

Tibby Hyslop's Dream, and the Sequel

By James Hogg

In the year 1807, when on a jaunt through the valleys of Nith and Annan, I learned the following story on the spot where the incidents occurred, and even went and visited all those connected with it, so that there is no doubt with regard to its authenticity.

In a wee cottage called Know-back, on the large farm of Drumlochie, lived Tibby Hyslop, a respectable spinster, about the age of forty I thought when I saw her, but, of course, not so old when the first incidents occurred which this singular prophetic tale relates. Tibby was represented to me as a good and sincere Christian, not in name and profession only, but in word and in deed; and I believe I may add, in heart and in soul. Nevertheless, there was something in her manner and deportment different from other people—a sort of innocent simplicity, bordering on silliness, together with an instability of thought, that, in the eyes of many, approached to abstraction.

But then Tibby could repeat the book of the Evangelist Luke by heart, and many favourite chapters both of the Old and New Testaments; while there was scarcely one in the whole country who was so thoroughly acquainted with those Books from beginning to end; for, though she had read a portion every day for forty years, she had never perused any other books but the Scriptures. They were her week-day books, and her Sunday books, her books of amusement, and books of devotion. Would to God that all our brethren and sisters of the human race—the poor and comfortless, as well as the great and wise, knew as well how to estimate these books as Tibby Hyslop did!

Tibby's history is shortly this. Her mother was married to a sergeant of a recruiting party. The year following he was obliged to go to Ireland, and from thence nobody knew where; but neither he nor his wife appeared again in Scotland. Before their departure, however, they left Tibby, then a helpless babe, with her grandmother, who lived in a hamlet somewhere about Tinwald; and with that grandmother was she brought up to read her Bible, card and spin, and work at all kinds of country labour to which women are accustomed. Jane Hervey was her grandmother's name, a woman then scarcely past her prime, certainly within forty years of age; but an elder sister, named Douglas, lived also with her, and with these two were the early years of Tibby Hyslop spent, in poverty, contentment, and devotion.

At the age of eighteen, Tibby was hired at the Candlemas fair, for a great wage, to be byre-woman to Mr Gilbert Forret, then farmer at Drumlochie. Tibby had then acquired a great deal of her mother's dangerous bloom—dangerous, when attached to poverty, and so much simplicity of heart; and when she came home and told what she had done, her mother and aunty, as she always denominated the two, marvelled much at the extravagant conditions, and began to express some fears regarding her new master's designs, till Tibby put them all to rest by the following piece of simple information.

“Dear, ye ken, ye needna be feared that Mr Forret has ony design o' courting me, for, dear, ye ken, he has a wife already, and five bonny bairns; and he'll never be sac daft as fa' on and court anither and. I se warrant he finds ane enow for him, honest man!”

“Oh, then, you are safe enough, since he is a married man, my bairn,” said Jane.

“Ay, but wha on Monanday’s morn has seen
The gerse and the dew-cup growing green,
Where a married man and a maid had been?”

said old aunty Douglas; but she spoke always in riddles and mysteries, and there was no more of it. But the truth was, that Mr Forret was notorious in his neighbourhood for the debauching of young and pretty girls, and was known in Dumfries market by the name of Gibby Gledger, from the circumstance of his being always looking slyly after them; and perceiving Tibby so comely, and at the same time so simple, he judged her a fine prey, hired her at nearly double wages, and moreover gave her a crown as arle-money.

So home Tibby went to her service, and being a pliable, diligent creature, she was beloved by all about the town. Her master attended much about the byre, commended her for her neatness, and whenever a quiet opportunity offered, would pat her rosy cheek, and say kind things. Tibby took all these in good part, judging them tokens of approbation of her good services, and was proud of them; and if he once or twice whispered a place and an hour of assignation, she took it for a joke, and paid no farther attention to it.

Mr Forret was much from home, kept much company, and had few opportunities of meeting with his pretty dairymaid privately; and the fewer, that between the stable and byres there was only a half wall.

In short, a whole year passed over without the worthy farmer having accomplished his cherished purpose regarding poor Tibby; still he was quite convinced that it was a matter which might be accomplished with perfect ease, and would lead to a very pleasant diversity in a farmer’s monotonous life. With this laudable prospect, when the Candlemas fair came round again, he hired Tibby to remain another year, still on the former high conditions, and moreover he said to her: “I wish your grandmother and grand-aunt would take my pleasant cottage of Know-back. They should have it for a mere trifle, a week’s shearing or so, as long as you remain in my service; and as it is likely to be a long while before you and I part, if I get my will, it would be better to have them near you, that you might see them often, and attend to their wants. I could give them plenty of work through the whole year, on the best conditions. What think you of this proposal, Rosy?”—a familiar name he often called her by.

“O, I’m sure, sir, I think ye are the kindest man that ever the Almighty made. What a blessing is it when riches open up the heart to acts of charity an’ benevolence! My poor auld mother an’ aunty will be blithe to grip at the kind offer, for they sit under a hard master yonder, and the Almighty will bestow a blessing on you for this, sir; and they will gie you their blessing, an’ I sall bestow my poor blessing on you too, sir.”

“Well, I’ll rather have that than all the rest. Come, bestow it, then. Nay, I see I must take it, after all.”

