

again—no, never again. Ye dinna mind sittin' in the dark?'

'No, Nathan.'

'Ay, the licht burns my een; an'—an' I've never said muckle a' my life, but I've often thoct oot lang screeds in the darkness, an' mebbe it'll help me oot wi' what I've to say to ye the noo. Ay, the Hebrons dinna speak muckle, Maister Weelum; but this is a forby time wi' me, an' I've something to ask o' ye. I hardly expec'it the ca' at this time o' the year. The back-en's the time o' liftin'. I aye thoct, someway, that when my time cam' it wad be when the growth was a' by, the aipples pu'd, and the tatties pitted; and it seems awfu' queer that I should ha'e to gang when the buds are burstin', an'—an' the gairden delvin' on—imphm!—but it's His wull. "The young may, the auld must."—Imphm!—Ay, are ye listenin', Maister Weelum?'

I rose from my chair, and I stroked the gray hair back from his forehead. 'Yes, Nathan, I'm listening; but you must not give up hope; you're really not an old man, and'—

'No' an auld man! Imphm! I've—I've been an auld man a' my days. I canna mind o' ever bein' young. I was ten—only ten—when my faither was ta'en awa', an' I had to mak' the handle o' his spade fit my wee bit