JOHN GALT

THE ANNALS OF THE PARISH

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Galt J.

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Содержание

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The Annals of the Parish / Or, the Chronicle of Dalmailing During the Ministry of the Rev. Micah Balwhidder

INTRODUCTION

In the same year, and on the same day of the same month, that his Sacred Majesty King George, the third of the name, came to his crown and kingdom, I was placed and settled as the minister of Dalmailing. [1] When about a week thereafter this was known in the parish, it was thought a wonderful thing, and everybody spoke of me and the new king as united in our trusts and temporalities, marvelling how the same should come to pass, and thinking the hand of Providence was in it, and that surely we were preordained to fade and flourish in fellowship together; which has really been the case: for in the same season that his Most Excellent Majesty, as he was very properly styled in the proclamations for the general fasts and thanksgivings, was set by as a precious vessel which had received a crack or a flaw, and could only be serviceable in the way of an ornament, I was obliged, by reason of age and the growing infirmities of my recollection, to consent to the earnest entreaties of the Session, and to accept of Mr. Amos to be my helper. I was long reluctant to do so; but the great respect that my people had for me, and the love that I bore towards them, over and above the sign that was given to me in the removal of the royal candle-stick from its place, worked upon my heart and understanding, and I could not stand out. So, on the last Sabbath of the year 1810, I preached my last sermon, and it was a moving discourse. There were few dry eyes in the kirk that day; for I had been with the aged from the beginning – the young considered me as their natural pastor – and my bidding them all farewell was, as when of old among the heathen, an idol was taken away by the hands of the enemy.

At the close of the worship, and before the blessing, I addressed them in a fatherly manner; and, although the kirk was fuller than ever I saw it before, the fall of a pin might have been heard – at the conclusion there was a sobbing and much sorrow. I said,

“My dear friends, I have now finished my work among you for ever. I have often spoken to you from this place the words of truth and holiness; and, had it been in poor frail human nature to practise the advice and counselling that I have given in this pulpit to you, there would not need to be any cause for sorrow on this occasion – the close and latter end of my ministry. But, nevertheless, I have no reason to complain; and it will be my duty to testify, in that place where I hope we are all one day to meet again, that I found you a docile and a tractable flock, far more than at first I could have expected. There are among you still a few, but with grey heads and feeble hands now, that can remember the great opposition that was made to my placing, and the stout part they themselves took in the burly, because I was appointed by the patron; but they have lived to see the error of their way, and to know that preaching is the smallest portion of the duties of a faithful minister. I may not, my dear friends, have applied my talent in the pulpit so effectually as perhaps I might have done, considering the gifts that it pleased God to give me in that way, and the education that I had in the Orthodox University of Glasgow, as it was in the time of my youth; nor can I say that, in the works of peace-making and charity, I have done all that I should have done. But I have done my best, studying no interest but the good that was to rise according to the faith in Christ Jesus.

[1] Dreghorn, Ayrshire, two miles from Irvine.

"To my young friends I would, as a parting word, say, look to the lives and conversation of your parents – they were plain, honest, and devout Christians, fearing God and honouring the King. They believed the Bible was the word of God; and, when they practised its precepts, they found, by the good that came from them, that it was truly so. They bore in mind the tribulation and persecution of their forefathers for righteousness' sake, and were thankful for the quiet and protection of the government in their day and generation. Their land was tilled with industry, and they ate the bread of carefulness with a contented spirit, and, verily, they had the reward of well-doing even in this world; for they beheld on all sides the blessing of God upon the nation, and the tree growing, and the plough going where the banner of the oppressor was planted of old, and the war-horse trampled in the blood of martyrs. Reflect on this, my young friends, and know, that the best part of a Christian's duty in this world of much evil, is to thole and suffer with resignation, as lang as it is possible for human nature to do. I do not counsel passive obedience: that is a doctrine that the Church of Scotland can never abide; but the divine right of resistance, which, in the days of her trouble, she so bravely asserted against popish and prelatic usurpations, was never resorted to till the attempt was made to remove the ark of the tabernacle from her. I therefore counsel you, my young friends, not to lend your ears to those that trumpet forth their hypothetical politics; but to believe that the laws of the land are administered with a good intent, till in your own homes and dwellings ye feel the presence of the oppressor – then, and not till then, are ye free to gird your loins for battle – and woe to him, and woe to the land where that is come to, if the sword be sheathed till the wrong be redressed.

"As for you, my old companions, many changes have we seen in our day; but the change that we ourselves are soon to undergo will be the greatest of all. We have seen our bairns grow to manhood – we have seen the beauty of youth pass away – we have felt our backs become unable for the burthen, and our right hand forget its cunning. – Our eyes have become dim, and our heads grey – we are now tottering with short and feckless steps towards the grave; and some, that should have been here this day, are bed-rid, lying, as it were, at the gates of death, like Lazarus at the threshold of the rich man's door, full of ails and sores, and having no enjoyment but in the hope that is in hereafter. What can I say to you but farewell! Our work is done – we are weary and worn out, and in need of rest – may the rest of the blessed be our portion! – and in the sleep that all must sleep, beneath the cold blanket of the kirkyard grass, and on that clay pillow where we must shortly lay our heads, may we have pleasant dreams, till we are awakened to partake of the everlasting banquet of the saints in glory!"

When I had finished, there was for some time a great solemnity throughout the kirk; and, before giving the blessing, I sat down to compose myself, for my heart was big, and my spirit oppressed with sadness.

As I left the pulpit, all the elders stood on the steps to hand me down, and the tear was in every eye, and they helped me into the session-house; but I could not speak to them, nor them to me. Then Mr. Dalziel, who was always a composed and sedate man, said a few words of prayer, and I was comforted therewith, and rose to go home to the manse; but in the churchyard all the congregation was assembled, young and old, and they made a lane for me to the back-yett that opened into the manse-garden – Some of them put out their hands and touched me as I passed, followed by the elders, and some of them wept. It was as if I was passing away, and to be no more – verily, it was the reward of my ministry – a faithful account of which, year by year, I now sit down, in the evening of my days, to make up, to the end that I may bear witness to the work of a beneficent Providence, even in the narrow sphere of my parish, and the concerns of that flock of which it was His most gracious pleasure to make me the unworthy shepherd.

CHAPTER I
YEAR 1760

The Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and sixty, was remarkable for three things in the parish of Dalmailing. – First and foremost, there was my placing; then the coming of Mrs. Malcolm with her five children to settle among us; and next, my marriage upon my own cousin, Miss Betty Lanshaw, by which the account of this year naturally divides itself into three heads or portions.

First, of the placing. – It was a great affair; for I was put in by the patron, and the people knew nothing whatsoever of me, and their hearts were stirred into strife on the occasion, and they did all that lay within the compass of their power to keep me out, insomuch, that there was obliged to be a guard of soldiers to protect the presbytery; and it was a thing that made my heart grieve when I heard the drum beating and the fife playing as we were going to the kirk. The people were really mad and vicious, and flung dirt upon us as we passed, and reviled us all, and held out the finger of scorn at me; but I endured it with a resigned spirit, compassionating their wilfulness and blindness. Poor old Mr. Kilfuddy of the Braehill got such a clash of glar on the side of his face, that his eye was almost extinguished.