So saying, he kissed her. Tibby neither blushed nor proffered refusal, because it was the way that the saints of old saluted one another; and away she went with the joyful news to her poor mother and aunty. Now, they had of late found themselves quite easy in their circumstances, owing to the large wages Tibby received, every farthing of which was added to the common stock; and though Tibby appeared a little brawer at the meeting-house, it was her grandmother who laid it out on her, without any consent on her part. “I am sure,” said her grandmother, when Tibby told the story of her master’s kindness and attention, “I am sure it was the kindest inter-vention o’ Providence that ever happened to poor things afore, when ye fell in wi’ that kind worthy man, i’ the mids o’ a great hiring market, where ye might just as easily hae met wi’ a

knave, or a niggard, or a sinner, wha wad hae thought naething o' working your ruin,—as wi' this man o' sickan charity an' mercy."

"Ay; the wulcat mann hae his collop,
An' the raven mann hae his part,
An' the tod will creep through the hether,
For the bonny moorhen's heart,"

said old Douglas Hervey, poking in the fire all the while with the tongs, and speaking only as if speaking to herself—"Hech-wow, an' lack-a-day! but the times are altered sam since I first saw the sun! 'How are they altered, kerlin?' Because the gospel's turn'd like a gainer, and Sin a fine madam. How d'ye do, sweet Madam Sin? Come in by here, and be a sharer o' our bed and board. Hope ye left a' friends wed in your cozy hame? But, on the tither hand, ca' away that dirty, wearysome bird; fling stanes an' glaur at him. What is he aye harp, harp, harping there for? Thraw his neck about. Poor, poor Religion, waes me for her! She was first driven out o' the lord's castle into the baron's ha'; out o' the baron's ha', into the farmer's bien dwelling; and at last out o' that, into the poor cauldknife shiel, where there's nae ither comfort but what she brings wi' her."

"What has set ye onna thae reflections the day, aunty?" cried Tibby aloud at her ear; for she was half deaf, and had so many flannel mutches on, besides a blue napkin, which she always wore over them all, that her deafness was nearly completed altogether.

"Oogh! what's the lassie saying?" said she, after listening a good while, till the sounds actually reached the interior of her ear, "what's the young light-head saying about the defections o' the day? what kens she about them?—oogh! Let me see your face, dame, and find your hand, for I hae neither seen the and, nor felt the tither, this lang and mony a day." Then taking her grand-niece by the hand, and looking close into her face through the spectacles, she added—"Ay, it is a weel-faured sonsy face, very like the mother's that bore ye; and hers was as like *her* mother's; and there was never as muckle common sense amang a' the three as to keep a brock out o' the kail-yard. Ye hae an unco good master, I hear—oogh! I'm glad to hear't—hoh-oh-oh-oh!—verra glad. I hope it will lang continue, this kindness. Poor Tibby!—as lang as the heart disna gang wrang, we mann excuse the head, for it'll never aince gang right. I hope they were baith made for a better warld, for nane o' them were made for this."

When she got this length, she sat hastily down, and began her daily and hourly task of carding wool for her sister's spinning, abstracting herself from all external considerations.

"I think aunty's unco parabolical the day," said Tibby to her grandmother; "what makes her that gate?"

"O dear, hinny, she's aye that gate now. She speaks to naehody but hersell," said Jane. "But—lowlny be it spoken—I think whiles there's ane speaks till her again that my ecu canna see.

"The angels often conversed wi' good folks langsyne," said Tibby. "I ken o' naething that can hinder them to do sae still, if they're sac disposed. But weel wad I like to hear ane o' thae preevvat apologies, perhaps meaning apologues,) for my auntie has something in her aboon other earthly creatures."

"Ye may hear enow o' them aince we war leeving near you again; there's ane every midnight, and another atween daylight and the sun. It is my wonder that she's no ta'en for a witch; for, troth, d'ye ken, hinny, I'm whiles a wee feared for her mysell. And yet, for a that, I ken she's a good Christian."

“Ay, that she is—I wish there were mony like her,” said Tibby, and so the dialogue closed for the present.

Mr Forret sent his carts at the term, and removed the old people to the cottage of Know-back, free of all charge, like a gentleman as he was, and things went on exceedingly well. Tibby had a sincere regard for her master; and as he continued to speak to her, when alone, in a kind and playful manner, she had several times ventured to broach religion to him, trying to discover the state of his soul. Then he would shake his head, and look demure in mockery, and repeat some grave, becoming words. Poor Tibby thought he was a blessed man. Then, when he would snatch a kiss or two, Tibby did not in the least comprehend the drift of this; but, convinced in her heart that it could only mean something holy, and good, and kind, she tried not further to reflect on it, for she could not; but she blessed him in her heart, and was content to remain in her ignorance of human life.

But in a short time his purposes were divulged in such a manner as to be no more equivocal. That morning immediately preceding the development of this long-cherished atrocity, Jane Hervey was awaked at an early hour by the following unintelligible dialogue in her elder sister’s bed.

“Have ye seen the news o’ the day, kerlin?”

“Have ye seen the news o’ the day?”

“Ay, that I hae, on a braid open book, without clasp or seal. Whether will von or the deil win?”

“That depends on the citadel. If it stand out, a’ the powers o’ hell winna shake the fortress, nor sap a stand o’ its foundation.”

“Ah, the fortress is a good ane, and a sound ane; but the poor head captain! ye ken what a sweet-lipped, turnip-headit brosey he is.”

“Ay; and the weapons o’ sin are grown strang and powerfu’ now-a-days, kerlin.”

“Sac they say, sac they say. They hae gotten a new forge i’ the fire o’ hell, made out o’ despised ordinances. O, lack-a-day, my poor Tibby Hyslop!—my innocent, kind, thowless Tibby Hyslop! Now for the tod or the moorhen!”

