

## JOHN JOHNSTON.

From Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.

In the year 1780, there was a John Johnston, a journeyman carpenter from Moffat, who came to Edinburgh to seek work. As he was an excellent tradesman, he soon procured employment, and he might have done very well, for he got the best wages that were going; but no matter how much he worked, he was always in poverty, and had not one penny to rub on another. There was a tipping house kept by a Mrs. Kerr, very near to the shop where he wrought, and there he and some of his companions who had the same taste as himself, got what drink they required through the week, on the express condition that they were to clear scores punctually every Saturday night. This was a very convenient arrangement, but it led to the running up of pretty long bills. Sometimes John's score amounted to six or seven shillings, as it might very well do, considering how speedily the price of one or two gills or a bottle or two of ale every day mount up to a round sum. Whatever the scores were, however, they were always pointedly paid. The allowance of credit with Lucky Kerr was called "having light," and the greatest pains were taken to keep the "light" from going out. How much of John's weekly wages remained after suffering these cuttings and carvings, on Saturday evenings, may be easily guessed.

Things went on in this kind of way till about the Martinmas of the year 1785, just as winter set in, when John took a severe cold, and was fairly laid up in his lodging. He had been working in a new house, which had not got in the windows, and a draught of air had blown all day upon him, so as to give him first a sore throat, and then a terrible cough, that was dreadful to hear. This was a very severe misfortune, more particularly as he had saved nothing from his wages, and he had no money either to get nourishing diet, or firing to keep himself warm. To make the case as bad as it could be, hardly any body came to see him, at least none that could give him any thing, for he did not belong to any box or sick society, and he was therefore now in the greatest straits. If he had not pawned some of his tools, it is believed that he would have actually perished.

In the midst of John's great illness and necessity, he sent his landlady, an old widow woman, who was very poor, and could make him no help, to tell Mrs. Kerr of his condition—and ask if she would be so kind as lend him twenty shillings till he got better, when he would honestly pay her. The request was made, but promptly refused. "Gae way wi'

ye, woman" said Lucky; "dye think naething else to do wi' my siller than gie sic a drunken chield as Jock Johnston? sets him weel to send to me for ony thing kind. Gang away wi' ye; he may dee at back o' a dyke for me." John was much disappointed when the old woman turned with this uncivil reply of the person whom he had for years been enriching with his money. "What an idiot I have been said he to himself, to come to this pinch, I might have plenty to keep me comfortable but if I live, I'll take better care again; as for that randy—, Lucy Kerr, she'll never see another ha'penny o' mine."

Well, fortunately for John, a sister to the town and gave him some small of his constitution at length got the better of the illness, so that he was able to approach his old master, Deacon Bryden, for employment. The Deacon was a considerate feeling man for the poor, and at once John into the shop, and advanced him to redeem his tools from the pawnbroker. Some short time after he returned to work, he had occasion to pass Mrs. Kerr's door, and there she was standing talking to a neighbour. "Good day, John," said "I am glad to see that ye are able to get to your work; will ye no step in and see?" "Thank ye," he replied; "I cannot, and so was passing on." "Hout, you, J she answered, "dinna be in sic a hurry, ye ken we're auld freends, and ye ma tak on through the week as ye used!" "That's a' very guid, mistress, but it do for me; your shabbiness in no lending what I wanted when I was sic ill o' your ill tongue to the bargain, hae ye o' ca'ing at your door, or the door o' a like ye." And with that he manfully on. The victory was completely John was now quite another thing, having a daized drunken look, and with a coat out at the elbows, he now had a national appearance in the face, and was content in his apparel as any workman might be. Sensible of the advantage of his manner of living, he persuaded other lads in the same shop to give up their ing, and lay by their odd bawbees. Being no Savings Banks in those days, he made himself a small box with a slit top, fastening the lid with screw nail; he went upon a fixed plan of putting his thing every week into it; and he determined not to break upon these savings, unless a case of very urgent necessity.