

innovation. He said, "the work could never be like a man's work. It was a ridiculous novelty, and would justly end in the ruin of all engaged in it." It had, indeed, not only reduced his wages the one half, but he had not half his wonted employment, and he saw nothing but folly, ruin, and injustice in the speculation. Reuben, however, pondered more deeply; he entered somewhat into the spirit of the projector. He not only entertained the belief that it would enrich the nation, but he cherished the hope that it would enrich himself. How it was to accomplish his own advancement he did not exactly perceive but he lived in the idea—he dreamed of it; nothing could make him divest himself of it; and he was encouraged by his mother saying—

"Well, Reuben, I canna tell, things may be as ye say—only there is very little appearance o' them at present, when the wages o' you and your faither put thegither, are hardly the half o' what ane o' ye could have made. But ae hing is certain—they who look for a silk gown, always get a sleeve o't."

"Nonsense, moman! ye're as bad as him," was the reply of his father; "wherefore would ye encourage the callant in his havers? I wonder, seeing the distress we are a' brought to, he doesna think shame to speak o' such a thing. Mak a fortune by the new-fangled systèm indeed!—my truly! if it continue meikle lan, er, he winna be able to get brose without butter."

"Well, faither," was the answer of Reuben, "we'll see; but you must perceive that there is no great improvement can take place, let it be what it will, without doing injury to somebody. And it is our duty to watch every opportunity to make the most of it."

"In my belief the laddy is out o' his head," rejoined the father, "but want will bring him to his senses."

Reuben, however, soon found that it became almost impossible to keep soul and body together by the labours of the loom. He therefore began to speculate on what he ought to do; and, like my honoured namesake, the respectable poet, but immortal ornithologist, he took unto himself a Pack, and with it upon his shoulders, he resolved to perambulate the Borders. There was no disgrace in the calling, for it is as ancient, perhaps more ancient, than nobility; and, we are told, that, even in the time of Solo-

mon, "there were chapmen in the land in those days." Therefore, Reuben Purves became a chapman. He, as his original trade might lead one to suppose, was purely a dealer in "soft" goods; and when he entered a farm-house, among the bonny buxom girls, he would have flung his pack upon the table, and said—

"Here, now, my braw lasses; look ye here! Here's the real upright, downright, elegant and irresistible muslin for frills, which no sweetheart upon this earth could have the power to withstand. Ane here's the gown pieces—cheap, cheap—actually gien them away—the newest, the most elegant patterns! Only look at them!—it is a sin to see them so cheap! Naething could be more handsome! Now or never, lasses! Look at the ribbons, too—blue, red, yellow, purple, green, plain, flowered, and gauze; now is the time for busking your cockernony—naething could withstand them wi' sic faces as yours. Naething, naething, and that ye would find. It would be out o' the question to talk o't. Come hinnies, only observe them, I'm sure ye canna but buy—or look at this lawn."

"O, Reuben, man," they would have said "they are very bonny, but we have naething."

"Havers!" answered he, "young quare like you talking about siller! Sell your hair dears, and buy lang lawn!"

Then did Reuben pull forth his scissors and begin to exercise the functions of a hair dresser, in addition to his calling as a chapman—thinning, and sometimes almost copying, the fair, the raven, the auburn, or the brown tresses of the serving-maids, and giving them his ribbons and his cambrics in exchange for their shorn locks. The ringle he disposed of to the hair dressers in Edinburgh, Newcastle, or Carlisle, and he confessed that he found it a very profitable speculation; and where the colour or texture of the hair was beautiful, he invariably preferred bartering for it, to receiving payment in money. This was a trait in Reuben's character, at the outset of his career as a speculator, which shewed that he had a correct appreciation of the real principles of trade—that he knew the importance of barter, without which commerce could not exist, and afforded an indication of the future merchant.

He was in the habit of visiting every town