spirit as any Crawford who ever lived. The two men were close friends, though they seldom met without disagreeing on some point.

"Weel met, dominie! Are you going to the Keep?"

"Just so, I am for an hour's talk wi' that fine young English clergyman you hae staying wi' you."

"Tallisker, let me tell you, man, you hae been seen o'er much wi' him lately. Why, dominie! he is an Episcopal, and an Arminian o' the vera warst kind."

"Hout, laird! Arminianism isna a contagious disease. I'll no mair tak Arminianism from the Rev. George Selwyn than

I'll tak Toryism fra Laird Alexander Crawford. My theology and my politics are far beyond inoculation. Let me tell you that, laird."

"Hae ye gotten an argument up wi' him, Tallisker? I would like weel to hear ye twa at it."

"Na, na; he isna one o' them that argues. He maks downright assertions; every one o' them hits a body's conscience like a sledge-hammer. He said that to me as we walked the moor last night that didna let me sleep a wink."

"He is a vera disagreeable young man. What could he say to you? You have aye done your duty."

"I thought sae once, Crawford. I taught the bairns their catechism; I looked weel to the spiritual life o' young and old; I had aye a word in season for all. But maybe this I ought to hae done, and not left the other undone."

"You are talking foolishness, Tallisker, and that's a thing no usual wi' you."

"No oftener wi' me nor other folk. But, laird, I feel there must be a change. I hae gotten my orders, and I am going to obey them. You may be certain o' that."

"I didna think I would ever see Dominie Tallisker taking orders from a disciple o' Arminius—and an Englishman forbye!"

"I'll tak my orders, Crawford, from any messenger the Lord chooses to send them by. And I'll do this messenger justice; he laid down no law to me, he only spak o' the duty laid on his own conscience; but my conscience said 'Amen' to his—that's about it. There has been a breath o' the Holy Ghost through the Church o' England lately, and the dry

bones o' its ceremonials are being clothed upon wi' a new and wonderfu' life."

"Humff!" said the laird with a scornful laugh as he kicked a pebble out of his way.

"There is a great outpouring at Oxford among the young men, and though I dinna agree wi' them in a' things, I can see that they hae gotten a revelation."

"Ou, ay, the young ken a' things. It is aye young men that are for turning the warld upside down. Naething is good enough for them."

The dominie took no notice of the petulant interruption. "Laird," he said excitedly, "it is like a fresh Epiphany, what this young Mr. Selwyn says—the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the prisoners comforted, the puir wee, ragged, ignorant bairns gathered into homes and schools, and it is the gospel wi' bread and meat and shelter and schooling in its hand. That was Christ's ain way, you'll admit that. And while he was talking, my heart burned, and I bethought me of a night-school for the little herd laddies and lasses. They could study their lessons on the hillside all day, and I'll gather them for an hour at night, and gie them a basin o' porridge and milk after their lessons. And we ought not to send the orphan weans o' the kirk to the warkhouse; we ought to hae a hame for them, and our sick ought to be better looked to. There is many another good thing to do, but we'll begin wi' these, and the rest will follow."

The laird had listened thus far in speechless indignation. He now stood still, and said,

"I'll hae you to understand, Dominie Tallisker, that I am laird o' Crawford and Traquare, and I'll hae nae such pliskies

played in either o' my clachans."

"If you are laird, I am dominie. You ken me weel enough to be sure if this thing is a matter o' conscience to me, neither king nor kaiser can stop me. I'd snap my fingers in King George's face if he bid me 'stay,' when my conscience said 'go,'" and the dominie accompanied the threat with that sharp, resonant fillip of the fingers that is a Scotchman's natural expression of intense excitement of any kind.

"King George!" cried the laird, in an ungovernable temper, "there is the whole trouble. If we had only a Charles Stuart on the throne there would be nane o' this Whiggery."

"There would be in its place masses, and popish priests, and a few private torture-chambers, and whiles a Presbyterian heretic or twa burned at the Grass-market. Whiggery is a grand thing when it keeps the Scarlet Woman on her ain seven hills. Scotland's hills and braes can do weel, weel without her."

This speech gave the laird time to think. It would never do to quarrel with Tallisker. If he should set himself positively against his scheme of sending his clan to Canada it would be almost a hopeless one; and then he loved and respected his friend. His tall, powerful frame and his dark, handsome face, all aglow with a passionate conviction of right, and an invincible determination to do it, commanded his thorough admiration. He clasped his hands behind his back and said calmly,

"Tallisker, you'll be sorry enough for your temper erelong. You hae gien way mair than I did. Ye ken how you feel about it."

"I feel ashamed o' mysel', laird. You'll no lay the blame o' it to my office, but to Dugald Tallisker his ain sel'. There's a deal o' Dugald Tallisker in me yet, laird; and whiles he is o'er much for Dominie Tallisker."

They were at the gate by this time, and Crawford held out his hand and said,

"Come in, dominie."

"No; I'll go hame, laird, and gie mysel' a talking to. Tell Mr. Selwyn I want to see him."

CHAPTER III.

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Alas, how often do Christ's words, "I come not to bring peace, but a sword," prove true. George Selwyn went away, but the seed he had dropped in this far-off corner of Scotland did not bring forth altogether the peaceable fruits of righteousness. In fact, as we have seen, it had scarcely begun to germinate before the laird and the dominie felt it to be a root of bitterness between them. For if Crawford knew anything he knew that Tallisker would never relinquish his new work, and perhaps if he yielded to any reasonable object Tallisker would stand by him in his project.

He did not force the emigration plan upon his notice. The summer was far advanced; it would be unjustifiable to send the clan to Canada at the beginning of winter. And, as it happened, the subject was opened with the dominie in a very favorable manner. They were returning from the moors one day and met a party of six men. They were evidently greatly depressed, but they lifted their bonnets readily to the chief. There was a hopeless, unhappy look about them that was very painful.

