

son. He was a born dunce. I fleeced him, and I coaxed him, and I endeavoured to divert him to get him to learn, and I kicked him, and I cuffed him; but I might as well hae kicked my heel upon the floor, or fleeced the fireplace. Jock was knowledge-proof. All my efforts were o' no avail. I could get him to learn nothing, and to comprehend nothing. Often I had half made up my mind to turn him away from the school, for I saw that I never would have any credit by the blockhead. But what was most annoying was, that here was his mother at me, every hand-awhile, saying—

'Mr. Grierson, I'm really surprised at ye. My son, John, is not comin on ava. I really wish ye wad tak mair pains wi' him. It is an unco thing to be payin' you guid money, and the laddie to be getting nae guid for it. I wad hae ye to understand, that his faither besna make his money sae easily—no by sitting on a seat, or walking up and down a room, as ye do. There's such a ane's son wa into the Latin, nae less, I understand, and my John no out o' the Testament. But depend upon it, Mr. Grierson, if ye dinna try o do something wi' him, I maun tak him awa from your school, and that is the short end the lang o't.'

'Do sae, ma'm,' said I, 'and I'll thank ye. Mercy me! it's a bonny thing, indeed—do ye suppose that I had the makin o' your son? Nature has formed his head out o' a whin-stane, can I transform it into marble? Your ma would try the patience o' Job—his head thicker than a door-post. I can mak nae thing o' him. I would sooner teach a hundred to be troubled wi' him.'

'Hundred here, hundred there!' said she, a lift; 'but it's a hard matter, Mr. Grierson, for his faither and me to be payin' ye money for naething; an' if ye dinna try to mak something o' him, I'll tak him frae your school, an' that will be baith seen an' heard o' it!'

So saying, away she would drive, tossing her head wi' the airs o' my lady. Ye canna receive, sir, what a teacher has to put up wi'. Thomson says—

'Delightful task

To teach the young ideas how to shoot !'

Wish to goodness he had tried it, and a mother's specimen o' its delights would have fleeced him, and instead o' what he has written, he would have said—

Degrading thought

To be each snivelling blockhead's parent's slave!

Now, ye'll remember that Jock was perpetually snifering and gaping wi' his mouth, or even sucking his thumb like an idiot. There was nae keeping the animal cleanly, much less instructing him; and then, if he had the book in his hand,—there he sat staring owre it, wi' a look as vacant and stupid as a tortoise. Or, if he had the slate before him, there was he drawing scores on't, or amusing himsel wi' twirling and twisting the pencil in the string through the frame. Never had I such a lump o' stupidity within the walls o' my school.

After his leaving me, he was put as an apprentice to a bookseller. I thought, of all the callings under the sun, that which had been chosen for him was the least suited to a person o' his capacity. But—would ye believe it, sir?—Jock surprised us a'. He fairly turned the corner on a' my calculations. When he began to look after the lassies, he also began to "smart up." He came to my night-school, when he would be about eighteen, and I was perfectly astonished at the change that had taken place, even in the appearance o' the callant. His very nose, which had always been so stuffed and thick-like, was now an ornament to his face. He had become altogether a lively, fine-looking lad; and, more marvellous still, his whole heart's desire seemed to be to learn; and he did learn with a rapidity that both astonished and delighted me. I actually thought the instructions which I had endeavoured to instil into him for years, and apparently without effect, had been lying dormant, as it were, in the chambers o' his brain, like a cuckoo in winter—that they had been sealed up as fast as I imparted them, by some cause that I did not comprehend, and that now they had got vent, and were issuing out in rapid and vigorous strength, like a person refreshed after a sleep.

After he had been two years at the night school, so far from considering him a dunce, I regarded him as an amazing clever lad. From the instance I had had in him, I began to perceive that precocity o' intellect was nae proof o' its power. Well, shortly after the time I am speaking o', he left Annan for Glasgow, and, after being a year or twa there, he commenced business upon his own account. I may safely say, that never mau