Jane was frightened at hearing such a colloquy, but particularly at that part of it where her darling child was mentioned in such a way. She sprung from her own bed to that of her sister, and cried in her ear with a loud voice, “Sister, sister Douglas, what is that you are saving about our dear bairn?”

“Oogh? I was saying naething about your bairn. She is turned intil a spring-gun, is she?—or a man-trap rather is it? I trow little whilk o’ them it is, poor stupit creature. She lies in great jeopardy yonder; but nane as yet. Gang awa’ to your bed—wow, but I was sound asleep.”

“There’s naebody can make ought out o’ her but nonsense,” said Jane, as she went to put a few sticks and peat clods on the scarcely living embers. But, after the two had risen from their scanty but happy breakfast, which Douglas had blessed with more fervency than ordinary, she could not settle at her carding, but always stopped short, and began mumbling and speaking to herself. At length, after a long pause, she looked over her shoulder, and said,—“Jeanie, warn a ye speaking o’ ganging owen to see our bairn the day? Haste thee an’ gang away, then; and stay nouth a to put On clean bussing, kirtle, nor barnie, else ye may be an antnin meenut or twa owen lang.”

Jane made no reply, but, drawing the skirt of her gown over her shoulders, she set out for Drumlochie, a distance of nearly a mile; and as she went by the corner of the byre, she weened she heard her bairn’s voice, in great passion or distress, and ran straight into the byre, crying out, “What’s the matter wi’ you, Tibby? what ails you, my bairn?” but, receiving no answer, she

thought her voice must have been somewhere outside the house, and slid quietly out, looking everywhere, and at length went down to the kitchen.

Tibby had run a hard risk that hour, not from any proffer of riches or finery these had no temptations for her—she could not even understand the purport or drift of them. But she did escape, however; and it was, perhaps, her grandmother's voice that saved her.

Mr Forret, *alias* Gledging Gibby, had borne the brunt of incensed kirk-sessions before that time, and also the unlicensed tongues of mothers, roused into vehemence by the degradation of beloved daughters; but never in his life did he bear such a rebuke as he did that day from the tongue of one he had always viewed as a mere simpleton. It was a lesson to him a warning of the most sublime and terrible description, couched in the pure and emphatic language of Scripture. Gibby cared not a doit for these things, but found himself foiled, and exposed to his family, and the whole world, if this fool chose to do it. He was, therefore, glad to act a part of deep hypocrisy, pretending the sincerest contrition, regretting, with tears, his momentary derangement, and want of self-control; attributing it wholly to the temptations of the wicked one, and praising poor Tibby to the skies for saving him in an hour of utter depravity. He likewise made her a present of a sum of money he had offered her before, saying, he did not give it her as a bribe, but as the reward of honesty, virtue, and truth, for all of which he had the highest regard, and that he would esteem her the more for her behaviour that day, as long as he lived.

Poor Tibby readily believed and forgave him; and thinking it hard to ruin a repentant sinner in his worldly and family concerns, she promised never to divulge what had passed; and he knowing well the value of her word, was glad at having so escaped.

Jane found her grand-daughter terribly flushed in the countenance, and flurried in her speech that day, but Jane's stupid head could draw no inferences from these, or anything else. She asked if she was well enough, and the other saying she was, Jane took it for granted that she was so, and only added, "Your crazed auntie would gar me believe ye war in some jeopardy, and hurried me away to see you, without giving me leave to change a steek." One may easily conceive Tibby's astonishment at hearing this, considering the moment at which her grandmother arrived. As soon as the latter was gone, she kneeled before her Maker, and poured out her soul in grateful thanksgiving for her deliverance; and, in particular, for such a manifest interference of some superior intelligence in her behalf.

"How did ye find our poor bairn the day, bitty Jean? Was the trial owen afore ye wan? Or did ye gie a helping-hand at raising the siege?—Ooogh?"

"Whaten siege? I saw nae siege, nor heard tell ofony."

"The great siege o' the castle o' Man-soul, that Bunyan speaks about, ye ken. Was it owen? Or is it to try for again? Oh! ye dinna understand me! Did ye ever understand onything a' your days? Did our bairn no tell ye onything?"

"She tauld me naething, but said she was very wed."

"She's ae fool, and ye're another! If I had been her, I wad hae blazed it baith to kirk and council;—to his wife's ear, and his minister's teeth! I wad hae gart heaven sab, and hell girm at it! Isna the resetter waur than the thief? The cowardly butcher that conceals the lambs and kills them, waur than the open fauld-bnikker and sheepreiver? And isna the sweet-lippit kiss-my-lufe saint waur than the stouthnight reprobate? Figh—fie! A dish o' sodden turnips at the best. She's very wed, is she? Oogh! Red an' rosy like a boiled lobster? Aye. Hoh—oh—oh—oh!—silly woman—silly woman—Hoh-oh-oh!"