When we got to the kirk door, it was found to be nailed up, so as by no possibility to be opened. The sergeant of the soldiers wanted to break it, but I was afraid that the heritors would grudge and complain of the expense of a new door, and I supplicated him to let it be as it was: we were, therefore, obligated to go in by a window, and the crowd followed us in the most unreverent manner, making the Lord's house like an inn on a fair day, with their grievous yellyhooing. During the time of the psalm and the sermon, they behaved themselves better, but when the induction came on, their clamour was dreadful; and Thomas Thorl, the weaver, a pious zealot in that time, he got up and protested, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." And I thought I would have a hard and sore time of it with such an outstrapolous people. Mr. Given, that was then the minister of Lugton, was a jocose man, and would have his joke even at a solemnity. When the laying of the hands upon me was adoing, he could not get near enough to put on his, but he stretched out his staff and touched my head, and said, to the great diversion of the rest, "This will do well enough, timber to timber;" but it was an unfriendly saying of Mr. Given, considering the time and the place, and the temper of my people.

After the ceremony, we then got out at the window, and it was a heavy day to me; but we went to the manse, and there we had an excellent dinner, which Mrs. Watts of the new inns of Irville [2] prepared at my request, and sent her chaise-driver to serve, for he was likewise her waiter, she having then but one chaise, and that no often called for.

But, although my people received me in this unruly manner, I was resolved to cultivate civility among them, and therefore, the very next morning I began a round of visitations; but, oh! it was a steep brae that I had to climb, and it needed a stout heart. For I found the doors in some places barred against me; in others, the bairns, when they saw me coming, ran crying to their mothers, "Here's the feckless Mess-John!" and then, when I went into the houses, their parents wouldna ask me to sit down, but with a scornful way, said, "Honest man, what's your pleasure here?" Nevertheless, I walked about from door to door like a dejected beggar, till I got the almous deed of a civil reception – and who would have thought it? – from no less a person than the same Thomas Thorl that was so bitter against me in the kirk on the foregoing day.

Thomas was standing at the door with his green duffle apron, and his red Kilmarnock nightcap – I mind him as well as if it was but yesterday – and he had seen me going from house to house, and in

[2] Irvine, Ayrshire.

what manner I was rejected, and his bowels were moved, and he said to me in a kind manner, "Come in, sir, and ease yoursel': this will never do, the clergy are God's gorbies, and for their Master's sake it behoves us to respect them. There was no ane in the whole parish mair against you than mysel'; but this early visitation is a symptom of grace that I couldna have expectit from a bird out the nest of patronage." I thanked Thomas, and went in with him, and we had some solid conversation together, and I told him that it was not so much the pastor's duty to feed the flock, as to herd them well; and that, although there might be some abler with the head than me, there wasna a he within the bounds of Scotland more willing to watch the fold by night and by day. And Thomas said he had not heard a mair sound observe for some time, and that, if I held to that doctrine in the poopit, it wouldna be lang till I would work a change. – "I was mindit," quoth he, "never to set my foot within the kirk door while you were there; but to testify, and no to condemn without a trial, I'll be there next Lord's day, and egg my neighbours to be likewise, so ye'll no have to preach just to the bare walls and the laird's family."

I have now to speak of the coming of Mrs. Malcolm. – She was the widow of a Clyde shipmaster, that was lost at sea with his vessel. She was a genty body, calm and methodical. From morning to night she sat at her wheel, spinning the finest lint, which suited well with her pale hands. She never changed her widow's weeds, and she was aye as if she had just been ta'en out of a bandbox. The tear was aften in her e'e when the bairns were at the school; but when they came home, her spirit was lighted up with gladness, although, poor woman, she had many a time very little to give them. They were, however, wonderful well-bred things, and took with thankfulness whatever she set before them; for they knew that their father, the breadwinner, was away, and that she had to work sore for their bit and drap. I dare say, the only vexation that ever she had from any of them, on their own account, was when Charlie, the eldest laddie, had won fourpence at pitch-and-toss at the school, which he brought home with a proud heart to his mother. I happened to be daunrin' by at the time, and just looked in at the door to say gude-night: it was a sad sight. There was she sitting with the silent tear on her cheek, and Charlie greeting as if he had done a great fault, and the other four looking on with sorrowful faces. Never, I am sure, did Charlie Malcolm gamble after that night.

I often wondered what brought Mrs. Malcolm to our clachan, instead of going to a populous town, where she might have taken up a huxtry-shop, as she was but of a silly constitution, the which would have been better for her than spinning from morning to far in the night, as if she was in verity drawing the thread of life. But it was, no doubt, from an honest pride to hide her poverty; for when her daughter Effie was ill with the measles – the poor lassie was very ill – nobody thought she could come through, and when she did get the turn, she was for many a day a heavy handful; – our session being rich, and nobody on it but cripple Tammy Daidles, that was at that time known through all the country side for begging on a horse, I thought it my duty to call upon Mrs. Malcolm in a sympathising way, and offer her some assistance, but she refused it.

"No, sir," said she, "I canna take help from the poor's-box, although it's very true that I am in great need; for it might hereafter be cast up to my bairns, whom it may please God to restore to better circumstances when I am no to see't; but I would fain borrow five pounds, and if, sir, you will write to Mr. Maitland, that is now the Lord Provost of Glasgow, and tell him that Marion Shaw would be obliged to him for the lend of that soom, I think he will not fail to send it."

I wrote the letter that night to Provost Maitland, and, by the retour of the post, I got an answer, with twenty pounds for Mrs. Malcolm, saying, "That it was with sorrow he heard so small a trifle could be serviceable." When I took the letter and the money, which was in a bank-bill, she said, "This is just like himsel'." She then told me that Mr. Maitland had been a gentleman's son of the east country, but driven out of his father's house, when a laddie, by his stepmother; and that he had served as a servant lad with her father, who was the Laird of Yillcogie, but ran through his estate, and left her, his only daughter, in little better than beggary with her auntie, the mother of Captain Malcolm, her husband that was. Provost Maitland in his servitude had ta'en a notion of her; and when he recovered his patrimony, and had become a great Glasgow merchant, on hearing how she was

left by her father, he offered to marry her, but she had promised herself to her cousin the captain, whose widow she was. He then married a rich lady, and in time grew, as he was, Lord Provost of the city; but his letter with the twenty pounds to me, showed that he had not forgotten his first love. It was a short, but a well-written letter, in a fair hand of write, containing much of the true gentleman; and Mrs. Malcolm said, “Who knows but out of the regard he once had for their mother, he may do something for my five helpless orphans.”

