

# THE LITERARY TRANSCRIPT.

## AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCER.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

### THE HEN-PECKED MAN.

FROM WILSON'S TALES OF THE BORDERS.

Concluded.

I thought I had been dropped down wi' indignation. I could ha' stricken if I durst. Ye observe I am just five feet two inches and an eight, upon my stocking soles,—that is rather below the army standard,—and I must say it is a very foolish one, for a man o' my height stands a better chance to shoot another than a giant that wad fire o'er his head. But she was aware that I was below the mark, and my threat was o' no avail; so I just had to slink away into the shop, rubbing my elbow.

But the cracky stool was but the beginning o' her driving; there wasna a week after that she let dee at me whatever came in the way, whenever I by accident crossed her cankered humour. It's a wonder that I'm in the land o' the living,—for I've had the skin peeled off my legs,—my arms mostly broken, my head cut, and other parts o' my body a' black and blue, times out o' number. I thought her an angel when I was courting her, but O Robin! she has turn'd out I'll no say what—an adder!—a tiger!—a she-fury!

As for asking any body to the house, it's a thing I dursta do for the life that's in my body. I never did it but once, and that was when an auld schoolfellow, that had been several years in America, called at the shop to see me. After we had cracked awhile—

“But I maun see the fu' Fae,” says he. Whether he had heard about her behaviour or no I canna tell, but I assure ye his request was ony thing but agreeable to me. However I took him into the house, and I introduced him wi' fear and trembling.

“ Tibby dear,” said I, and I dinna think i' had on'd her dear for ten years afore, “here's Mr. W.—an auld schoolfellow o' mine, that's come a' the way frae America, an' ca'd in to see ye.”

Ye're aye meeting wi' auld schoolfellows, or some set or other to take ye off your work,” muttered she sulkyly, but loud enough for him to hear.

I was completely at a loss what to say or do next: but pretending as though I hadn't heard her, I said as familiarly and kindly as I could, though my heart was in a terrible swither. “Bring out the bottle lass.”

“ Bottle!” quo' she, “what bottle?—what does the man mean?—has he perted wi' the little sense that he ever had?” But had ye seen her as she said this!—I've seen a cloud black when driven wi' a hurricane, and I've seen it awfu' when roarin' in the agony of thunder, but never did I see ony that I was mair in fear o' than my wife's face at that moment. But somehow or other I gathered courage to say—“Hoots woman, what's the use o' behav'ing that way, I'm sure ye ken well enuff' its the sperrit bottle.”

“The sperrit bottle!” cried she wi' a scream, “and when was there a sperrit bottle within this door! Dinna shew yourself off to your American friend for a greater man than ye are Patie. I think if wi' a' that ye bring in, I get meat and bits o' duds for your bairns, I do very well.”

This piece o' impudence completely knocked me stupid, for wad ye believe it, Robin, though she had lang driven a' my friends frae about the house, yet never—did ony o' her friends ca'—and that was gaistly every Sunday, and every Coldstream market-day,—but there was the bottle out frae the cupboard, which she always kept under lock and key, and a dram and a bit short-bread na less, was, aye and to this day handed round to every a' them. They have discovered that it is worth while to make Patie the bickermaker's a half-way house. But if I happen to be in when they call, though she pours out a full glass a-piece for them, she takes ay'e good care to stand in before me when she comes to me, between them and me, so that they canna see what she is doing, or how meikle she pours out; and I assure ye it is seldom a thimbleful that fa's to my share, though she hands the bottle lang up in her hand—mony a time no a' westin'; and again have I showed my head pess'd her side, and said—“your health, Mrs. Me-and-so,”—or “yours Mr. Such-a-thing.”

wi' no as much in my glass as wad drown a midge. Or if I was placed that she durstna but for shame fill a glass wi'an half an inch o' the top or sare, she wad gie me a look, a wink, or make a motion o' some kind, which wad el ken the man-ning o', and which was the same as saying—“Drink it, if ye dare!” O Robin man! it's weel for you that no kens what it is to be a footab' at your ain fireside. I daresay my friend burnd to the bone forme, for he got up, and—

“I wish you good days, Mr. Crichton,” said he, “I have business in Kelso-to-night, then I'll be mistress f—”

I was perfectly overpowered wi' shame, but it was a relief to me when he gae a' and I slipped out after him, and into the shop again.