"You have been unsuccessful on the hills, Archie, I fear."

"There's few red deer left," said the man gloomily. "It used to be deer and men; it is sheep and dogs now."

After a painful silence the dominie said,

"Something ought to be done for those braw fellows. They canna ditch and delve like an Irish peasant. It would be like harnessing stags in a plough."

Then Crawford spoke cautiously of his intention, and to his delight the dominie approved it.

"I'll send them out in Read & Murray's best ships. I'll gie each head o' a family what you think right, Tallisker, and I'll put #100 in your hands for special cases o' help. And you will speak to the men and their wives for me, for it is a thing I canna bear to do."

But the men too listened eagerly to the proposition. They trusted the dominie, and they were weary of picking up a precarious living in hunting and fishing, and relying on the chief in emergencies. Their old feudal love and reverence still remained in a large measure, but they were quite sensible that everything had changed in their little world, and that they were out of tune with it. Some few of their number had made their way to India or Canada, and there was a vague dissatisfaction which only required a prospect of change to develop. As time went on, and the laird's plan for opening the coal beds on his estate got known, the men became impatient to be gone.

In the early part of March two large ships lay off the coast waiting for them, and they went in a body to Crawford Keep to bid the chief "farewell." It was a hard hour, after all, to Crawford. The great purpose that he had kept before his eyes for years was not at that moment sufficient. He had dressed himself in his full chieftain's suit to meet them. The eagle's feather in his Glengary gave to his great stature the last grace. The tartan and philibeg, the garters at his knee, the silver buckles at his shoulder, belt, and shoon, the jewelled mull and dirk, had all to these poor fellows in this last hour a proud and sad significance. As he stood on the

steps to welcome them, the wind colored his handsome face and blew out the long black hair which fell curling on his shoulders.

Whatever they intended to say to him, when they thus saw him with young Colin by his side they were unable to say. They could only lift their bonnets in silence. The instincts and traditions of a thousand years were over them; he was at this moment the father and the chief of their deepest affection. One by one they advanced to him. He pressed the hands of all. Some of the older men—companions of his youth in play and sport—he kissed with a solemn tenderness. They went away silently as they came, but every heart was full and every eye was dim. There was a great feast for them in the clachan that night, but it was a sombre meeting, and the dominie's cheerful words of advice and comfort formed its gayest feature.

The next day was calm and clear. The women and children were safely on board soon after noon, and about four o'clock the long boats left the shore full of men. Tallisker was in the front one. As they pulled away he pointed silently to a steep crag on the shingly beach. The chief stood upon it. He waved his bonnet, and then the long-pent feelings of the clan found vent in one long, pitiful Gallic lament, *O hon a rie! O hon a rie!* For a few moments the boats lay at rest, no man was able to lift an oar. Suddenly Tallisker's clear, powerful voice touched the right chord. To the grand, plaintive melody of St. Mary's he began the 125th Psalm,

"They in the Lord that firmly trust
shall be like Sion hill,
Which at no time can be removed,

but standeth ever still.

As round about Jerusalem
the mountains stand alway;
The Lord his folk doth compass so
from henceforth and for aye."

And thus singing together they passed from their old life into a new one.

Colin had been indignant and sorrowful over the whole affair. He and Helen were still young enough to regret the breaking of a tie which bound them to a life whose romance cast something like a glamour over the prosaic one of more modern times. Both would, in the unreasonableness of youthful sympathy, have willingly shared land and gold with their poor kinsmen; but in this respect Tallisker was with the laird.

"It was better," he said, "that the old feudal tie should be severed even by a thousand leagues of ocean. They were men and not bairns, and they could feel their ain feet;" and then he smiled as he remembered how naturally they had taken to self-dependence. For one night, in a conversation with the oldest men, he said, "Crawfords, ye'll hae to consider, as soon as you are gathered together in your new hame, the matter o' a dominie. Your little flock in the wilderness will need a shepherd, and the proper authorities maun be notified."

Then an old gray-headed man had answered firmly, "Dominie, we will elect our ain minister. We hae been heart and soul, every man o' us, with the Relief Kirk; but it is ill living in Rome and striving wi' the pope, and sae for the chief's sake and your sake we hae withheld our testimony.

But we ken weel that even in Scotland the Kirk willna hirple along much farther wi' the State on her back, and in the wilderness, please God, we'll plant only a Free Kirk."

The dominie heard the resolve in silence, but to himself he said softly, "*They'll do! They'll do!* They'll be a bit upsetting at first, maybe, but they are queer folk that have nae failings."

A long parting is a great strain; it was a great relief when the ships had sailed quite out of sight. The laird with a light heart now turned to his new plans. No reproachful eyes and unhappy faces were there to damp his ardor. Everything promised well. The coal seam proved to be far richer than had been anticipated, and those expert in such matters said there were undoubted indications of the near presence of iron ore. Great furnaces began to loom up in Crawford's mental vision, and to cast splendid lustres across his future fortunes.

In a month after the departure of the clan, the little clachan of Traquare had greatly changed. Long rows of brick cottages, ugly and monotonous beyond description, had taken the place of the more picturesque sheilings. Men who seemed to measure everything in life with a two-foot rule were making roads and building jetties for coal-smacks to lie at. There was constant influx of strange men and women—men of stunted growth and white faces, and who had an insolent, swaggering air, intolerably vulgar when contrasted with the Doric simplicity and quiet gigantic manhood of the mountain shepherds.

The new workers were, however, mainly Lowland Scotchmen from the mining districts of Ayrshire. The