Thirdly, Upon the subject of taking my cousin, Miss Betty Lanshaw, for my first wife, I have little to say. – It was more out of a compassionate habitual affection, than the passion of love. We were brought up by our grandmother in the same house, and it was a thing spoken of from the beginning, that Betty and me were to be married. So, when she heard that the Laird of Breadland had given me the presentation of Dalmailing, she began to prepare for the wedding; and as soon as the placing was well over, and the manse in order, I gaed to Ayr, where she was, and we were quietly married, and came home in a chaise, bringing with us her little brother Andrew, that died in the East Indies, and he lived and was brought up by us.

Now, this is all, I think, that happened in that year worthy of being mentioned, except that at the sacrament, when old Mr. Kilfuddy was preaching in the tent, it came on such a thunder-plump, that there was not a single soul stayed in the kirkyard to hear him; for the which he was greatly mortified, and never after came to our preachings.

CHAPTER II
YEAR 1761

It was in this year that the great smuggling trade corrupted all the west coast, especially the laigh lands about the Troon and the Loans. The tea was going like the chaff, the brandy like well-water, and the wastrie of all things was terrible. There was nothing minded but the riding of cadgers by day, and excisemen by night – and battles between the smugglers and the king's men, both by sea and land. There was a continual drunkenness and debauchery; and our session, that was but on the lip of this whirlpool of iniquity, had an awful time o't. I did all that was in the power of nature to keep my people from the contagion: I preached sixteen times from the text, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." I visited, and I exhorted; I warned, and I prophesied; I told them that, although the money came in like sclate stones, it would go like the snow off the dyke. But for all I could do, the evil got in among us, and we had no less than three contested bastard bairns upon our hands at one time, which was a thing never heard of in a parish of the shire of Ayr since the Reformation. Two of the bairns, after no small sifting and searching, we got fathered at last; but the third, that was by Meg Glaiks, and given to one Rab Rickerton, was utterly refused, though the fact was not denied; but he was a termagant fellow, and snappit his fingers at the elders. The next day he listed in the Scotch Greys, who were then quartered at Ayr, and we never heard more of him, but thought he had been slain in battle, till one of the parish, about three years since, went up to London to lift a legacy from a cousin that died among the Hindoos. When he was walking about, seeing the curiosities, and among others Chelsea Hospital, he happened to speak to some of the invalids, who found out from his tongue that he was a Scotchman; and speaking to the invalids, one of them, a very old man, with a grey head and a leg of timber, inquired what part of Scotland he was come from; and when he mentioned my parish, the invalid gave a great shout, and said he was from the same place himself; and who should this old man be, but the very identical Rab Rickerton, that was art and part in Meg Glaiks' disowned bairn. Then they had a long converse together, and he had come through many hardships, but had turned out a good soldier; and so, in his old days, was an indoor pensioner, and very comfortable; and he said that he had, to be sure, spent his youth in the devil's service, and his manhood in the king's, but his old age was given to that of his Maker, which I was blithe and thankful to hear; and he enquired about many a one in the parish, the blooming and the green of his time, but they were all dead and buried; and he had a contrite and penitent spirit, and read his Bible every day, delighting most in the Book of Joshua, the Chronicles, and the Kings.

Before this year, the drinking of tea was little known in the parish, saving among a few of the heritors' houses on a Sabbath evening; but now it became very rife: yet the commoner sort did not like to let it be known that they were taking to the new luxury, especially the elderly women, who, for that reason, had their ploys in out-houses and by-places, just as the witches lang syne had their sinful possets and galravitchings; and they made their tea for common in the pint-stoup, and drank it out of caps and luggies, for there were but few among them that had cups and saucers. Well do I remember one night in harvest, in this very year, as I was taking my twilight dauner aneath the hedge along the back side of Thomas Thorl's yard, meditating on the goodness of Providence, and looking at the sheaves of victual on the field, that I heard his wife, and two three other carlins, with their Bohea in the inside of the hedge, and no doubt but it had a lacing of the conek, [3] for they were all cracking like pen-guns. But I gave them a sign, by a loud host, that Providence sees all, and it skailed the bike; for I heard them, like guilty creatures, whispering, and gathering up their truck-pots and trenchers, and cowering away home.

[3] Cognac.

It was in this year that Patrick Dilworth (he had been schoolmaster of the parish from the time, as his wife said, of Anna Regina, and before the Rexes came to the crown), was disabled by a paralytic, and the heritors, grudging the cost of another schoolmaster as long as he lived, would not allow the session to get his place supplied, which was a wrong thing, I must say, of them; for the children of the parishioners were obliged, therefore, to go to the neighbouring towns for their schooling, and the custom was to take a piece of bread and cheese in their pockets for dinner, and to return in the evening always voracious for more, the long walk helping the natural crave of their young appetites. In this way Mrs. Malcolm's two eldest laddies, Charlie and Robert, were wont to go to Irville, and it was soon seen that they kept themselves aloof from the other callans in the clachan, and had a genteeler turn than the grulshy bairns of the cottars. Her bit lassies, Kate and Effie, were better off; for some years before, Nanse Banks had taken up a teaching in a garret-room of a house, at the corner where John Bayne has biggit the sclate-house for his grocery-shop. Nanse learnt them reading and working stockings, and how to sew the semplar, for twal-pennies a-week. She was a patient creature, well cut out for her calling, with blear een, a pale face, and a long neck, but meek and contented withal, tholing the dule of this world with a Christian submission of the spirit; and her garret-room was a cordial of cleanliness, for she made the scholars set the house in order, time and time about, every morning; and it was a common remark for many a day, that the lassies, who had been at Nanse Banks's school, were always well spoken of, both for their civility, and the trigness of their houses when they were afterwards married. In short, I do not know, that in all the long epoch of my ministry, any individual body did more to improve the ways of the parishioners, in their domestic concerns, than did that worthy and innocent creature, Nanse Banks, the schoolmistress; and she was a great loss when she was removed, as it is to be hoped, to a better world; but anent this I shall have to speak more at large hereafter.

It was in this year that my patron, the Laird of Breadland, departed this life, and I preached his funeral sermon; but he was non-beloved in the parish; for my people never forgave him for putting me upon them, although they began to be more on a familiar footing with myself. This was partly owing to my first wife, Betty Lanshaw, who was an active throughgoing woman, and wonderfu' useful to many of the cottars' wives at their lying-in; and when a death happened among them, her helping hand, and any thing we had at the manse, was never wanting; and I went about myself to the bedsides of the frail, leaving no stone unturned to win the affections of my people, which, by the blessing of the Lord, in process of time, was brought to a bearing.