In a few weeks, Mr Forret's behaviour to his simple dairymaid altered very materially. He called her no more by the endearing name of Rosy; poor idiot was oftener the term; and finding

he was now safe from accusation, his malevolence towards her had scarcely any bounds. She made out her term with difficulty, but he refused to pay the stipulated wage, on pretence of her incapacity; and as she had by that time profited well at his hand, she took what he offered, thanked him, and said no more about it. She was no more hired as a servant, but having at the first taken a long lease of the cottage, she continued, from year to year, working on the farm by the day, at a very scanty allowance. Old Douglas in a few years grew incapable of any work, through frailty of person, being constantly confined to bed, though in mind as energetic and mysterious as ever. Jane wrought long, till at length a severe illness in 1799 rendered her unfit to do anything further than occasionally knit a piece of a stocking; and poor Tibby's handywork had all three to maintain. They had brought her up with care and kindness amid the most pinching poverty, and now, indeed, her filial affection was hardly put to the proof; but it was genuine, and knew no bounds. Night and day did she toil for the sustenance of her aged and feeble relations, and a murmur or complaint never was heard to drop from her lips. Many a blessing was bestowed on her as they raised their palsied heads to partake of her hard-earned pittance; and many a fervent prayer was poured out, when none heard but the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

Times grew harder and harder. Thousands yet living remember what a time that was for the poor, while the meal for seasons was from four to five shillings a-stone, and even sometimes as high as seven. Tibby grew fairly incapable of supporting herself and her aged friends. She stinted herself for their sakes, and that made her still more incapable; yet often with tears in her eyes did she feed these frail beings, her heart like to melt because she had no more to give them. There are no poor-rates in that country. Know-back is quite retired—nobody went near it, and Tibby complained to none, but wrought on, and fought away, night and day, in sorrow and anxiety, but still with a humble and thankful heart.

In this great strait, Mrs Forret was the first who began, unsolicited, to take compassion on the destitute group. She could not conceive how they existed on the poor creature's earnings. So she went privately to see them, and when she saw their wretched state, and heard their blessings on their dear child, her heart was moved to pity, and she determined to assist them in secret, for her husband was such a churl, that publicly she durst not venture to do it. Accordingly, whenever she had an opportunity, she made Tibby come into the kitchen, and get a meal for herself; and often the considerate lady slid a small loaf, or a little tea and sugar, into her lap, quietly, for the two aged invalids; for gentle woman is always the first to pity, and the first to relieve.

Poor Tibby! how her heart expanded with gratitude on receiving these little presents, for her love for the two old dependent creatures was of so pure and sacred a sort, as scarcely to retain in its element any of the common feelings of humanity. There was no selfish principle there—they were to her as a part of her own nature. And it was observed, that whenever she got these little presents, enabling her to give the aged and infirm a better meal, and one more suited to their wasted frames, she had not patience to walk home to Know-back—she ran all the way.

Tibby never went into the kitchen unless the mistress desired her, or sent her word by some of the other day-labourers to come in as she went home; and one evening having got word in this last way, she went in, and the lady of the house, with her own hand, presented her with a little bowl full of beat potatoes, and some sweet milk to them. This was all, and one would have thought it was an aliment so humble and plain, that scarcely any person would have grudged it to a hungry dog. However, it so happened that as Tibby was sitting behind backs enjoying her little savoury meal, Mr Forret chanced to come into the kitchen to give orders anent something that had come into his mind; and perceiving Tibby, his old friend, so comfortably engaged, he,

without speaking a word, seized her by the neck with one hand, and by the shoulder with the other, and hurrying her out at the back-door into the yard, he flung her, with all his might, on a dunghill. "Wha the devil bade you come into my house, and eat up the meat that was made for others?" cried he, in a demoniac voice, choking with rage; and then he swore a terrible oath, which I do not choose to set down, that "if he found her again at such employment, he would cut her throat, and fling her to the dogs."

Poor Tibby was astounded beyond the power of utterance, or even of rising from the place where he had thrown her down, until lifted by two of the servant-maids, who tried to comfort her as they supported her part of the way home; and bitterly did they blame their master, saying it would have been a shame to any one who had the feelings of a man, to do such an act; but as for their master, he scarcely had the feelings of a beast. Tibby never opened her mouth, neither to curse, blame, nor complain, but went on her way crying till her heart was like to break.

She had no supper for the old famishing pair that night. They had tasted nothing from the time that she left them in the morning; and as she had accounted herself sure of receiving something from Mrs Forret that night, she had not asked her day's wages from the grieve, glad to let a day run up now and then, when able to procure a meal in any other honest way. She had nothing to give them that night, so what could she do? She was obliged, with a sore heart, to kiss them and tell them so; and then, as was her custom, she said a prayer over their couch, and laid herself down to sleep drowned in tears.

She had never so much as mentioned Mr Forret's name either to her grandmother or grand-aunt that night, or by the least insinuation given them to understand that he had either used her ill or well; but no sooner were they composed to rest, and all the cottage quiet, than old Douglas began abusing him with great vehemence and obstreperousness, and Tibby, to her astonishment, heard some of his deeds spoken of with great familiarity, which she was sure never had been whispered to the ear of flesh; and many more of the same stamp which Tibby had never heard mentioned before, which, nevertheless, from obvious circumstances, might have been but too true. But what shocked her most of all, was the following terrible prognostication, which she heard repeated three several times:— "Na, na, I'll no see it, for I'll never see aught earthly again beyond the wa's o' this cottage, but Tibby will live to see it; ay, ay, she'll see it." Then a different voice asked—"What will *she* see, kenlin?" "She'll see the craws picking his banes at the back o' the dyke."

Tibby's heart grew cauld within her when she heard this terrible announcement, because, for many years bygone, she had been convinced, from sensible demonstration, that old Douglas Hervey had commerce with some superior intelligence; and after she had heard the above sentence repeated again and again, she shut her ears, that she might hear no more; committed herself once more to the hands of a watchful Creator, and fell into a troubled sleep.

