

## The Family Circle.

### ARMENIA TO THE QUEEN.

BY REV. CHARLES DUFF, M.A.

Victoria, Queen! greatest, best Christian Monarch of the world! Whose rule benign doth England's light o'er nations shed; whose dire wrath

In war strikes to earth the cruel foe-man,  
And brings the renewing forces that can  
Uproot the wrong a will establish right.  
Hear'st thou not th' cry, in darkest night  
Of outraged sister hosts, Armenian,  
For help thou hold'st from God in sacred trust?  
Shall pity longer move thy heart toward him  
Of Hildiz; while the burning cup of lust,  
Rapine and murder, filled up to the brim,  
Thou see'st him press to pure Christian lips?  
Must  
Deaf thine ear be to cries in death so grim?  
Toronto.

### THE THREE MAISTER PETER SLEES, MINISTERS IN THE PARISH OF COUTHY.

REPORTED VERBATIM FROM THE CONVERSATION OF WILLIAM M'KIE, GRAVEDIGGER AND MINISTER'S MAN

It was a still summer evening in the slack between hay and harvest on the farm of Drumquhat. The Galloway moors rose in long purple ridges to the West. The sun had set, and in the hollows pools of mist were gathering, islanded with clumps of willow. The "maister" had made his nightly rounds and was now meditatively taking his smoke, leaning on the gate at the head of the loaning, and looking over a green cornfield, through the raw color of which the first yellow was beginning to glimmer. From the village half a mile away he could hear the clink of the smith's anvil. There came into his mind a slow thought of the good crack going on there, and he erected himself as far as a habitual stoop would allow him, as if he proposed "daunerin'" over to the village to make one of the company in the heartsome "smiddy."

For a moment he stood undecided, and then deliberately resumed his former position with his elbows on the "yeit." Saunders MaWhurr had remembered his wife. To do him justice, it was seldom that he forgot her. But in his single perpendicular moment Saunders had been able to see over the stone dike which hid from him the broken and deceptive path which led from the farm along the burnside and over the meadows to the village of Whunnyliggat. What he saw would have astonished a stranger, but it did not even induce Saunders to take a second look. A man was approaching up the loaning, apparently on all fours. The farmer knew instinctively that the stranger was no stranger to him. He only saw William Kie, gravedigger and minister's man, walking as he had walked any time these forty years. (William's name was strictly, no doubt, M'Kie, but the Mac was as hopelessly lost as the Books of Manetho). He even remembered William when he was a dashing young hedger and ditcher, with a red plush waistcoat for the lassies to look at on Sabbath as they walked modestly from the churchyard gate to the door of Couthy Kirk.

That was before William got his hurt by being thrown off a hearse in the famous South country snow-storm of the 1st of May. William Kie had never married. Why, you shall hear some day if you care, for once in a mellow mood William told me the story in his white-washed bachelor's house, that stood with its gable end to the street, opposite the Free Kirk School. The bairns vexed his soul by playing "Antony Over" against the end of his

house, and running into his garden for the ball when, at every third throw, it went among the beadle's kale. Had they been the pupils of the authorized parochial dominie at the other end of the village, William might have borne it with some degree of equal mind; but, as he said, a beadle for forty years in the parish kirk is bound to have his feelings about the Free Kirk.

The farmer of Drumquhat did not turn round in reply to the greeting of the minister's man. He, too, had his feelings, for he was a "Free" and an elder.

He said, "Thank ye, Weelum, I canna compleen. Hoo's yersel'?"

"No' that weel, Drumquhat; things are awfu' drug (slow). I hanna buried but yin since Martinmas—no' a sowl for fower months, and the last but a tramp body that drowned himself in the Dee—a three-fit grave that I made ower narrow an' had to widen in the sweat o' my broo—never a bawbee extra for't frae the parish, but a grummel from that thrawn stick o' a registrar!"

