

coat, he called at the huxtery, and having demanded an audience of the Quaker, submitted his cranium (that's one of Dr. Scougall's words-) to his consideration.

The trial was granted, with an incredulous grunt as to the probable result. Malachi fumbled about Wattie's ears for the better portion of half an hour; and the suitor was at length dismissed with the consolatory assurance that so far from his boasting anything of the bump in question, there was a hollow, like a coal pit in the very place where it should have been!

Never was a poor lover in such a predicament! Wattie absconded from the shop as if his nose had been bleeding;—and I doubt not but that he would have submitted even to the decoration of a pair of bumps as big as Arthur's seat, so be that they were in the proper quarter.

Though a thoughtless creature, Wattie had not a grain of selfishness in his composition. His love for Bathsheba was pure as virgin honey and genuine as unadulterated Glenlivet whiskey, and he made up his mind to demand her hand even though he should get it empty. Accordingly he sought and compassed an interview with the maiden—stated fairly the *pros* and the *cons* of the whole matter—and the upshot was that the lass was much of the same mind with the lad, accepting the half of a broken sixpence as the *erles* of her engagement.

There are some combustibles—as Dr. Scougall tells me—that only burn when they are under water, and in like manner there are minds whose energies are mainly called forth in seasons of trouble and difficulty. Bathsheba Buddicombe was one of this description. She bethought her of an old adage “two heads are better than one,” and started the idea to her betrothed that perchance Malachi had been mistaken in his survey, and that haply a more skilful hunter might find out the nest of the miserly bump in the wilderness of Wattie's cranium. The lover grasped at the suggestion like a drowning man at a straw; and got a man of business, Mr. Caption the lawyer, to write a formal letter to the Quaker, demanding an inspection of his client's skull by a competent authority with a view to the implement of the conditions which had been publicly promulgated.

As the Quaker, in the course of his feud

with Miss Nettles, had tasted somewhat of the wormwood of the law, and had no stomach for a second draught from that grewsome cup, he had not courage to refuse the challenge. He granted the trial, the more easily, I opine, because he had complete confidence in the correctness of his own manipulation, to borrow again the paganish jargon of the craft.

A day was accordingly fixed for the inspection, and the notorious Master Kame, the leading high-priest of the denomination, was engaged to come from Edinburgh to officiate on the occasion.

On the night preceding the momentous epoch, the lovers had made a paction to meet behind the hay-stack, in Malachi's kail-yard, in order to concert their future plans, in case the verdict should prove unfavourable to their hopes, as they could not help fearing it would. As the man in the play says, “*the course of true love never yet ran smooth,*” and truly the course it took on this occasion was as crooked, so far as human eye could see, as a cork-screw, or the conscience of a usurer!

Wattie was punctual to his appointment, being at the place of meeting a full half-hour before the time, which was eleven o'clock. Every minute that absconded appeared an age in duration, so great were his anxiety and impatience, and when at last he heard the sound of footsteps approaching, his over-burdened heart beat as if driven by a ten-horse power engine.

The night was pitch dark. It seemed as if reform had mounted to the heavens, causing a penurious retrenchment in the lights, as not even a solitary star was to be seen like a speck of silver foil on a sable escutcheon!

Lovers, however, have no need of candles to read each other's hearts, and Wattie, when the object of his desires came up, felt as independent as if he had been in an illuminated ball-room. So soon as she arrived he grasped her hand, and began pouring forth the usual *alpha beta* of folk in such a predicament, enlarging upon hearts, and darts, and supreme felicity, and so forth,—as the same is to be found more particularly and at greater length in the “Universal Letter Writer.” Modesty, of course, forbade the maiden to give any response to this preposterous paternoster, and the swain having exhausted his bead-roll of endearments at last began to speak of business.