The elemental spirits that weave the shadowy tapestry of dreams, were busy at their aerial looms that night in the cottage of Know-back, bodying forth the destinies of men and women in brilliant and quick succession. One only of these delineations I shall here relate, precisely as it was related to me, by my friend the worthy clergyman of that parish, to whom Tibby related it the very next day. There is no doubt that her grand-aunt's disjointed prophecy formed the groundwork of the picture; but be that as it may, this was her dream; and it was for the sake of telling it, and tracing it to its fulfilment, that I began this story.

Tibby Hyslop dreamed, that on a certain spot which she had never seen before, between a stone-dyke and the verge of a woody precipice, a little, sequestered, inaccessible corner, of a triangular shape,—or, as she called it to the minister, "a three-neukit crook o' the linn," she saw

Mr Forret lying without his hat, with his throat slightly wounded, and blood running from it; but he neither appeared to be dead, nor yet dying, but in excellent spirits. He was clothed in a fine new black suit, had full boots on, which appeared likewise to be new, and yellow spurs gilt. A great number of rooks and hooded crows were making free with his person; some picking out his eyes, some his tongue, and some tearing out his bowels. But in place of being distressed by their voracity, he appeared much delighted, encouraging them on all that he could, and there was a perfectly good understanding between the parties. In the midst of this horrible feast, down came a majestic raven from a dark cloud close above this scene, and, driving away all the meaner birds, fell a-feasting himself; opened the breast of his victim, who was still alive, and encouraging him on; and after preying on his vitals for some time, at last picked out his heart, and devoured it; and then the mangled wretch, after writhing for a short time in convulsive agonies, groaned his last.

This was precisely Tibby's dream as it was told to me, first by my friend Mr Cunningham of Dalswinton, and afterwards by the clergyman to whom she herself related it next day. But there was something in it not so distinctly defined, for though the birds which she saw devouring her master, were rooks, blood-crows, and a raven, still each individual of the number had a likeness by itself, distinguishing it from all the rest; a certain character, as it were, to support; and these particular likenesses were so engraven on the dreamer's mind, that she never forgot them, and she could not help looking for them both among "birds and bodies," as she expressed it, but never could distinguish any of them again; and the dream, like many other distempered visions, was forgotten, or only remembered now and then with a certain tremor of antecedent knowledge.

Days and seasons passed over, and with them the changes incident to humanity. The virtuous and indefatigable Tibby Hyslop was assisted by the benevolent, who had heard of her exertions and patient sufferings; and the venerable Douglas Hervey had gone in peace to the house appointed for all living, when one evening in June, John Jardine, the cooper, chanced to come to Know-back, in the course of his girding and hooping peregrinations. John was a living and walking chronicle of the events of the day, all the way from the head of Glen-breck to the bridge of Stoneylee. He knew every man, and every man's affairs—every woman, and every woman's failings; and his information was not like that of many others, for it was generally to be depended on. How he got his information so correctly, was a mystery to many, but whatever John the cooper told as a fact, was never disputed, and any woman, at least, might have ventured to tell it over again.

"These are hard times for poor folks, Tibby. How are you and auld granny coming on?"

"Joost fighting on as we hae done for mon a year. She is aye contentit, poor body, an' thankfu', whether I hae little to gie her, or muckle. This life's naething but a fight, Johnie, frae beginning to end."

"It's a' true ye say, Tibby," said the cooper, interrupting her, for he was afraid she was going to begin on religion, a species of conversation that did not accord with John's talents or dispositions, "It's a true ye say, Tibby; but your master will soon be sic a rich man now, that we'll a' be made up, and you amang the lave will be made a lady."

"If he get his riches honestly, an' the blessing o' the Almighty wi' them, Jahn, I shall rejoice in his prosperity, but neither me nor ony ither poor body will ever be muckle the better o' them. What way is he gaun to get sickan great riches? If a' be true that I hear, he is gaun to the wrang part to seek them?"

"Aha, lass, that's a' that ye ken about it. Did ye no hear that he had won the law-plea on his laird, whilk has been afore the Lords for main than seven years? An' did ye no hear that he had

won ten pleas afore the courts o' Dumfries, a' rising out o' ane anither, like ash girdenings out o' ad root, and that he's to get, on the hale, about twenty thousand pund's worth o' damages?"

"That's an unco sight o' siller, John. How muckle is that?"

"Aha, lass, ye hae fixed me now; but they say it will come to as muckle goud as six men can carry on their backs. And we're a' to get twenties, and thirties, and forties o' pund's for bribes, to gar us gie t'aithfu' and true evidences at the great concluding trial afore the Lords; and you are to be bnibit among the rest, to gar ye tell the hale truth, and nothing but the truth."

"There needs nae waste o' siller to gar me do that. But, Johnie, I wad like to ken whether that mode o' taking oaths, solemn and sacred oaths, about the miserable trash o' this warld, be according to the tenor o' gospel revelation, and the third o' the Commands?"

"Aha, lass! ye hae fixed me now! That's rather a kittle point, but I believe it's a' true that ye say. However, ye'll get the offer of a great bribe in a few days; an' take ye my advice, Tibby, Get baud o' the bribe afore hand; for if ye lippen to your master's promises, you will never finger a bodle after the job's done."

"I'm but a poor simple body, Johnie, an' canna manage ony sickan things. But I shall need nae fee to gar me tell the truth, an' I winna tell an untruth for a' my master's estate, an' his sax backfu's o' goud into the bargain. If the sin o' the soul, Johnie

"Ay, ay, that's very true, Tibby! very true, indeed, about the sin o' the soul! But as ye were saying about being a simple body—What wad ye think if I were to cast up that day Gledging Gibby came here to gie you your lesson I could maybe help you on a wee bit—What wad you gie me if I did?"