"Manalive!" said Saunders MaWhurr indifferently, his thoughts being arithmetically with his calves as he watched Jo, his farm boy, turn them out into the field. The gravedigger knew that the farmer's attention was perfunctory, but he was not offended, for Saunders kept three pair of horses and a gig. Instinctively, however, he took up a subject that was bound to interest a Free Kirk elder.

He said, "Did you hear what we got at the Hie Kirk yesterday? I dare say no'. Yer plooman was there, I ken, to see Jess Coupland; but him—he disna ken a sermon frae an exposcotion, let alone bringing awa' the fine points o' sic a discourse as we gat yesterday."

"He was oot a' nicht, and I hanna seen him since he lowsed," said Saunders in his non-committal manner.

"But what did ye get to mak' ye craw sae croose? No' a new sermon, I see warrant!"

"Weel, na, he didna exactly gang that length; but, dod, it was better than that—it was a new yin o' his granfaithers! Whaur he had fa'en on wi' is mair than I can say, but the manse lass tells me that he was howkin' up in the garret twa afternoons last week, an' a bonny sicht he made o' himself!"

In a moment the farmer of Drumquhat was quite a different man; he even offered William Kie a share of the gate to lean upon by silently stepping aside, which was a great deal for a man in his position. William acknowledged his kindness by silently seating himself on a broken gate-post lying at the dike-back. This was what is known in learned circles as a compromise.

The beadle took up his parable: "As sune as he steppit oot o' the manse, I could see that there was something unusual in the wund. First, I thoct that it micht be clean bands that the mistress had gotten for him; for Mistrees Slee was in gey guid fettle last week, an' I didna ken what she michtna ha' done; but when I saw him tak' oot o' his case the same auld pair that he has worn since the Sacrament afore last—ye can juist tell them frae the color o' the goon—I kenned that it bood be something else that was makkin' him sae brisk. Men, Saunders," said William, forgetting to say "Drumquhat," as he had intended, which was counted more polite from a man like him, "Man, Saunders, I didna ken whaur

my een could ha' been, for I oven gat a glisk o' the sermon as it ged intil the Buik, yet never for a minute did I jaloose what was comin'."

"Ah, man Weelum, an' what was't awa'?" said Saunders, now thoroughly awake to a congenial topic. He was glad that he had not gone down to the "smiddy" now, for Saunders was not in the habit of opening out there before so many.

"Well, Saunders, as I am tellin' you, it was a new sermon o' his granfaither's decent man, him that lies aneath the big thruch stane in the wast corner o' the kirk-yard. It's maistly covered wi' dockens an' soorooks noo for the Maister Slee that we ha' the noo is mair fameeliar wi' his forebears' han' o' write than wi' the bit stanics that haud them decently doon till Gawbriel's trump bids them rise!"

"Haun o' write!" quoth Saunders; "what can the craitur mean?"

"Saunders MaWhurr," said the minister's man solemnly, "thirty year an' mair ha' I carried the Buik, an' howkit the yaird, an' dibbled the cabbage for Maister Sles, faither and son. Ay, an' I mind brawly o' the granfaither—a graun' figure o' a man him, sax fit two in his buckled shoon. Saunders, I'm no' an' upsettin' man, an' quate-spoken even on Setterday nicht, but ye will aloo that I'm bun' to ken something aboot the three Peter Sles, ministers o' the parish o' Couthy."

"Ga on," said Saunders.

"Weel, it's no' onkenned to you that the twa first Maister Sles wraite their sermons, for they were self-respectin' men, an' na ranters haiverin' oot o' their heids! Na—"

"What aboot the granfaither, Weelum?" put in Saunders, quickly, avoiding in the interests of history, contentious matter upon which at another time he would gladly have accepted gage of battle.

"Weel, the granfaither was, as I ha' said, a graun', solit man, wi' a reed face on him like the mune in hairst, an' sic a bonny heid o' hair, it was hardly considered decent in the parish o' Couthy. Fowk used to think he wore a wig till they saw him on horseback, for he wad ride wi' his hat in his haun', an' his hair blawin' oot in the wund like Absalom's. He was a rare fine moral preacher, reared in the hinder end o' the last century, but neyther to hand nor to bind if onybody ca'd him a Moderate. In deed an' truth, onybody that saw him wi' the laird when the twosome had been hain' denner thegither, could see that was a lee an' a big yin!"