But a thing happened in this year, which deserves to be recorded, as manifesting what effect the smuggling was beginning to take in the morals of the country side. One Mr. Macskipnish, of Highland parentage, who had been a valet-de-chambre with a major in the campaigns, and taken a prisoner with him by the French, he having come home in a cartel, took up a dancing-school at Irville, the which art he had learnt in the genteelest fashion, in the mode of Paris, at the French court. Such a thing as a dancing-school had never, in the memory of man, been known in our country side; and there was such a sound about the steps and cottillions of Mr. Macskipnish, that every lad and lass, that could spare time and siller, went to him, to the great neglect of their work. The very bairns on the loan, instead of their wonted play, gaed linking and louping in the steps of Mr. Macskipnish, who was, to be sure, a great curiosity, with long spindle legs, his breast shot out like a duck's, and his head powdered and frizzled up like a tappit-hen. He was, indeed, the proudest peacock that could be seen, and he had a ring on his finger, and when he came to drink his tea at the Breadland, he brought no hat on his head, but a droll cockit thing under his arm, which, he said, was after the manner of the courtiers at the petty suppers of one Madam Pompadour, who was at that time the concubine of the French king.

I do not recollect any other remarkable thing that happened in this year. The harvest was very abundant, and the meal so cheap, that it caused a great defect in my stipend; so that I was obligated to postpone the purchase of a mahogany scrutoire for my study, as I had intended. But I had not the heart to complain of this: on the contrary, I rejoiced thereat; for what made me want my scrutoire till

another year, had carried blitheness into the hearth of the cottar, and made the widow's heart sing with joy; and I would have been an unnatural creature, had I not joined in the universal gladness, because plenty did abound.

CHAPTER III
YEAR 1762

The third year of my ministry was long held in remembrance for several very memorable things. William Byres of the Loanhead had a cow that calved two calves at one calving; Mrs. Byres, the same year, had twins, male and female; and there was such a crop on his fields, testifying that the Lord never sends a mouth into the world without providing meat for it. But what was thought a very daunting sign of something, happened on the Sacrament Sabbath at the conclusion of the action sermon, when I had made a very suitable discourse. The day was tempestuous, and the wind blew with such a pith and birr, that I thought it would have twirled the trees in the kirkyard out by the roots, and, blowing in this manner, it tirled the thack from the rigging of the manse stable; and the same blast that did that, took down the lead that was on the kirk-roof, which hurled off, as I was saying, at the conclusion of the action sermon, with such a dreadful sound, as the like was never heard, and all the congregation thought that it betokened a mutation to me. However, nothing particular happened to me; but the smallpox came in among the weans of the parish, and the smashing that it made of the poor bits o' bairns was indeed woeful.

One Sabbath, when the pestilence was raging, I preached a sermon about Rachel weeping for her children, which Thomas Thorl, who was surely a great judge of good preaching, said, "was a monument of divinity whilk searched the heart of many a parent that day;" a thing I was well pleased to hear, for Thomas, as I have related at length, was the most zealous champion against my getting the parish; but, from this time, I set him down in my mind for the next vacancy among the elders. Worthy man! it was not permitted him to arrive at that honour. In the fall of that year he took an income in his legs, and couldna go about, and was laid up for the remainder of his days, a perfect Lazarus, by the fire-side. But he was well supported in his affliction. In due season, when it pleased Him that alone can give and take, to pluck him from this life, as the fruit ripened and ready for the gathering, his death, to all that knew him, was a gentle dispensation, for truly he had been in sore trouble.

It was in this year that Charlie Malcolm, Mrs. Malcolm's eldest son, was sent to be a cabin-boy in the Tobacco trader, a three-masted ship, that sailed between Port-Glasgow and Virginia in America. She was commanded by Captain Dickie, an Irville man; for at that time the Clyde was supplied with the best sailors from our coast, the coal-trade with Ireland being a better trade for bringing up good mariners than the long voyages in the open sea; which was the reason, as I often heard said, why the Clyde shipping got so many of their men from our country side. The going to sea of Charlie Malcolm was, on divers accounts, a very remarkable thing to us all; for he was the first that ever went from our parish, in the memory of man, to be a sailor, and everybody was concerned at it, and some thought it was a great venture of his mother to let him, his father having been lost at sea. But what could the forlorn widow do? She had five weans, and little to give them; and, as she herself said, he was aye in the hand of his Maker, go where he might; and the will of God would be done, in spite of all earthly wiles and devices to the contrary.

On the Monday morning, when Charlie was to go away to meet the Irville carrier on the road, we were all up, and I walked by myself from the manse into the clachan to bid him farewell, and I met him just coming from his mother's door, as blithe as a bee, in his sailor's dress, with a stick, and a bundle tied in a Barcelona silk handkerchief hanging o'er his shoulder, and his two little brothers were with him, and his sisters, Kate and Effie, looking out from the door all begreeten; but his mother was in the house, praying to the Lord to protect her orphan, as she afterwards told me. All the weans of the clachan were gathered at the kirkyard yett to see him pass, and they gave him three great shouts as he was going by; and everybody was at their doors, and said something encouraging to him; but there was a great laugh when auld Mizy Spaewell came hirpling with her bauchle in her hand,

and flung it after him for good-luck. Mizy had a wonderful faith in freats, and was just an oracle of sagacity at expounding dreams, and bodes of every sort and description – besides, she was reckoned one of the best howdies in her day; but by this time she was grown frail and feckless, and she died the same year on Hallowe'en, which made everybody wonder that it should have so fallen out for her to die on Hallowe'en.

Shortly after the departure of Charlie Malcolm, the Lady of Breadland, with her three daughters, removed to Edinburgh, where the young laird, that had been my pupil, was learning to be an advocate, and the Breadland-house was set to Major Gilchrist, a nabob from India; but he was a narrow ailing man, and his maiden-sister, Miss Girzie, was the scrimpetest creature that could be; so that, in their hands, all the pretty policy of the Breadlands, that had cost a power of money to the old laird that was my patron, fell into decay and disorder; and the bonny yew-trees that were cut into the shape of peacocks, soon grew out of all shape, and are now doleful monuments of the major's tack, and that of Lady Skimmilk, as Miss Girzie Gilchrist, his sister, was nick-named by every ane that kent her.

But it was not so much on account of the neglect of the Breadland, that the incoming of Major Gilchrist was to be deplored. The old men that had a light labour in keeping the policy in order, were thrown out of bread, and could do little; and the poor women that whiles got a bit and a drap from the kitchen of the family, soon felt the change, so that by little and little we were obligated to give help from the session; insomuch that, before the end of the year, I was necessitated to preach a discourse on almsgiving, specially for the benefit of our own poor, a thing never before known in the parish.