"Alack, I hae naething to gie you but my blessing; but I shall pray for the blessing o' God on ye."

"Ay, ay, as ye say. I daresay there might be waur things. But could you think o' naething else to gie a body wha likes as wed to be paid aff hand as to gie credit? That's the very thing I'm cautioning you against."

"I dinna expect ony siller frae that fountain-head, Johnie: It is a dry ane to the puir and the needy, and an unco sma' matter wad gar me make over my rights to a pose that I hae neither faith nor hope in. But ye're kend for an auld-farrant man; if ye can bring a little honestly this way, I shall gie you the half o't; for wed I ken it will never come this way by ony art or shift o' mine."

"Ay, ay, that's spoken like a sensible and reasonable woman, Tibby Hyslop, as ye are and hae always been. But think you that nae way could be contrived"—and here the cooper gave two winks with his left eye—"by the whilk ye could gie me it a', and yet no rob yoursel of a farthing?"

"Na, na, Johnie Jardine, that's clean ahoon my comprehension:

But ve're a cunning draughty man, and I leave the hale matter to your guidance."

"Very wed, Tibby, very wed. I'll try to ca' a gayan substantial gird round your success, if I can hit the width o' the chance, and the girth o' the gear. Gude day to you the day, an' think about the plan o' equal-aqual that I spake o'."

Old maids are in general very easily courted, and very apt to take a hint. I have indeed known a great many instances in which they took hints very seriously, before ever they were given. Not so with Tibby Hyslop. There had such a heavy charge lain upon her the greater part of her life, that she had never turned her thoughts to any earthly thing beside, and she knew no more what the cooper was aiming at, than if the words had not been spoken. When he went away, her grandmother called her to the bedside, and asked if the cooper was gone away. Tibby answered

in the affirmative; on which granny said, "What has he been havening about sac lang the day? I thought I heard him courting ye."

"Courting me! Dear granny, he was courting nane o' me; he was telling me how Mr Forret had won as muckle siller at the law as sax men can carry on their backs, and how we are a' to get a part of it."

"Dinna believe him, hinny; the man that can win siller at the law, will lose it naewhere. But, Tibby, I heard the cooper courting you, and I thought I heard you gie him your consent to manage the matter as he likit. Now you hae been a great blessing to me. I thought you sent to me in wrath, as a punishment of my sins, but I have found that you were indeed sent to me in love and in kindness. You have been the sole support of my old age, and of hers wha is now in the grave, and it is natural that I should like to see you put up afore I leave you. But, Tibby Hyslop, John Jardine is not the man to lead a Christian life with. He has nae main religion than the beasts that perish—he is frighted for it, and shuns it as a body would do a loathsome or poisonous draught: And besides, it is wed kend how sam he neglected his first wife. Hae naething to do wi' him, my dear bairn, but rather live as you are. There is neither sin nor shame in being unwedded, but there may be baith in joining yourself to an unbeliever."

Tibby wondered at this information. She did not know she had been courted, and she found that she rather thought the better of the cooper for what it appeared he had done. Accordingly, she made no promises to her grandmother, but only remarked, that "it was a pity no to gie the cooper a chance o' conversion, honest man."

The cooper kept watch about Drumlochie and the hinds' houses, and easily found out all the sly Gibby's movements, and even the exact remuneration he could be urged to give to such as were pleased to remember aright. Indeed it was believed that the most part of the hinds and labouring people remembered nothing of the matter farther than he was pleased to inform them, and that in fact they gave evidence to the best of their knowledge or remembrance, although that evidence might be decidedly wrong.

One day Gibby took his gun, and went out towards Know-back. The cooper also, guessing what was in his head, went thither by a circuitous route, so as to come in as it were by chance; but ere he arrived, Mr Forret had begun his queries and instructions to Tibby.— The two could not agree by any means; Tibby either could not recollect the yearly crops on each field on the farm of Drumlochie, or recollected wrong. But at length, in comes the cooper, when the calculations were at the keenest, and at every turn he took Mr Forret's side, with the most strenuous asseverations, abusing Tibby for her stupidity and want of recollection.

"Hear me speak, Johnie Jardine, afore ye condemn me aff-loof: Mr Forret says that the crooked holm was pease in the 96, and corn in the 97; I say it was corn baith the years. How do ye say about that?"

"Mr Forret's right—perfectly right. It grew pease in the 96, and aits, good Angus aits, in the 97. Poor gouk! dinna ye think that he has a' these things merkit down in black an' white, and what good could it do to him to mislead you? Depend on't, he is right there."

"Could ye tak your oath on that, Johnie Jardine?"

"Ay, this meenint,—sax times repeated, if it were necessary.

"Then I yield—I am but a poor silly woman, liable to mony errors and shortcomings—My recollection is playing at hide-an'-seek wi' me I maun be wrang, and I yield that it is sae. But I am sure, John, you cannot but remember this sae short a while syne, for ye shore wi us that

har'st. Was the lang field niest RobieJohnston's farm growing corn in the dear year, or no? I say it was."

"It was the next year, Tibby, my woman," said Mr Forret; "you are confounding one year with another again; and I see what is the reason. It was oats in 99, grass in 1800, and oats again in 1801; now you never remember any of the intermediate years, but only those that you shore on these fields. I cannot be mistaken in a rule I never break."

