

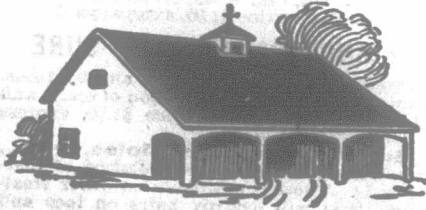
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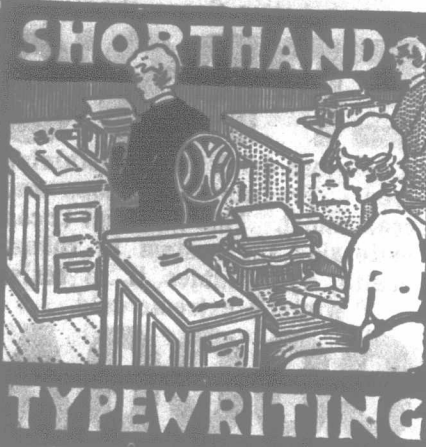


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in which he attributed to the late Radical Government. He said that new with the Conservatives in office, and a ministry composed of "honorable men and gentlemen," he felt convinced that things would brighten. The Radicals' one ambition was to set class against class, landlord against tenant. Well, during the last five hundred years, the Sylvesters had rarely been—he was sorry to have to confess it—good men (laughter and dissent); but he never yet heard of the Sylvester—though he shouldn't say it—who was a bad landlord (loud applause).

This was a free country, and any tenant of his who was not content (a voice, "Oo says we baint?")—"thank you, thank you!"—well, there was room for him outside. (Cheers.) He thanked God from the bottom of his heart that, during the forty years he had been responsible for the March Mere Estate, there had never been any friction between him and his people (cheers), and he didn't think there ever would be. (Loud cheers.)

"Thank you, thank you!" And his motto was, "Shun a Radical as you do the devil!"—and he was very glad to see them all there—very glad; and he wished to give them a toast, "The Queen! God bless her!" and—wait a minute!—with her Majesty's name to couple—he was sure that gracious lady would wish it—that of "Owd Bob o' Kenmuir!" Then he sat down abruptly amid thundering applause.

The toasts duly honored, James Moore, by prescriptive right as Master of Kenmuir, rose to answer.

He began by saying that he spoke "as representing all the tenants,"—but he was interrupted.

"Na," came a shrill voice from half-way down the table. "Ye'll except me, James Moore. I'd as lief be represented by Judas!"

There were cries of "Hold ye gab, little mon!" and the squire's voice, "That'll do, Mr. M'Adam!"

The little man restrained his tongue, but his eyes gleamed like a ferret's; and the Master continued his speech.

He spoke briefly and to the point, in short phrases. And all the while M'Adam kept up a low-voiced, running commentary. At length he could control himself no longer. Half rising from his chair, he leant forward with hot face and burning eyes, and cried: "Sit doon, James Moore! How daur ye stan' there like an honest man, ye whitewashed sepulchre? Sit doon, I say, or"—threateningly—"wad ye hae me come to ye?"

At that the Dalesmen laughed uproariously, and even the Master's grim face relaxed. But the squire's voice rang out sharp and stern.

"Keep silence and sit down, Mr. M'Adam! D'you hear me, sir? If I have to speak to you again it will be to order you to leave the room."

The little man obeyed, sullen and vengeful, like a beaten cat.

The Master concluded his speech by calling on all present to give three cheers for the squire, her ladyship, and the young ladies.

The call was responded to enthusiastically, every man standing. Just as the noise was at its zenith, Lady Eleanor herself, with her two fair daughters, glided into the gallery at the end of the hall; whereat the cheering became deafening.

Slowly the clamor subsided. One by one the tenants sat down. At length there was left standing only one solitary figure—M'Adam.

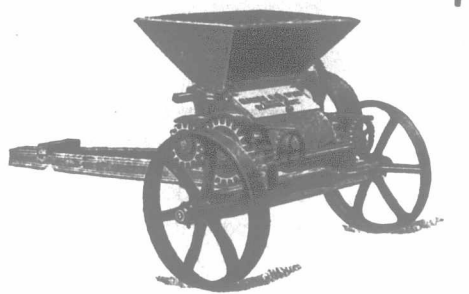
His face was set, and he gripped the chair in front of him with thin, nervous hands.

"Mr. Sylvester," he began in low yet clear voice, "ye said this is a free country and we're a free men. And that bein' so, I'll tak' the liberty, wi' yer permission, to say a word. It's maybe the last time I'll be wi' ye, so I hope ye'll listen to me."

The Dalesmen looked surprised, and the squire sneered. Nevertheless he nodded assent.

(To be continued.)

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