But one good thing came from the Gilchrists to Mrs. Malcolm. Miss Girzie, whom they called Lady Skimmilk, had been in a very penurious way as a seamstress, in the Gorbals of Glasgow, while her brother was making the fortune in India, and she was a clever needle-woman – none better, as it was said; and she, having some things to make, took Kate Malcolm to help her in the coarse work; and Kate, being a nimble and birky thing, was so useful to the lady, and the complaining man the major, that they invited her to stay with them at the Breadland for the winter, where, although she was holden to her seam from morning to night, her food lightened the hand of her mother, who, for the first time since her coming into the parish, found the penny for the day's darg more than was needed for the meal-basin; and the tea-drinking was beginning to spread more openly, insomuch that, by the advice of the first Mrs. Balwhidder, Mrs. Malcolm took in tea to sell, and in this way was enabled to eke something to the small profits of her wheel. Thus the tide that had been so long ebbing to her, began to turn; and here I am bound in truth to say, that although I never could abide the smuggling, both on its own account, and the evils that grew therefrom to the country side, I lost some of my dislike to the tea after Mrs. Malcolm began to traffic in it, and we then had it for our breakfast in the morning at the manse, as well as in the afternoon. But what I thought most of it for was, that it did no harm to the head of the drinkers, which was not always the case with the possets that were in fashion before. There is no meeting now in the summer evenings, as I remember often happened in my younger days, with decent ladies coming home with red faces, tosy and cosh, from a posset-masking; so, both for its temperance and on account of Mrs. Malcolm's sale, I refrained from the November in this year to preach against tea; but I never lifted the weight of my displeasure from off the smuggling trade, until it was utterly put down by the strong hand of government.

There was no other thing of note in this year, saving only that I planted in the garden the big pear-tree, which had the two great branches that we call the Adam and Eve. I got the plant, then a sapling, from Mr. Graft, that was Lord Eaglesham's head-gardener; and he said it was, as indeed all the parish now knows well, a most juicy sweet pear, such as was not known in Scotland till my lord brought down the father plant from the king's garden in London, in the forty-five when he went up to testify his loyalty to the House of Hanover.

CHAPTER IV
YEAR 1763

The An. Dom. 1763, was, in many a respect, a memorable year, both in public and in private. The King granted peace to the French, and Charlie Malcolm, that went to sea in the Tobacco trader, came home to see his mother. The ship, after being at America, had gone down to Jamaica, an island in the West Indies, with a cargo of live lumber, as Charlie told me himself, and had come home with more than a hundred and fifty hoggits of sugar, and sixty-three puncheons full of rum; for she was, by all accounts, a stately galley, and almost two hundred tons in the burthen, being the largest vessel then sailing from the creditable town of Port-Glasgow. Charlie was not expected; and his coming was a great thing to us all, so I will mention the whole particulars.

One evening, towards the gloaming, as I was taking my walk of meditation, I saw a brisk sailor laddie coming towards me. He had a pretty green parrot sitting on a bundle, tied in a Barcelona silk handkerchief, which he carried with a stick over his shoulder, and in this bundle was a wonderful big nut, such as no one in our parish had ever seen. It was called a cocker-nut. This blithe callant was Charlie Malcolm, who had come all the way that day his leeful lane, on his own legs from Greenock, where the Tobacco trader was then 'livering her cargo. I told him how his mother, and his brothers, and his sisters were all in good health, and went to convoy him home; and as we were going along, he told me many curious things, and he gave me six beautiful yellow limes, that he had brought in his pouch all the way across the seas, for me to make a bowl of punch with, and I thought more of them than if they had been golden guineas, it was so mindful of the laddie.

When we got to the door of his mother's house, she was sitting at the fireside, with her three other bairns at their bread and milk, Kate being then with Lady Skimmilk, at the Breadland, sewing. It was between the day and dark, when the shuttle stands still till the lamp is lighted. But such a shout of joy and thankfulness as rose from that hearth, when Charlie went in! The very parrot, ye would have thought, was a participator, for the beast gied a skraik that made my whole head dirl; and the neighbours came flying and flocking to see what was the matter, for it was the first parrot ever seen within the bounds of the parish, and some thought it was but a foreign hawk, with a yellow head and green feathers.

In the midst of all this, Effie Malcolm had run off to the Breadland for her sister Kate, and the two lassies came flying breathless, with Miss Girzie Gilchrist, the Lady Skimmilk, pursuing them like desperation, or a griffin, down the avenue; for Kate, in her hurry, had flung down her seam, a new printed gown, that she was helping to make, and it had fallen into a boyne of milk that was ready for the creaming, by which issued a double misfortune to Miss Girzie, the gown being not only ruined, but licking up the cream. For this, poor Kate was not allowed ever to set her face in the Breadland again.

When Charlie Malcolm had stayed about a week with his mother, he returned to his berth in the Tobacco trader, and shortly after his brother Robert was likewise sent to serve his time to the sea, with an owner that was master of his own bark, in the coal trade at Irville. Kate, who was really a surprising lassie for her years, was taken off her mother's hands by the old Lady Macadam, that lived in her jointure house, which is now the Cross Keys Inn. Her ladyship was a woman of high breeding, her husband having been a great general, and knighted by the king for his exploits; but she was lame, and could not move about in her dining-room without help; so hearing from the first Mrs. Balwhidder how Kate had done such an unatonable deed to Miss Girzie Gilchrist, she sent for Kate, and, finding her sharp and apt, she took her to live with her as a companion. This was a vast advantage, for the lady was versed in all manner of accomplishments, and could read and speak French with more ease than any professor at that time in the College of Glasgow; and she had learnt to sew flowers on satin,

either in a nunnery abroad, or in a boarding-school in England, and took pleasure in teaching Kate all she knew, and how to behave herself like a lady.

In the summer of this year, old Mr. Patrick Dilworth, that had so long been doited with the paralytics, died, and it was a great relief to my people, for the heritors could no longer refuse to get a proper schoolmaster; so we took on trial Mr. Lorimore, who has ever since the year after, with so much credit to himself, and usefulness to the parish, been schoolmaster, session clerk, and precentor – a man of great mildness and extraordinary particularity. He was then a very young man, and some objection was made, on account of his youth, to his being session-clerk, especially as the smuggling immorality still gave us much trouble in the making up of irregular marriages; but his discretion was greater than could have been hoped for from his years; and, after a twelvemonth's probation in the capacity of schoolmaster, he was installed in all the offices that had belonged to his predecessor, old Mr. Patrick Dilworth that was.

But the most memorable thing that befell among my people this year, was the burning of the lint-mill on the Lugton water, which happened, of all the days of the year, on the very selfsame day that Miss Girzie Gilchrist, better known as Lady Skimmilk, hired the chaise from Mrs. Watts of the New Inns of Irville, to go with her brother, the major, to consult the faculty in Edinburgh concerning his complaints. For, as the chaise was coming by the mill, William Huckle, the miller that was, came flying out of the mill like a demented man, crying fire! – and it was the driver that brought the melancholy tidings to the clachan – and melancholy they were; for the mill was utterly destroyed, and in it not a little of all that year's crop of lint in our parish. The first Mrs. Balwhidder lost upwards of twelve stone, which we had raised on the glebe with no small pains, watering it in the drouth, as it was intended for sarking to ourselves, and sheets and napery. A great loss indeed it was, and the vexation thereof had a visible effect on Mrs. Balwhidder's health, which from the spring had been in a dwining way. But for it, I think she might have wrestled through the winter: however, it was ordered otherwise, and she was removed from mine to Abraham's bosom on Christmas-day, and buried on Hogmanay, for it was thought uncanny to have a dead corpse in the house on the new-year's day. She was a worthy woman, studying with all her capacity to win the hearts of my people towards me – in the which good work she prospered greatly; so that, when she died, there was not a single soul in the parish that was not contented with both my walk and conversation. Nothing could be more peaceable than the way we lived together. Her brother Andrew, a fine lad, I had sent to the college at Glasgow, at my own cost; and when he came out to the burial, he stayed with me a month, for the manse after her decease was very dull, and it was during this visit that he gave me an inkling of his wish to go out to India as a cadet, but the transactions anent that fall within the scope of another year – as well as what relates to her headstone, and the epitaph in metre, which I indicated myself thereon; John Truel the mason carving the same, as may be seen in the kirkyard, where it wants a little reparation and setting upright, having settled the wrong way when the second Mrs. Balwhidder was laid by her side. – But I must not here enter upon an anticipation.

