

tality of the goodwife made him an offer of refreshment before he entered upon business, he most magnanimously, but unpedlar-like, resisted the temptation to eat, animated by the still stronger desire to sell. There was no possibility of withdrawing him for a moment from his darling topic. To the master he said, "Won't you buy a coat?"—to the mistress, "Won't you buy a shawl?"—to the servant girls, "Won't you buy a gown a-piece?" and he earnestly urged the cowherd to purchase a pair of garters, regardless of the notorious fact that the ragged urchin wore no stockings. But all his efforts were ineffectual; even his gaudiest ribbons could not melt the money out of a single female heart; and his vinegar aspect grew yet more meagre as he restored each article untouched to its package.

The rival of this unsuccessful solicitor of custom was a short, squat man, fair-haired and ruddy. He came in with a hearty salutation, and set down his pack in some corner, where, as he expressed himself, it might be "out of the way." He then immediately abandoned himself to the full current of conversation, and gave a detail of every particular of news that was within his knowledge. He could tell the farmer every thing that he desired to know—what number of corn-stacks appeared in the barn-yards wherever he had been, and what quantity of grain still remained uncut or in shock, and he took time to enumerate the whole distinctly. He was equally well prepared in other departments of intelligence, and so fascinating was his gossip, that when the duties of any member of the family called them out of hearing, they were apt to linger so long that the goodwife declared he was "a perfect offput to a' wark." This, however, was not meant to make him abate of his talkative humour; and neither did he; the whole budget was emptied first, and he received in turn the narratives of all and sundry. Then came the proposal from some of those whom he had gratified with his news, to "look what was in the packet." The goods were accordingly lugged from their place of concealment, and every one's hand was ready to pick out some necessary or some coveted piece of merchandise. The master discovered that as he would be needing a suit ere long, it was well to take it now. The mistress was just waiting for Thomas coming round to supply herself with a variety of articles, "for," quoth she, "mony things are needit in a house." The servants exhorted each other to think whether they did not require something, for it was impossible to say when another opportunity of getting it might occur. The ellwand was forthwith put into diligent requisition, the scissors snipt a little bit of the selvaige, and an adroit "screed" separated the various cloths from the rapidly diminished webs. The corners of many chests gave up their carefully hoarded gains, with which cheap remnants were triumphantly secured. In the midst of this transfer of finery, the poor herd boy looked on with a countenance so woefully expressive of the fact that he had not a farthing to spend, that some one took compassion on him, and, having laid out a trifling sum, had the satisfaction of making him perfectly happy with the equivalent, flinging it into his unexpectant arms and exclaiming, "Here, callat, there's something for you!" What a multiplicity of pleasing emotions had this trader the tact of calling into exercise; all of them redounding tenfold to his own proper advantage! It was impossible to say whether he cultivated his powers of talk from forethought, as knowing that they would produce a crisis favourable to his own interests, or if he indulged in them because gossiping was congenial to his own disposition. He had a sharp eye enough to what is called the main chance; but at the same time he did not possess that degree of intellectual depth, which we might expect to find in one who could calculate upon