

THE AYRSHIRE LEGATEES

night was rather sharp, it is not to be supposed that she would have been the bearer of any such message, had her own curiosity not enticed her.

During supper the conversation was very lively. Many 'pickant jokes,' as Miss Becky described them, were cracked by the Doctor ; but, soon after the table was cleared, he touched Mr. Snodgrass on the arm, and, taking up one of the candles, went with him to his study, where he then told him, that Rachel Pringle, now Mrs. Sabre, had informed him of a way in which he could do him a service. 'I understand, sir,' said the Doctor, 'that you have a notion of Miss Bell Tod, but that until ye get a kirk there can be no marriage. But the auld horse may die waiting for the new grass ; and, therefore, as the Lord has put it in my power to do a good action both to you and my people,—whom I am glad to hear you have pleased so well,—if it can be brought about that you could be made helper and successor, I'll no object to give up to you the whole stipend, and, by and by, maybe the manse to the bargain. But that is if you marry Miss Bell ; for it was a promise that Rachel gar't me make to her on her wedding morning. Ye know she was a forcasting lassie, and, I have reason to believe, has said nothing anent this to Miss Bell herself ; so that if you have no partiality for Miss Bell, things will just rest on their own footing ; but if you have a notion, it must be a satisfaction to you to know this, as it will be a pleasure to me to carry it as soon as possible into effect.'

Mr. Snodgrass was a good deal agitated ; he was taken by surprise, and without words the Doctor might have guessed his sentiments ; he, however, frankly confessed that he did entertain a very high opinion of Miss Bell, but that he was not sure if a country parish would exactly suit him. 'Never mind that,' said the Doctor ; 'if it does not fit at first, you will get used to it ; and if a better casts up, it will be no obstacle.'

The two gentlemen then rejoined the ladies, and, after a short conversation, Miss Becky Glibbans was admonished to depart, by the servants bringing in the Bibles for the worship of the evening. This was usually performed before supper, but, owing to the bowl being on the table, and the company jocose, it had been postponed till all the guests who were not to sleep in the house had departed.

The Sunday morning was fine and bright for the season ;