The cooper had now got his cue. He perceived that the plea ultimately depended on proof relating to the proper cropping of the land throughout the lease; and he supported the farmer so strenuously, that Tibby, in her simplicity, fairly yielded, although hardly convinced; but the cooper assured the farmer that he would put her all to rights, provided she received a handsome acknowledgment, for there was not the least doubt that Mr Forret was right in every particular.

This speech of the cooper's gratified the farmer exceedingly, as his whole fortune now depended upon the evidence to be elicited in the court at Dumfries, on a day that was fast approaching, and he was willing to give anything to secure the evidence on his side; so he made a long set speech to Tibby, telling her how necessary it was that she should adhere strictly to the truth—that, as it would be an awful thing to make oath to that which was false, he had merely paid her that visit to instruct her remembrance a little in that which was the truth, it being impossible, on account of his jottings, that he could be mistaken; and finally it was settled, that for thus telling the truth, and nothing but the truth, Tibby Hyslop, a most deserving woman, was to receive a present of L.15, as wages for time bygone. This was all managed in a very sly way by the cooper, who assured Forret that all should go right, as far as related to Tibby Hyslop and himself, which elated the farmer exceedingly; for the spirit of litigation had of late possessed him to such a degree, and he had ventured such a stake on the issue, that if he had been master of the realm, he would have parted with the half of it to beat his opponents.

The day of the trial arrived, and counsel attended from Edinburgh for both parties, to take full evidence before the two Circuit Lords and Sheriff. The evidence was said to have been unsatisfactory to the Judges, but upon the whole in Mr Forret's favour. The cooper's was decidedly so, and the farmer's counsel were crowing and bustling immoderately, when at length Tibby Hyslop was called to the witnesses' box. At the first sight of her master's counsel, and the Dumfries writers and notaries that were hanging about him, Tibby was struck dumb with amazement, and almost bereaved of sense. She at once recognised them, all and severally, as the birds that she saw, in her dream, devouring her master, and picking the flesh from his bones; while the great lawyer from Edinburgh was, in feature, eye, and beak, the identical raven which at last devoured his vitals and heart.

This singular coincidence brought reminiscences of such a nature over her spirit, that, on the first questions being put, she could not answer a word. She knew from thenceforward that her master was a ruined man, and her heart failed, on thinking of her kind mistress and his family. The counsel then went, and whispering Mr Forret, inquired what sort of a woman she was, and if her evidence was likely to be of any avail. As the cooper had behaved so well, and had likewise answered for Tibby, the farmer was intent on hot losing her evidence, and answered his counsel that she was a worthy honest woman, who would not swear to a lie for the king's dominions, and that he must not lose her evidence. This intelligence the lawyer announced to the bench with great consequence and pomposity, and the witness was allowed a little time to recover her spirits.

Isabella Hyslop, spinster, was again called, answered to her name, and took the oath distinctly, and without hesitation, until the official querist came to the usual question, "Now, has no one instructed you what to say, or what you are to answer?" When Tibby replied, with a steady

countenance, "Nobody except my master!" The counsel and client stared at one another, while the Court could hardly maintain their gravity of deportment. The querist went on—

"What? Do you say your master instructed you what to say?"

"Yes."

"And did he promise or give you any reward for what you were to say?"

"Yes."

"How much did he give or promise you for answering as he directed you?"

"He gave me fifteen pound notes."

Here Mr Forret and his counsel, losing all patience, interrupted the proceedings, the latter addressing the Judges, with pompous vehemence, to the following purport:

"My Lords, in my client's name, and in the names of justice and reason, I protest against proceeding with this woman's evidence, it being manifest that she is talking through a total derangement of intellect. At first she is dumb, she cannot answer nor speak a word, and now she is answering in total disregard of all truth and propriety. I appeal to your Lordships if such a farrago as this can be at all inferential or relevant?"

"Sir, it was but the other minute," said the junior Judge, "that you announced to us with great importance, that this woman was a person noted for honesty and worth, and one who would not tell a lie for the king's dominions. Why not then hear her evidence to the end? For m own part, I perceive no tokens of discrepancy in it, but rather a scrupulous conscientiousness. Of that, however, we will be better able to judge when we have heard her out. I conceive that, for the sake of both parties, this woman should be strictly examined."

"Proceed with the evidence, Mr Wood," said the senior Lord, bowing to his assistant.

Tibby was reminded that she was on her great oath, and examined over again; but she adhered strictly to her former answers.

"Can you repeat anything to the Court that he desired you to say?"

"Yes; he desired me over and over again to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"And, in order that you should do this, he paid you down fifteen pounds sterling."

"Yes."

"This is a very singular transaction: I cannot perceive the meaning of it. You certainly must be sensible that you made an advantageous bargain?"

"Yes."

"But you depone that he charged you to tell only the truth?"

"Yes, he did, and before witnesses, too."

Here Mr Forret's counsel began to crow amain, as if he victory had been his own; but the junior Judge again took him short by saying, "Have patience, sir, the woman may be right, and your client in the wrong; at least I think I can perceive as much. Now, my good woman, I esteem your principles and plain simplicity very highly. We want only to ascertain the truth, and you say your master there charged you to tell that only. Tell me this, then did he not inform you what that truth was?"

"Yes. It was for that purpose he came over to see me, to help my memory to what was the truth, for fear I should hae sworn wrang, which wad hae been a great sin, ye ken."

"Yes, it would so. I thought that would be the way.—You may now proceed with your questions regularly, Mr Wood."