CHAPTER V
YEAR 1764

This year well deserved the name of the monumental year in our parish; for the young laird of the Breadland, that had been my pupil, being learning to be an advocate among the faculty in Edinburgh, with his lady mother, who had removed thither with the young ladies her daughters, for the benefit of education, sent out to be put up in the kirk, under the loft over the family vault, an elegant marble headstone, with an epitaph engraven thereon, in fair Latin, setting forth many excellent qualities which the old laird, my patron that was, the inditer thereof said he possessed. I say the inditer, because it couldna have been the young laird himself, although he got the credit o't on the stone, for he was nae daub in my aught at the Latin or any other language. However, he might improve himself at Edinburgh, where a' manner of genteel things were then to be got at an easy rate, and doubtless the young laird got a probationer at the College to write the epitaph; but I have often wondered sin' syne, how he came to make it in Latin, for assuredly his dead parent, if he could have seen it, could not have read a single word o't, notwithstanding it was so vaunty about his virtues, and other civil and hospitable qualifications.

The coming of the laird's monumental stone had a great effect on me, then in a state of deep despondency for the loss of the first Mrs. Balwhidder; and I thought I could not do a better thing, just by way of diversion in my heavy sorrow, than to get a well-shapen headstone made for her – which, as I have hinted at in the record of the last year, was done and set up. But a headstone without an epitaph, is no better than a body without the breath of life in't; and so it behoved me to make a poesy for the monument, the which I conned and pondered upon for many days. I thought as Mrs. Balwhidder, worthy woman as she was, did not understand the Latin tongue, it would not do to put on what I had to say in that language, as the laird had done – nor indeed would it have been easy, as I found upon the experimenting, to tell what I had to tell in Latin, which is naturally a crabbed language, and very difficult to write properly. I therefore, after mentioning her age and the dates of her birth and departure, composed in sedate poetry the following epitaph, which may yet be seen on the tombstone.

EPITAPH

A lovely Christian, spouse, and friend,
Pleasant in life, and at her end. —
A pale consumption dealt the blow
That laid her here, with dust below.
Sore was the cough that shook her frame;
That cough her patience did proclaim —
And as she drew her latest breath,
She said, "The Lord is sweet in death."
O pious reader! standing by,
Learn like this gentle one to die.
The grass doth grow and fade away,
And time runs out by night and day;
The King of Terrors has command
To strike us with his dart in hand.
Go where we will by flood or field,
He will pursue and make us yield.

But though to him we must resign
The vesture of our part divine,
There is a jewel in our trust,
That will not perish in the dust,
A pearl of price, a precious gem,
Ordained for Jesus' diadem;
Therefore, be holy while you can,
And think upon the doom of man.
Repent in time and sin no more,
That when the strife of life is o'er,
On wings of love your soul may rise,
To dwell with angels in the skies,
Where psalms are sung eternally,
And martyrs ne'er again shall die;
But with the saints still bask in bliss,
And drink the cup of blessedness.

This was greatly thought of at the time, and Mr. Lorimore, who had a nerve for poesy himself in his younger years, was of opinion that it was so much to the purpose, and suitable withal, that he made his scholars write it out for their examination copies, at the reading whereof before the heritors, when the examination of the school came round, the tear came into my eye, and every one present sympathized with me in my great affliction for the loss of the first Mrs. Balwhidder.

Andrew Langshaw, as I have recorded, having come from the Glasgow College to the burial of his sister, my wife that was, stayed with me a month to keep me company; and staying with me, he was a great cordial, for the weather was wet and sleety, and the nights were stormy, so that I could go little out, and few of the elders came in, they being at that time old men in a feckless condition, not at all qualified to warsle with the blasts of winter. But when Andrew left me to go back to his classes, I was eerie and lonesome; and but for the getting of the monument ready, which was a blessed entertainment to me in those dreary nights, with consulting anent the shape of it with John Truel, and meditating on the verse for the epitaph, I might have gone altogether demented. However, it pleased Him, who is the surety of the sinner, to help me through the Slough of Despond, and to set my feet on firm land, establishing my way thereon.

But the work of the monument, and the epitaph, could not endure for a constancy, and after it was done, I was again in great danger of sinking into the hypochonderies a second time. However, I was enabled to fight with my affliction, and by-and-by, as the spring began to open her green lattice, and to set out her flower-pots to the sunshine, and the time of the singing of birds was come, I became more composed, and like myself, so I often walked in the fields, and held communion with nature, and wondered at the mysteries thereof.

On one of these occasions, as I was sauntering along the edge of Eaglesham-wood, looking at the industrious bee going from flower to flower, and the idle butterfly, that layeth up no store, but perisheth ere it is winter, I felt as it were a spirit from on high descending upon me, a throb at my heart, and a thrill in my brain, and I was transported out of myself, and seized with the notion of writing a book – but what it should be about, I could not settle to my satisfaction. Sometimes I thought of an orthodox poem, like *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton, wherein I proposed to treat more at large of Original Sin, and the great mystery of Redemption; at others, I fancied that a connect treatise on the efficacy of Free Grace would be more taking; but although I made divers beginnings in both subjects, some new thought ever came into my head, and the whole summer passed away and nothing was done. I therefore postponed my design of writing a book till the winter, when I would have the benefit of the long nights. Before that, however, I had other things of more importance to think about.

My servant lasses, having no eye of a mistress over them, wastered every thing at such a rate, and made such a galravitching in the house, that, long before the end of the year, the year's stipend was all spent, and I did not know what to do. At lang and length I mustered courage to send for Mr. Auld, who was then living, and an elder. He was a douce and discreet man, fair and well-doing in the world, and had a better handful of strong common sense than many even of the heritors. So I told him how I was situated, and conferred with him; and he advised me, for my own sake, to look out for another wife as soon as decency would allow, which he thought might very properly be after the turn of the year, by which time the first Mrs. Balwhidder would be dead more than twelve months; and when I mentioned my design to write a book, he said, (and he was a man of good discretion), that the doing of the book was a thing that would keep, but masterful servants were a growing evil; so, upon his counselling, I resolved not to meddle with the book till I was married again, but employ the interim, between then and the turn of the year, in looking out for a prudent woman to be my second wife, strictly intending, as I did perform, not to mint a word about my choice, if I made one, till the whole twelve months and a day, from the date of the first Mrs. Balwhidder's interment, had run out.