But Tibby's isna the only persecution that I ha'e to put up wi', for we ha'e five bairns, and she's brought them a' up to treat me as she does herself. If I offer to correct them, they cry out—“I'll tell my mother!”—and frae the oldest to the youngest o' them, when they speak about me, it is he did this, or he did that—they for ev'ertak o' me as Him!—Him! I never got the name o' Father frae one o' them, and it is a' her doings. Now I just ask ye simply if I maun put up wi' it? If I were offering to lay hands upon them for it, I am sure and persuaded she wad raise a Bingham about me—my life wadna be safe where she is,—but indeed I needna say that, for it never is.

But, there is one thing that grieves me beyond a' that I have mentioned i' ye. Ye ken my mother, poor auld body, is a widow now. She is in the seventy-six year o' her age, and very frail. She has naebody to look after her but me,—nobody that has a natural right to do it; for I never had ony brothers, as ye ken, and as for my twa sisters, I daresay they just have a saif enough fight wi' their sin families, and as they are at a distance, I dinna ken how they are situated wi' their guidemen,—though I must say for them, they send her a stane o' oatmeal, an ounce o' tobacco, or a pickle tea and sugar now and then, which is very like as often as they have it in their power; and that is a great deal mair than I allowed to do for her,—me that has a right to protect and maintain her. A' that she has to support her, is fifteen pence a-week off the parish o' Merton. O Robin man!—Robin man!—my heart ruggs within me, when I talk to you about this. A' that I have endured is naething to it! To see my poor mother in a state o' starvation, and no to be allowed to gie her a sixpence! O Robin man!—Robin man!—is it no awfu'? When she was first left destitute, and a widow, I gied to break the matter to Tibby and to remapp wi' her.

“O Tibby woman!” said I, “I'm very distressed. Here's my faither laid in the grave, and I dinna see what's to come o' my mother poor body,—she is auld and she is frail—she has naebody to take care or provide for her but me!”

“You!” cried Tibby—“you! I wish ye wad mind what ye are talking about! Ye have as mony dogs I can tell ye as ye have bones to pick! Let your mother do as other widows ha'e done before her—let the parish le' it after her.”

“O Tibby woman!” said I, “but ye'll only consider, the parish money is very sma',—and poor body, it will make her heart sair to receive a penny o' it; for she weel kens that my faither would rather have died in a ditch, than been beheading to either a parish or an individual for a sixpence.”

“An' meikle they ha'e made by their pride,” said Tibby, “I wish ye wad haud your tongue.”

“Aye, but Tibby,” says I, for I was nettled mair than I durst shew it, “but she has been a good mother to me, and ye ken yourself! that she's no been an ill good-mother! to you. She never stood in the way o' you and me comin' together, though I was payng six shillings a week into the house.”

“And what am I obliged to her for that?” interrupted my Jezebel.

“I dinna ken Tibby,” says I, “but it's a

Mother-in-law.

hard thing for a son to see a mother in want where he can assist her. Now, it isna meikle she takes,—she never was used wi' dainties,—and if I may just take her home, little will serve her, and her meat will never be missed.”

“Ye bonx idiot!” cried Tibby, “I aye thought ye a fool,—but ye are worse than a fool! Bring your mother here! No! while I live in this house I'll never let ken that I'll be mistress f—”

“Aye and master too,” thought I. I found it was o' use to argue wi' her. There was nae possibility o' getting my mother into the house, and as to assisting her wi' a shilling or twa at a time by canteen, or paying for house-rent, or sending her a load o' coals, it was perfectly out o' the question and beyond my power.

Frae the night that I went to Orange Lane to this moment, I ha'e never had a sixpence under my thumb that I could ca' my min'. Indeed, I never ha'e money in my hands, unless it is on the day like this when I ha'e to gang to a fair or the like o' that; and even then, after we start, her leddyship sees every hawker, bicker, and pigginn', that gangs into the cart—she kens the price o' them as weel as I do—and if I shou'dna bring home either money or goods accordin' to her valuation, I actually believe she wad murder me—there is nae cheating her. It is by mere chance, that having had a good market, I've outreached her to-day by a shilling or twa; and one of them I'll spend wi' Robin, and the rest shall gang to my mother. O man! ye may bless your stars that ye dinna ken what it is to ha'e a temerant wife.”