"Juist that," said the farmer of Drumquhat.

"But when he preached on the Sabbath he gied the fowk no Gospel to ca' Gospel, but he did mak' them scunner with the Law; an' when he preached on justice, temperance, an' judgment to come, there wasna a shut ee in a Couthy Kirk! Fine I mind o't, though I was but a callant, an' hoo I wussed that he wad ha' done an' let me hame to mak' pyowes o' poother for the fair on Monday."

"The faither o' oor present Maister Slee ye'll mind yersel'. He was a strong Non-Instruction man afore the 'forty-three, as strong as it was in the craitur to be. A' fowk thoct that he wad ha' comed oot wi' the lave, an' sa' I believe he wad but for the wife, wha lockit him in the garret for three days, an' gied him his meals through the sky-light!"

"His sermons were like himself, like peace brose made o' half a pun o' peas to

the boilerfu' o' water—rare evangelica ye ken, but meat for babes, hardly to grown fowk."

"I needna tell ye eyther, aboot young Maister Sles; weel, he's no' young noo ony mair than oorself's."

"Humph!" said Saunders.

"He preaches aboot the lillies o' the field, hoo bonny they are, an' aboot the birds o' the air, an' the mowdies in the yaird—the very craws he canna let alone. He said the ither Sabbath day that fowk that wraite guid resolutions in their note-books to keep oot the de'il war like the farmer that shut the yetts o' his cornfields to keep oot the craws!"

"That's nane sae stupit!" said Saunders.

"Na; he's a graun' naiteralist, the body," said the minister's man, an' when the big Enbra' societies come doon here to glower an' wunner at the bit whurles an' holes in the rocks, he's the very man to tak' them to the bit; an' whan the Crechton Asylum fowk cam' doon to a picnic, as they ca'd it, it was Maister Sles that gied them a lectur' on the bonny benches o' Couthy. An' faith, I couldna tell ye what yin o' the twa companies was the mair sensible."

"Weel, to mak' a lang story short, if I get a fair guid look at the paper when he pits it intil the Buik, I can tell by the yellaness o't whether it's his ain, or his faither's, or his granfaither's; but I maistly forgot to look, for he generally gies us them day aboot, beginnin' on the Sacrament wi' his faither's famous discourse, 'As a nail in a sure place,' that we had every sax months, till the Glencairn joiner, a terrible outspoken body, tellt him that that nail wadna haud in that hole ony langer!"

"But when he begins to preach, we sune ken wha's barrel he has been in, for if we hear o' oor duty to the laird, an' the State, an' them in authority ower us, we say, 'If the wast wunda was open, an' the auld man wad cock his lug, he wud hear something that he wad ken.' On the ither haun', if we hear aboot these present sad troubles, an' speeritual independence, an' effectual calling, we ken he's been howkin' in the big beef-barrell whaur the Pre-Disruption sermons o' his daddy lie in pickle."

"Sae yesterday he gied us a terrible startle wi' a new yin o' his granfaither's that na man leevin' had ever heard."

"An' what was his text?" said practical Saunders:

"'Deed, an' I'm no sae guid at mindin' texts as I yince was; but the drift o' it was that we war to be thankfu' for the recent maist remarkable preservation o' oor land in the great victory that the Duke of Wellington an' oor noble army had won ower the usurper Bonyparty on the plains o' Waterloo!'"

"That manna had been a treat!" said Saunders.—Rev. S. R. Crockett.

### THE BLESSINGS OF A COUCH.

A room without a couch of some sort is only half-furnished. Life is full of ups and downs, and all that saves the sanity of the mentally jaded and physically exhausted fortune-fighter is the periodical good cry and momentary loss of consciousness on the upstairs lounge or the old sofa in the sitting-room.

There are times when so many of the things that distract us could be straightened out and the way made clear if one only had a long, comfortable couch on