In this the hand of Providence was very visible, and lucky for me it was that I had sent for Mr. Auld when I did send, as the very week following, a sound began to spread in the parish, that one of my lassies had got herself with bairn, which was an awful thing to think had happened in the house of her master, and that master a minister of the gospel. Some there were, for backbiting appertaineth to all conditions, that jealoused and wondered if I had not a finger in the pie; which, when Mr. Auld heard, he bestirred himself in such a manful and godly way in my defence, as silenced the clash, telling that I was utterly incapable of any such thing, being a man of a guileless heart, and a spiritual simplicity, that would be ornamental in a child. We then had the latheron summoned before the session, and was not long of making her confess that the father was Nichol Snipe, Lord Glencairn's gamekeeper; and both her and Nichol were obligated to stand in the kirk: but Nichol was a graceless reprobate, for he came with two coats, one buttoned behind him, and another buttoned before him, and two wigs of my lord's, lent him by the valet-de-chamer; the one over his face, and the other in the right way; and he stood with his face to the church-wall. When I saw him from the poopit, I said to him – "Nichol, you must turn your face towards me!" At the which, he turned round to be sure, but there he presented the same show as his back. I was confounded, and did not know what to say, but cried out with a voice of anger – "Nichol, Nichol! if ye had been a' back, ye wouldna hae been there this day;" which had such an effect on the whole congregation, that the poor fellow suffered afterwards more derision, than if I had rebuked him in the manner prescribed by the session.

This affair, with the previous advice of Mr. Auld, was, however, a warning to me, that no pastor of his parish should be long without a helpmate. Accordingly, as soon as the year was out, I set myself earnestly about the search for one; but as the particulars fall properly within the scope and chronicle of the next year, I must reserve them for it; and I do not recollect that any thing more particular befell in this, excepting that William Mutchkins, the father of Mr. Mutchkins, the great spirit-dealer in Glasgow, set up a change-house in the clachan, which was the first in the parish, and which, if I could have helped, would have been the last; for it was opening a howf to all manner of wickedness, and was an immediate get and offspring of the smuggling trade, against which I had so set my countenance. But William Mutchkins himself was a respectable man, and no house could be better ordered than his change. At a stated hour he made family worship, for he brought up his children in the fear of God and the Christian religion; and although the house was full, he would go in to the customers, and ask them if they would want anything for half an hour, for that he was going to make exercise with his family; and many a wayfaring traveller has joined in the prayer. There is no such thing, I fear, nowadays, of publicans entertaining travellers in this manner.

CHAPTER VI
YEAR 1765

As there was little in the last year that concerned the parish, but only myself, so in this the like fortune continued; and saving a rise in the price of barley, occasioned, as was thought, by the establishment of a house for brewing whisky in a neighbouring parish, it could not be said that my people were exposed to the mutations and influences of the stars, which ruled in the seasons of Ann. Dom. 1765. In the winter there was a dearth of fuel, such as has not been since; for when the spring loosened the bonds of the ice, three new coal-heughs were shanked in the Douray moor, and ever since there has been a great plenty of that necessary article. Truly, it is very wonderful to see how things come round. When the talk was about the shanking of their heughs, and a paper to get folk to take shares in them, was carried through the circumjacent parishes, it was thought a gowk's errand; but no sooner was the coal reached, but up sprung such a traffic, that it was a godsend to the parish, and the opening of a trade and commerce, that has, to use an old byword, brought gold in gowpins amang us. From that time my stipend has been on the regular increase, and therefore I think that the incoming of the heritors must have been in like manner augmented.

Soon after this, the time was drawing near for my second marriage. I had placed my affections, with due consideration, on Miss Lizy Kibbock, the well brought-up daughter of Mr. Joseph Kibbock of the Gorbyholm, who was the first that made a speculation in the farming way in Ayrshire, and whose cheese were of such an excellent quality, that they have, under the name of Delap-cheese, spread far and wide over the civilized world. Miss Lizy and me were married on the 29th day of April, with some inconvenience to both sides, on account of the dread that we had of being married in May; for it is said —

"Of the marriages in May,
The bairns die of a decay."

However, married we were, and we hired the Irville chaise, and with Miss Jenny her sister, and Becky Cairns her niece, who sat on a portmanty at our feet, we went on a pleasure jaunt to Glasgow, where we bought a miracle of useful things for the manse, that neither the first Mrs. Balwhidder nor me ever thought of; but the second Mrs. Balwhidder that was, had a geni for management, and it was extraordinary what she could go through. Well may I speak of her with commendations; for she was the bee that made my honey, although at first things did not go so clear with us. For she found the manse rookit and herrit, and there was such a supply of plenishing of all sort wanted, that I thought myself ruined and undone by her care and industry. There was such a buying of wool to make blankets, with a booming of the meikle wheel to spin the same, and such birring of the little wheel for sheets and napery, that the manse was for many a day like an organ kist. Then we had milk cows, and the calves to bring up, and a kirning of butter, and a making of cheese; in short, I was almost by myself with the jangle and din, which prevented me from writing a book as I had proposed, and I for a time thought of the peaceful and kindly nature of the first Mrs. Balwhidder with a sigh; but the outcoming was soon manifest. The second Mrs. Balwhidder sent her butter on the market-days to Irville, and her cheese from time to time to Glasgow, to Mrs. Firlot, that kept the huxtry in the Saltmarket; and they were both so well made, that our dairy was just a coining of money, insomuch that, after the first year, we had the whole tot of my stipend to put untouched into the bank.

But I must say, that although we were thus making siller like sclate stones, I was not satisfied in my own mind that I had got the manse merely to be a factory of butter and cheese, and to breed up veal calves for the slaughter; so I spoke to the second Mrs. Balwhidder, and pointed out to her what I

thought the error of our way; but she had been so ingrained with the profitable management of cows and grumphies in her father's house, that she could not desist, at the which I was greatly grieved. By-and-by, however, I began to discern that there was something as good in her example, as the giving of alms to the poor folk; for all the wives of the parish were stirred up by it into a wonderful thrift, and nothing was heard of in every house, but of quiltings and wabs to weave; insomuch that, before many years came round, there was not a better stocked parish, with blankets and napery, than mine was, within the bounds of Scotland.

