

against those who obstinately refused to give justice to Ireland. "Hae ye never heard that there's aye something to be said on baith sides? We here in Scotland micht mak' a din if we liked, an' wi' as muckle reason. When do Scotch affairs get attention in the Parliament, tell me that? It's a disgrace the way we're shoved aside, but we dinna mak' sic a song about it."

"There's truth in what you say. Still, we are not so shamefully treated as the Irish are. It makes the blood of every fair-minded man boil, and nothing less."

"I whiles think ye must hae some Irish bluid in ye, Rob," said the old man, with a twinkle in his kindly eye. "That wad be a farce, after we've named ye Robert Burns."

Young Rob slightly smiled, entering for the moment into the old man's kindly humour. It was impossible to harbour any bitter or harsh thoughts in that gentle atmosphere. He was a born fighter, and his blood was hot to a fault. But he was never able to get away from the restraining memories of the poet's cottage at Spitalhaugh; in his moments of passion and excitement an unseen hand seemed to touch him, and the voices he loved bade him be still.

"I shouldn't wonder. There was not the slightest clue, I suppose," he said, with a touch of wistfulness on his rugged face. This was the first time the question of his birth had ever been spoken between them, though many strange thoughts had from time to time passed through the young man's mind.

"There was naething that could be ca'd a clue, I think. But your mother kept a' the claes ye wore that nicht we picked ye up—puir, forlorn atom of humanity—on the doorstep o' your granny's house at Stockbrig. She'll let ye see them, I dinna doot, if you ask her.