

village, and farm-stead within sixty miles of the Borders—to the north and to the south ; and taking in the entire breadth of the island. His visits became as regular as clock-work. Every merchant now-a-days knows more exactly the day and almost the hour when he may expect a visit from the traveller of the house with which he deals, accompanied with an invitation to drink a bottle of wine, and pay his account, than the people in the Border villages knew when Reuben would appear amongst them.

It was shrewdly suspected that Reuben did not confine himself solely to the sale of ribbons, gown-pieces, and such like ware, but that his goodly pack was in fact a magazine, which was concealed tea, cogniac, and tobacco. At all events he prospered amazingly, and in the course of three years—though he lessened its weight at every village he came to—his pack overgrew his shoulders, and prosperity compelled him, first, to have recourse to a pack-horse, and, before he had long, to a covered cart or caravan. In short, arriving at a village, instead of going from house to house, with his stock on his shoulders, as he was wont to do, he went round the drummer or bellman ; or, where no such functionaries were known, he employed some other individual, with a key and a treacher, to go round the village and make the proclamation—

"This is to give notice, that Mr. Reuben Purves, with his grand and elegant assortment of the newest fashionable varieties of ware goods, and other commodities, all brought by him for ready money, so that great gains may be expected, has just arrived, (such an inn,) and will remain for this day only ; therefore, those who wish the real superior articles, at most excellent bargains, embrace the present opportunity !"

Let not the reader despise Reuben, because he practised and understood the mysteries of trading. There is nothing done in this world without it. No gardener ever "lichtlied" his own leaks. All men practise it, from the dealer of books to the maker of shoe-black, and from the vender of matches. From the eloquent advertisement of a metropolis-auctioneer, down to the "only true and secular account" of an execution, bawled by a flying stationer on the streets, the spirit of puffing, in its various degrees, is to be

found. Therefore, we blame not Reuben ; he only did what other people did, though perhaps after a different fashion, and with better success. It gave a promise of his success as a tradesman. He said he ventured on it as a speculation, and finding it to suit his purpose, he continued it. In truth, scarce had the herald made the proclamation which I have quoted, until Reuben's cart was literally besieged. His customers said, "it went like a cried fair"—"there was nae getting forward to it."

Moreover, he was always civil, he was always obliging. He had a smile, and a pleasant and merry word for every one. Buy or not buy, his courtesy never failed him. In short, he would do anything to oblige his customers, save to give them credit ; and that, as he said, was not because he had any doubt of their honesty, or that he was unwilling to serve them, but because he had laid it down as a rule never to trust a single penny, which rule he could not break. He was also possessed of a goodly person, was some five feet ten inches in height, he had fair hair, a ruddy cheerful countenance, intelligent blue eyes, and his years but little exceeded thirty.

At this period of Reuben's history, there dwelt in the town of Moffat, one Miss Priscilla Spottiswoode. Now, Priscilla was a portly, and withal a comely personage, and though rather stout, she was tall in proportion to her thickness. Nothing could surpass the smoothness of the clear red and white upon her goodly countenance. There was by no means too much red, and constitutional good-nature shed a sort of perpetual smile over her features, like a sun-beam irradiating a tranquil lake. In short, it was a reproach to every bachelor in the town and parish of Moffat, to have permitted forty and four summers to roll over the head of Priscilla, without one amongst them having the manliness to step forward and offer his hand to rescue her from a state of single solitariness. She had been for more than twenty years the maid, or rather I might say the nurse, of an old and rich lady, who, at her death, bequeathed to her five hundred pounds.

Reuben first saw Priscilla about three months after she had received the legacy.—"Five hundred pounds," thought he "would set a man on his feet." He also gazed on her kind, comely, smiling countenance, and