“I'm sorry for ye Patie,” said Robin Roughhead, “but really I think in a great measure ye have yourself to blame for it a'!”

“Me!” said Patie—“what do ye mean Robin?”

“Why Patie,” said Robin, “I ken ye are in a dozen bottles o' wine wi' at great cheerfulness as I raise this glass to my lips. It was a grand advice that o' yours—stop the supplies.”

“I am glad to hear it,” said Robin; “I was surt it was the only thing that would do.”

“Ye shall hear a' about it,” said Patie. “After parting wi' ye, I trudged hame to Bingham and when I got to my house,—before I had the sneck o' the door weel out o' my hand—

“What's stopped ye to this time o' night, ye foottless, feckless creature ye?” cried Tibby—“where ha'e ye been?—giv an account o' yersel'!”

“An account o' myself!” says I, and I gied the doon a drivel behind me, as if I had driven it off the hingies—“for what should I gie an account o' myself?—or who should I gie it to? I suppose this house is my ain, and I can come in and gang out when I like!”

“Yours!” cried she, “is the body drunk?”

“No,” says I, “I'm not drunk, but I wad ha'e you to be decent. Where is my supper?—it is time that I had it.”

“Ye might have come in to time to get it then,” said she, folk kannap keep supper waitin' on you.”

“But I'll gang where I can get it,” said I, and I offered to leave the house.

“I'll take the life o' ye first,” said she; “giv me the siller. Ye had five cogs, a dozen

o' bickers, twa dozen o' piggins, three howies, four cream dishes and two laddies—aside the wooden spoons that I packed up myself; gie me the siller,—and you poor profligate let me see what ye ha'e spent.”

“Gieyou the siller!” says I, “na, na, I've done that lang enough—I ha'e stopped the supplies my woman.”

“Stop your breath!” cried she; “giv me the siller, every farthing, or woe betide ye?”

It was needless for her to say every farthing, for had I done as I used to do, I kenned she wad search through every pocket o' my claes, the moment she thought me asleep,—through every hole and corner o' them to see if I had cheated her out o' a single penny,—aye, and take them up, and shake them, and shake them after a' was done. But I was determined to stand fast by your advice.

“Do as ye like,” says I, “I'll bring you to your senses—I ha'e stopped the supplies.”

again, and I'll be the death o' a mutchkin but that ye tell me Tibby's a different woman,—your baums different,—your whole house different,—and your auld mother comfortable.”

“O man if it might be see t’ said Patie; “at this very night,—the moment I get hame I'll try it,—and if I succeed, I'll treat ye wi' a bottle o' wine, and I believe I never drank ane in ny life.”

“Agreed,” said Robin; “but mind ye're no to do things by halves. Ye're no to be nearer out o' your resolution because Tibby may fire and storm, and let drive the things in the house at ye,—nor even though she should greev me.”

“I thoroughly understand ye,” said Patie “my resolution's taken and I will stand by it.”

“Give your hand on't,” said Robin; and Patie gave him his hand.

Now the two friends parted, and it is unnecessary for me either to describe their parting, or the reception which Patie, on his arrivin' at Bingham, met with from his spouse.

Twelve months went round, Dunse fair came again, and after the fair was over, Patie Crichton once more went in quest of his old friend Robin Roughhead. He found standin' in the Horse Market, and—

“How's a wi' ye, my friend?” says Patie. “O, hearty, hearty I,” cries the other; “but how's a wi' ye?—how is your family?”

“Come and get the bottle o' wine that we've gie ye,” said Patie, “and I'll tell ye a' about it.”

“I'll do that,” said Robin, “for my business is done.”

So they went into the same house in the Castle Wynd where they had been twelve months before, and Patie called for a bottle of wine—but he found that the house had not the wine licence, and was therefore content with a gill of whiskey made into toddy.

“O man!” said he to Robin, “I wad pay ye half a dozen bottles o' wine wi' at great cheerfulness as I raise this glass to my lips. It was a grand advice that o' yours—stop the supplies.”

“I am glad to hear it,” said Robin; “I was surt it was the only thing that would do.”

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