

REUBEN PURVES; OR, THE SPECULATOR.

Speculation is the soul of business, it is the manœuvring of improvement, it is essential to prosperity. Burns has signified that he could not stoop to crawl into what he considered as the narrow holes of bargain-making; and nine out of every ten persons, who consider themselves high-minded, profess to sympathize with him, and say he was right. But our immortal bard, in so saying, looked only at the odds and ends—the corners and the disjointed extremities of bargain-making, properly so called—and he suffered his pride and his prejudices to blind, in this instance, his mighty spirit, and contract his vision, so that he saw not the all-powerful, humanizing, and civilizing influence of the very bargain-making which he despised. True it is, that as a spirit of speculation or bargain-making contracts itself, and every day becomes more and more a thing of farthings and of fractions, it begets a grovelling spirit of meanness, that may eventually end in dishonesty; but as it expands, it exalts the man, imbues his mind with liberality, and benefits society. The spirit of commercial speculation will spread abroad, until it renders useless the sword of the hero, cause it to rust in its scabbard, and to be regarded as the barbarous plaything of antiquity. It will go forth as a dove from the ark of society, bearing the olive branch of peace and mutual benefits unto all lands, until men all learn war no more.

But at present I am not writing an essay on speculation or enterprise, but the history of Reuben Purvis, the speculator, and I will therefore begin with it at once. Reuben was born in Galashiels, than which I do not know a more thriving town, or one more beautifully situated on all the wide Borders. You pass it, seated on the outside of the heavy Chase coach on a summer day, (if chance a sunny shower shall have fallen,) it lies before you as a long and silvered line, its blue slates reflecting back the sunbeams. Its streets, cleanliness and prosperity join its sides, while before it and behind rise hills, high enough to be called mountains, where gorgeous heather purples in its season. You fore it—I might say through it—wimples its la, almost leaving its thresholds. There

the spirit of speculation and of trade has taken up "a local habitation and a name" in the bosom of poetry. On the one hand is the magic of Abbotsford, on the other the memories of Melrose. But its description is best summed up in the condemnation of a Cockney traveller, who said—"Vy, certainly, Galashiels would be verry pretty, were it not its vood and vater!"

But I again digress from the history of Reuben Purves. I have said that he was born in Galashiels; his father was a weaver, and the father brought his son up to his own profession. But although Reuben

"was a wabster guild.
Could stown a clue wi' ony body."

his apprenticeship (if his instructions from his father could be called one) was scarce expired, when, like Othello, he found "his occupation gone," and the hand-loom was falling into disuse. Arkwright, who was long considered a mere bee-headed barber, had, though in a great measure by the aid of others, brought his mechanism to a degree of perfection, that not only astonished the world, but held out a more inexhaustible, and a richer source of wealth to Britain, than its mines did to Peru. Deep and bitter were the imprecations of many against the power-loom; for it is difficult for any man to see good in that which dashes away his hard-earned morsel from the mouths of his family, and leaves them calling in vain for food.—But there were a few spirits who could appreciate the vast discovery, and who in it perceived, not only the benefits it would confer on the country, but on the human race.—Arkwright, who, though a wonderful man, was not one of deep or accurate knowledge, with a vanity which in him is excuseable, imagined that he could carry out the results of his improvements to an extent that would enable the country to pay off the national debt. It was a wild idea; but extravagant as it was, it must be acknowledged, that the fruits of his discoveries enabled Britain to bear up against its burdens, and maintain its faith in times of severest trial and oppression.

Reuben's father was one of those who complained most bitterly against the modern