"Are you quite conscious, now, that those things he brought to your remembrance were actually the truth?"

"Are you conscious they were not the truth?"

“Yes; at least, some of them, I am sure, were not.”

“Please to condescend on one instance.”

“He says he has it markit on his buik, that the crookit houm, that lies at the back o’ the wood, ye ken, grew pease in the ninety-sax, and corn in the ninety-se’en; now, it is unco queer that he should hae settin’ t down wrang, for the houm was really and truly aits baith the years.

“It is a long time since; perhaps your memory may be at fault?”

“If my master had not chanced to mention it, I could not have been sure, but he set me a-calculating and comparing; and my mother and me have been consulting about it, and have fairly settled it.”

“And you are quite positive it was oats both years?”

“Yes.”

“Can you mention any circumstance on which you rest your conclusions?”

“Yes; there came a great wind ae Sabbath day, in the ninety-sax, and that raised the shearers’ wages, at Dumfries, to three shillings the day. We began to the crookit houm on a Monanday’s morning, at three shillings a-day, and that very day twalmonth, we began till’t again at tenpence. We had a good deal o’ speaking about it, and I said to John Edie, ‘What need we grumble! I made sac muckle at shearing, the last year, that it’s no a’ done yet.’ And he said, ‘Ah, Tibby, Tibby, but wha can ham like you?’”

“Were there any others that you think your master had marked down wrong.

“There was ane at any rate the lang field niest Robie Johnston’s march: He says it was clover in the drouthy dear year, and aits the niest; but that’s a year I canna forget; it was aits baith years. I lost a week’s shearing on it the first year, waiting on my auntie, and the niest year she was dead; and I shore the lang feld niest Robie Johnston’s wi’ her sickle heuk, and black ribbons on my mutch.”

The whole of Tibby’s evidence went against Mr Forret’s interest most conclusively, and the Judges at last dismissed her, with high compliments of her truth and integrity. The cause was again remitted to the Court of Session for revisal after this evidence taken, and the word spread over all the country that Mr Forret had won. Tibby never contradicted this, nor disputed it, but she was thoroughly convinced, that in place of winning, he would be a ruined man.

About a month after the examination at Dumfries, he received a letter from his agents in Edinburgh, buoying him up with hopes of great and instant success, and urging the utility of his presence in town at the final decision of the cause on which all the minor ones rested. Accordingly he equipped himself, and rode into Dumfries in the evening, to be ready for the coach the following morning, saying to his wife, as he went away, that he would send home his mare with the carrier, and that as he could not possibly name the day on which he would be home, she was to give herself no uneasiness. The mare was returned the following night, and put up in her own stall, nobody knew by whom; but servants are such sleepy, careless fellows, that few regarded the circumstance. This was on a Tuesday night; and a whole week passed over, and still Mrs Forret had no word from her husband, which kept her very uneasy, as their whole fortune, being, and subsistence, now depended on the issue of this great law-suit, and she suspected that the case still continued dubious, or was found to be going against him.

But, behold, on the arrival of the Edinburgh papers next week, the whole case, so important to farmers, was detailed; and it was there stated, that the great farmer and improver, Mr Forret of Drumlochie, had not only forfeited his whole fortune by improper husbandry and manifest breaches of the conditions on which he held his lease, but that criminal letters had been issued against him for attempts to pervert justice, and rewards offered for his detention or seizure. This

was terrible news for the family at Drumlochie, but there were still sanguine hopes entertained that the circumstances were mistated, or at all events that the husband and father would make his escape; and as there was no word from him day after day. this latter sentiment began to be cherished by the whole family as their only remaining and forlorn hope.

But one day, as poor Tibby Hyslop was going over to the Cat Linn, to gather a burden of sticks for firewood, she was surprised, on looking over the dike, to see a great body of crows collected, all of which were so intent on their prey, that they seemed scarcely to regard her presence as a sufficient cause for their desisting; she waved her burden-ropes at them over the dike, but they refused to move. Her heart nearly failed her, for she remembered of having before seen something of the same scene, with some fearful concomitants. But pure and unfeigned religion, the first principle of which teaches a firm reliance on divine protection, can give courage to the weakest of human beings. Tibby climbed over the dike, drove the vermin away, and there lay the corpse of her late unfortunate master, woefully defaced by these voracious birds of prey. He had bled himself to death in the jugular vein, was lying without the hat, and clothed in a fine new black suit of clothes, top boots, which appeared likewise to be new, and gilt spurs; and the place where he lay was a little three-cornered sequestered spot, between the dike and the precipice, and inaccessible by any other way than through the field. It was a spot that Tibby had never seen before.

A city dream is nothing but the fumes of a distempered frame, and a more distempered imagination; but let no man despise the circumstantial and impressive visions of a secluded Christian; for who can set bounds to the intelligences existing between the soul and its Creator?

The only thing more I have to add is, that the Lord President, having made the remark that he paid more regard to that poor woman, Isabella Hyslop's evidence, than to all the rest elicited at Dumfries, the gainers of the great plea became sensible that it was owing to her candour and invincible veracity that they were successful, and sent her a present of twenty pounds. She was living comfortably at Know-back when I saw her, a contented and happy old maiden. The letter was found in Mr Forret's pocket, which was found in Mr Forret's pocket, which had blasted all his hopes and driven him to utter distraction; he had received it at Dumfries, returned home, and put up his mare carefully in the stable, but not having courage to face his ruined family, he had hurried to that sequestered spot, and perpetrated the woeful deed of self-destruction.