

look braw aboot the holytide; the lads an' lasses maybe spendin' a rait o' their gathered gear—the tane on a new waiscoat, or a lang-tailed coat, the tither on a torryshell back came, or a goold-washed brooch; or, aiblins, they micht coft a bit giftie for their friends, to gie them as a hansel on Nures-day mornin'. The auld folks, (the women bodies, I mean) had enouch to do in their huswifeskep, slachterin' hens an' turkies an' geese maist unmercifully, an' gettin' ready a' sorts o' dishes to gar us lick our lips.

I mind ae Hogmanay weel, an' I'll tell ye a' aboot it, jist as a swatch, like, o' the rest.

It was at auld Mrs. Tamson's; she leavit then in the Kirk-gate, whaur Johnnie Muckelstane had his baxter's shop afterhan'. We were to for-guither at sax o'clock, an' jist as the toon knock chappit I was at the door. Mysie, Mrs. Tamson's lass, let me in, an' ben I gaed to the big parlour, whaur I fand your faither, an' twa or three mae, wi' the Tamsons. Others cam' drappin' in thick an' threefauld, an' the chaumer, ere lang, was as fu' as a bicker o' brose. Howsomever, there was aye room for us to steer aboot; the auld folks clappit themselves close by the wa', while we young anes footit it fu' deftly, to the springs o' auld Will Semple, the blind fiddler. 'The nicht drave on wi' lauchin' an' dattin', till, atween ten an' eleven o'clock, we quat the dancin', an' gaed butt to anither room whaur the supper was laid out—name o' your wheellie-whanlies o' jeellies and custards, but guid substantial dishes—howtowdies an' collops, an' sic like; things that didna melt in your mouth, but needit a guid chow to put them ower. Solid as they were, they didna stand us lang, an' back we gaed to the big room again. Will Semple hadna been idle either when we were awa', an' to it he fell, wi' mair smed-dum than ever, at the reels, strathspeys, an' kintra dances, an', at an orra time, a cotillion or twa.

Me an' Jean Tamson—her that's now Widow Walker—were geyan thick in thae days, an' keepin' my e'e on the auld watch on the brace. I slippit near her as it cam' close upon twal o'clock, an' keepit her in converse, for neither her nor me was dancin' that time. Charlie Graham had a kind o' likin' to her, too, an' at the first chap o' twelve frae the muckle toon knock, he made a dash furrit: I was ower gleg for him, though, and gat the first kiss o' Jean. Weel! after that the salutes gaed pappin' roon', like musketry on a review day; we had to kiss every lady there, young an' auld, an', my certie! some o' them tasted sour. When this was ower, we fell to the dancin' again, but after a reel or twa, we closed aff wi' "Bab at the bowster," an' heth! if we didna gar the lassies play spin! Then the women folk gaed awa' to put on their haps, an' the rest

o' us had a glass o' "het pint" round, and sang "Auld Lang Syne," wi' a roosin' chorus, till they cam' back, ready for the road.

Ye're no to think, though, that we drappit the fun here—it was only beginnin'. Ilka had haid brocht his bottle an' glass wi' him, an' laid them by in a corner till the now. Some o' us had ginger wine, some currant wine, twa or three brandy, but the maist feck stuck to the peat-reek. They were a' fotch out, an', yokin' in wi' the lassies, we skailed in a' airts, like a bumbee's blee. Your faither and me conveyed the twa Miss Trumbulls hame, an' when their servant lass opened the door, in we stappin', o' coorse, to gie them their first fitin'. They each took a mouthfu' o' your faither's ginger wine—though they hardly did mair than smell wi' whiskey—and, then, without sayin' "by your leave," up the stairs we ran, an' rappit at auld Mr. Trumbull's chaumer door.

"Wha's there?" quo he, wi' a grunt.

"It's me," I answered him, wi' a squeak.

"An' wha are ye, comin' rampagin' into folk's houses, at this untimous hour o' the nicht?"

"A happy New Year to ye, Mr. Trumbull!" said your faither.

I followed him up wi' "And the same to you, too, Mrs. Trumbull!"

"Oh! it's you, ye deevil's buckies, is't—wi' your first-fittin'!" cried the auld man. "Come inower, an' let's see ye!"

By this time Bell Trumbull was up wi' a light, an' gangin' ben, we gied the auld folks a tasin', an' gat their benison. When we cam oot again, we had Bell an' her sister Nancy guid mornin', an' I jaloose our pairtin' salute maun ha'e been rather warm, for the auld man cried oot:

"Holo! wha's that frin' pistols at my door?"

We didna stop to answer, but were aff like lenries to the cross, whaur we had trysted to meet wi' a wheen mair birkies.

When we had a' forgaithered, we set aff on our first-fittin' tramp; an' whenever we wan intul a house, I se warrant a' body was weel waukened up afore we left it. I needna gang through a our visits, as I've naur come to the hinner-en' o' my paper, but our en' at the Trumbulls' ill be a speimin' tul ye. It's enouch to say that it was guid grey licht by the time we wan back to the cross, when, after a hurrah, or rather, an eldritch yell, we smashed our empty bottles against the toon well, an' took aff our several gaits.

Weel! weel! I often wonder, whether we should play a lilt or a coronach ower the grave o' thae auld-furrant times. Ony way, if ye want to hear mair aboot them, jist let me ken.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

WALTER ELSHENDER.