

provost demanding in a loud voice if his "carriage *and* lamps" had come. Never before had any magistrate of Kingshaven presumed to any grander vehicle than a dog-cart.

"Geordie was a queer lad," said Todd the miller; "but we're a' deadly and lively, and it must come some day." He was very solemn, but somewhat vague; probably he was the more impressive in consequence.

"He was never married," was the comment of Brunton the farmer, who thought he had solved the problem of Methven's riches. He had been himself twice married.

"Well, well, well!" continued the provost with an air of retrospective patronage, "if I had only known what he was to come to, I might have helped the laddie."

"He seems to have got on pretty well without your help," was the disagreeable rejoinder of the bailie, who was also the oldest doctor of the town.

The provost walked home, thoughtful.

"Who is to be the heir?" inquired his wife, Mrs. Dubbieside; "will it be Dalmahoy?"

"More like to be Miss Wishart, if it's either of them. But there's no saying how it will go, for I hear there's no will, and the property will fall to the nearest friends. I wonder if any of our forebears were connected."

The eyes of Mrs. Dubbieside started on her fat cheeks at the mere possibility of a relationship about which, not long ago, she would have been discreetly silent if it had existed. She was a short, stout Lancashire woman, and she was described by the bailie's wife as "a poor creature who was always ailing and always cooking."

The provost and his wife laid their heads together, and devoted the day to a diligent study of genealogy, ranging as far as fourth and fifth cousins seven times removed. There were other people occupied at that moment in similar exciting speculations.

George Methven was a natural child; his mother, a poor lass, who died soon after his birth; his father, a wild young laird, who never remembered the existence of the boy, and who happened to be married to a wealthy widow on the very day George was born.