

of which looked into a dirty lane. John, however, was naturally a cheerful and happy fellow, was blest with a powerful frame and perfect health, and, with his bared arms, on which the stout muscles looked like ropes and the veins like whipcord, battered the leather on the lapstone, or jerked in the resin stitches, from morning till night, with a hearty good will. The chamber in which he worked served the double purpose of workshop and dining-room, and I rather think that a plain-looking couch, covered with print, on which I have often sat, would have been found, if disembowelled, to contain secret store of blanket and heading. This chamber was by no means destitute of ornaments after their kind. A portrait of John Knox hung on the wall—a frontispiece or leaf of some biography or book, nakedly set in a homely frame of black-painted wood. Done up in similar style, and at no great distance from the Reformer, appeared the physiognomy of Burns. Then followed “Sir Colin Campbell,” sitting erect with his lion face on a galloping steed, as he sat and conquered on the day of Balaclava. On the top of a chest of drawers which stood in a corner, there was a small museum, consisting of a wild duck, a fox, an owl, and a squirrel, a row of fossils, and a piece or two of coral. A few shelves under the window opposite which John sat and worked, contained his library. Among the books he possessed, I recollect seeing Boston’s Fourfold State, Hervey’s Meditations, Robinson Crusoe, Burns’ Poems, a number of Sir Walter Scott’s Novels, and a well-fingered copy of Chambers’ Information for the People. A large Family Bible lay, with a Psalm-Book, on the top of a shelf in the corner, apparently made for its accommodation. John Gerry, I said, was naturally a contented and cheerful man, but there was one thing which I soon learned had begun to disturb his peace and embitter his happiness. His wife’s mother, a woman about 60 years of age, who lived in the house, was a fretful, officious, and disagreeable creature, and occasionally got the worse of liquor. She was a widow, had a small house of her own in the neighbouring village of K——, and, since her husband’s death, until she came to John’s house, had resided there, eking out her small means by doing a turn of work for her neighbors, and knitting stockings for the city market. Her grown-up children were also kind to her, and, of all the relations she had, John Gerry was the most liberal in his gifts. She had been in the habit of coming to wait on her daughter, Mrs. Gerry, on special occasions, and it was when the youngest child (now 11 months old) was born, that she came and permanently took up her abode in the house. John was always pleased to see Mrs. Allan on these occasions, yet, before the end of three or four weeks, he longed to witness her departure—not from any selfishness or heartlessness, but

because he felt he could not be happy with a woman of her temper and habits living in his family. She evidently possessed great influence over her daughter, was fond of exercising that influence, and, so long as she was an inmate, John discovered that he was not the real head of the house. Moreover, she was always fretting about something, often getting into quarrels with the neighbors (through gossiping propensities), and there was a notoriously drunken woman in the vicinity with whom she sometimes associated, no way to her advantage. She never got positively drunk, but the pressure was occasionally rather high; and when she came home in this state, John could scarcely restrain his anger and indignation. I remember visiting the family one day, when I found John, as usual, busy at his work. I sat down beside him, and told him to go on and I would speak to him, for I liked to see the sturdy fellow making his honest bread with such willing alacrity. A few moments afterwards the old woman came in, holding a fold of her apron over her mouth, as I noticed she always did when steaming of the whisky shop. I could see by John’s manner that his blood was fired, for the thumps that he laid on the lapstone increased with redoubled fury, and it seemed as if every blow were half intended for the head of the offender. The old woman, without speaking, passed through into the other apartment, John’s eye glancing frowningly after her. John rose and shut the door rather smartly behind her, and, in a quiet tone, said: “I would like to hae a little private speech wi’ you some nicht, Mr. —, on a subject that has been gien me great trouble.”

“I shall be happy to meet you any time you may fix, John.”

“What time would I get you in your lodgings, sir? I would prefer callin’ there.”

“Almost any morning until 11, and every night after 6 o’clock—excepting Fridays and Saturdays, when I’m engaged.”

One evening, soon after this, John called on me. “Weel, sir,” he said, “it’s a delicate matter I’ve come to see you about. I wish your coonsel.”

“If I can be of any service to you, John, it will give me great pleasure.”

“That auld woman you noticed, the day you visited me last, is my wife’s mither, and Nelly and me are nae at yane aboot her bein’ i’ the hoose. She has a hoose o’ her ain at K——, and she’s nae needin’ to stay wi’ me, and I’ve done my part in helpin’ her accordin’ to my ability, but I canna pit up wi’ her i’ the hoose. My wife Nelly is as guid a wife as ever man had, and we’ve aye had great comfort and happiness thegither—but her mither is spoilin’ her. She has gotten mair influence o’er her than mysel’, and the respect that Nelly used to shaw me in regard to the plans o’ doin’ and livin’ is