

UNDER THE EVENING LAMP.

THE PREACHER I AM AFTER.

BY THE REV. JOHN LAY JAMIE.

The preacher I am after must be so very small,
I have a sort of notion that he don't exist at all.
Perhaps I may have missed him, if so I don't know where,
But the preacher I am after is the one that isn't there.

The preacher I am after must be so grave and gay,
Like the frost upon the mountain, like the whisperings of May;
One eye must see the merry, while the other sheds a tear,
He must laugh the people's laughter, and other shreds the people's fear.

The preacher I am after must know to hate and love,
With the wisdom of a serpent and the shyness of a dove;
He doesn't want opinions, save of a general kind,
Else he isn't quite the preacher I am hoping yet to find.

Some like a written sermon, or think they so prefer,
While others want it spoken as if upon the spur;
The preacher I am after will so combine the two
That each will think the other, just what he didn't do.

And as for compensation, perhaps I ought to say,
The preacher I am after never thinks about his pay;
He should be anxious to hunger or have a mortal care,
He may browse among the clover and feast upon the air.

The preacher I am after may be so very near,
And yet I fail to find him, perhaps he isn't here;
But this to me is certain, wherever he may be,
The preacher I am after may not be after me.

A FAMILY FUED.

BY DAVID LYALL.

My introduction to Miss Jeffreys was the means of advancing my interests very considerably with my employers, and Mr. James Wedderburn very often took me with him on confidential business, in which he required the help of a clerk. We were all very friendly in the office, and John Grieve, the managing clerk, in no way resented my advancement. He was getting old himself, and his duties were nominal, but he was one of the pillars of the house, and as he had grown grey in its service, so he would remain till the day of his death. Like his master, he belonged to the old order which changes every day. Entirely devoted to the best interests of the firm, which were, of course, identical with those of the clients, he had no ambition beyond them. He was thus entirely free from petty jealousies, which are the curse of many houses where a number of persons are employed; of course his own position was assured, nothing could assail or undermine it, therefore he could afford to be generous to those under him. Good old man, much wise advice did he give to me, and his words of counsel I remember and cherish to this day.

One day I was called to Mr. Jame's private room, and bidden prepare at once for a journey.

"I have to go out to Lauder this morning, Lyall, to see Sir John Campbell March, of Balswinton. It's a will business—will take us all day. Send for a cab to be here in twenty minutes; the train leaves at twenty minutes to eleven."

I know not how it is now, but in these days the train service only brought travellers within eight miles of the quaint old-world little town, shut in among its bare hills; the last part of the journey had to be accomplished by coach or on foot. Mr. Wedderburn, however, had telegraphed the time of our arrival, and when we alighted at the station a dog-cart in charge of a man in livery waited us.

It was a wintry day, best described perhaps by the old Scotch word *snell*. The roads were hard bound by a grim black frost, and stray snowflakes were scudding before the bitter north wind, which met us fair in the teeth as we turned up the hilly road to our destination.

"A closed carriage would have been preferable on a day like this," said Mr. Wedderburn, rather irritably, as he put another fold of his neck-cloth round his throat, and turned up the collar of his overcoat. "Who ordered this thing to be sent?"

"Her ladyship, sir," answered the man, apologetically, touching his hat. Mr. Wedderburn gave a little snort, and climbed to his seat with a very bad grace.

"Just like her," I heard him say under his breath. Then he looked straightly at me and gave a slight smile. "You'll see a bit of tragedy to-day, Lyall, I could almost prophesy. A bitter struggle has been going on here for

the last twelve years. I wonder who's going to be the victor. Well, we'll see."

I knew the family of Campbell March by repute, since Balswinton was not so very far from my own home country, but I was of course ignorant of their inner affairs, and looked forward with some interests to events of the day. I was even in these early days a keen student of human nature, and seldom lost any opportunity of prosecuting that study. I counted myself extremely fortunate in having got into the good graces of my principal, who had it in his power to introduce me to many a strange bit of human experience.

Balswinton lay on the near side of Lauder, so that we turned in at the imposing stone gateway without even coming in sight of the town. I have never seen a finer park or more magnificent trees than those surrounding Balswinton. The house was insignificant viewed from without, and I was therefore surprised to be ushered into a very spacious hall, from which an imposing staircase ascended to a quaint gallery such as I never had before seen. We were received by an elderly manservant, whom Mr. Wedderburn greeted in the cordial manner of an old friend.

"Well, Bryden, how's Sir John to-day?" he asked, as we stepped into the library.

"He's very low, sir," answered the old man, mournfully. "Dr. Laidlaw says there's nae hope. I'll tell her ladyship you have come."

When we were left alone Mr. Wedderburn turned to me with a word of explanation.

"Here there is an exemplification of the old adage, 'marry in haste and repent at leisure,' lad," he said, quietly. "Twenty years ago there wasn't a finer nor a happier man than my old friend Campbell March. He was a bachelor like myself, and many a happy day we've spent together in this place. Like many another foolish man, he has come to grief on the sea of matrimony. He fell in love, or imagined himself in love, with a young lady he met at a ball in Edinburgh, the daughter of a retired naval man at Trinity; and in spite of the advice freely bestowed upon him by all of his best friends, myself among them, he married her, five and twenty years his junior, and a regular bad lot besides. What has been the result? He's had the whole hungry pack of her relations at Balswinton all these years, eating him out of house and home. He was not a rich man when he married her; she's made him a good deal poorer. There's been nothing but bickerings and misery all through, and that's what's killed my old friend, who ought to have had twenty years' good life in him yet."

He spoke with a great deal of bitterness, and I observed that the matter was one upon which he felt deeply.

"Is there not an heir, then?" I asked.

"No," he answered. "I don't know whether that would have mended matters or not. The next of kin is as fine a young fellow as ever breathed, the son of Sir John's brother, a lieutenant in the 93rd. He's at Edinburgh Castle just now, but though he's in the army he's not a soldier born; he was made for a country life, and he's the very apple of his uncle's eye."

"He's the heir at law, I suppose?" I said enquiringly.

"Well, that's entirely as his uncle pleases; there's no entail, and you will readily understand Lady March's anxiety; of course she wants Balswinton, so that she may have the whole tribe of her relations and questionable acquaintances to hold high carnival here. But so far I think we've outwitted her. Sir John has behaved very generously to her, and she will have no reason to complain."

At that moment we were interrupted by the opening of the door, and a lady entered. A very cool greeting passed between her and Mr. Wedderburn; of me she took not the smallest notice. She was very handsome; I think I see her still as she stood by the table in her smart tailor-made gown, with its faultless linen collar and cuffs, the severe simplicity of which seemed to accentuate the proud, strong, clear-cut features of her face. She had a great luxuriance of glossy black hair, and straight, strongly marked black eyebrows, which gave a look of characteristic determination; a very strong-minded woman evidently, and one who would fight for, even if she did not gain, her own ends.

I was not aware that you were expected, Mr.