It was about the Michaelmas of this year that Mrs. Malcolm opened her shop, which she did chiefly on the advice of Mrs. Balwhidder, who said it was far better to allow a little profit on the different haberdasheries that might be wanted, than to send to the neighbouring towns an end's errand on purpose for them, none of the lasses that were so sent ever thinking of making less than a day's play on every such occasion. In a word, it is not to be told how the second Mrs. Balwhidder, my wife, showed the value of flying time, even to the concerns of this world, and was the mean of giving a life and energy to the housewifery of the parish, that has made many a one beek his shins in comfort, that would otherwise have had but a cold coal to blow at. Indeed, Mr. Kibbock, her father, was a man beyond the common, and had an insight of things, by which he was enabled to draw profit and advantage, where others could only see risk and detriment. He planted mounts of fir-trees on the bleak and barren tops of the hills of his farm, the which everybody, and I among the rest, considered as a thrashing of the water and raising of bells. But as his rack ran his trees grew, and the plantations supplied him with stabs to make *stake and rice* between his fields, which soon gave them a trig and orderly appearance, such as had never before been seen in the west country; and his example has, in this matter, been so followed, that I have heard travellers say, who have been in foreign countries, that the shire of Ayr, for its bonny round green plantings on the tops of the hills, is above comparison either with Italy or Switzerland, where the hills are, as it were, in a state of nature.

Upon the whole, this was a busy year in the parish, and the seeds of many great improvements were laid. The king's road, the which then ran through the Vennel, was mended; but it was not till some years after, as I shall record by-and-by, that the trust-road, as it was called, was made, the which had the effect of turning the town inside out.

Before I conclude, it is proper to mention that the kirk-bell, which had to this time, from time immemorial, hung on an ash-tree, was one stormy night cast down by the breaking of the branch, which was the cause of the heritors agreeing to build the steeple. The clock was a mortification to the parish from the Lady Breadland, when she died some years after.

CHAPTER VII
YEAR 1766

It was in this Ann. Dom. that the great calamity happened, the which took place on a Sabbath evening in the month of February. Mrs. Balwhidder had just infused or masket the tea, and we were set round the fireside, to spend the night in an orderly and religious manner, along with Mr. and Mrs. Petticrew, who were on a friendly visitation to the manse, the mistress being full cousin to Mrs. Balwhidder. – Sitting, as I was saying, at our tea, one of the servant lasses came into the room with a sort of a panic laugh, and said, "What are ye all doing there when the Breadland's in a low?" – "The Breadland in a low!" cried I. – "Oh, ay!" cried she; "bleezing at the windows and the rigging, and out at the lum, like a killogie." Upon the which, we all went to the door, and there, to be sure, we did see that the Breadland was burning, the flames crackling high out o'er the trees, and the sparks flying like a comet's tail in the firmament.

Seeing this sight, I said to Mr. Petticrew, that, in the strength of the Lord, I would go and see what could be done, for it was as plain as the sun in the heavens that the ancient place of the Breadlands would be destroyed; whereupon he accorded to go with me, and we walked at a lively course to the spot, and the people from all quarters were pouring in, and it was an awsome scene. But the burning of the house, and the droves of the multitude, were nothing to what we saw when we got forenent the place. There was the rafters crackling, the flames raging, the servants running, some with bedding, some with looking-glasses, and others with chamber utensils as little likely to be fuel to the fire, but all testifications to the confusion and alarm. Then there was a shout, "Whar's Miss Girzie? whar's the Major?" The Major, poor man, soon cast up, lying upon a feather-bed, ill with his complaints, in the garden; but Lady Skimmilk was nowhere to be found. At last, a figure was seen in the upper flat, pursued by the flames, and that was Miss Girzie. Oh! it was a terrible sight to look at her in that jeopardy at the window, with her gold watch in the one hand and the silver teapot in the other, skreighing like desperation for a ladder and help. But, before a ladder or help could be found, the floor sunk down, and the roof fell in, and poor Miss Girzie, with her idols, perished in the burning. It was a dreadful business! I think, to this hour, how I saw her at the window, how the fire came in behind her, and claught her like a fiery Belzebub, and bore her into perdition before our eyes. The next morning the atomy of the body was found among the rubbish, with a piece of metal in what had been each of its hands, no doubt the gold watch and the silver teapot. Such was the end of Miss Girzie; and the Breadland, which the young laird, my pupil that was, by growing a resident at Edinburgh, never rebuilt. It was burnt to the very ground; nothing was spared but what the servants in the first flaught gathered up in a hurry and ran with; but no one could tell how the Major, who was then, as it was thought by the faculty, past the power of nature to recover, got out of the house, and was laid on the feather-bed in the garden. However, he never got the better of that night, and before Whitsunday he was dead too, and buried beside his sister's bones at the south side of the kirkyard dyke, where his cousin's son, that was his heir, erected the handsome monument, with the three urns and weeping cherubims, bearing witness to the great valour of the Major among the Hindoos, as well as other commendable virtues, for which, as the epitaph says, he was universally esteemed and beloved, by all who knew him, in his public and private capacity.

But although the burning of the Breadland-House was justly called the great calamity, on account of what happened to Miss Girzie with her gold watch and silver teapot; yet, as Providence never fails to bring good out of evil, it turned out a catastrophe that proved advantageous to the parish; for the laird, instead of thinking to build it up, was advised to let the policy out as a farm, and the tack was taken by Mr. Coulter, than whom there had been no such man in the agriculturing line among us before, not even excepting Mr. Kibbock of the Gorbyholm, my father-in-law that was. Of

the stabling, Mr. Coulter made a comfortable dwelling-house; and having rugget out the evergreens and other unprofitable plants, saving the twa ancient yew-trees which the near-begaun Major and his sister had left to go to ruin about the mansion-house, he turned all to production, and it was wonderful what an increase he made the land bring forth. He was from far beyond Edinburgh, and had got his insight among the Lothian farmers, so that he knew what crop should follow another, and nothing could surpass the regularity of his rigs and furrows. – Well do I remember the admiration that I had, when, in a fine sunny morning of the first spring after he took the Breadland, I saw his braird on what had been the cows' grass, as even and pretty as if it had been worked and stripped in the loom with a shuttle. Truly, when I look back at the example he set, and when I think on the method and dexterity of his management, I must say, that his coming to the parish was a great godsend, and tended to do far more for the benefit of my people, than if the young laird had rebuilded the Breadland-House in a fashionable style, as was at one time spoken of.

But the year of the great calamity was memorable for another thing: – in the December foregoing, the wind blew, as I have recorded in the chronicle of the last year, and broke down the bough of the tree whereon the kirk-bell had hung from the time, as was supposed, of the persecution, before the bringing over of King William. Mr. Kibbock, my father-in-law then that was, being a man of a discerning spirit, when he heard of the unfortunate fall of the bell, advised me to get the heritors to big a steeple; but which, when I thought of the expense, I was afraid to do. He, however, having a great skill in the heart of man, gave me no rest on the subject; but told me, that if I allowed the time to go by till the heritors were used to come to the kirk without a bell, I would get no steeple at all. I often wondered what made Mr. Kibbock so fond of a steeple, which is a thing that I never could see a good reason for, saving that it is an ecclesiastical adjunct, like the gown and bands. However, he set me on to get a steeple proposed, and after no little argol-bargling with the heritors, it was agreed to. This was chiefly owing to the instrumentality of Lady Moneyplack, who, in that winter, was much subjected to the rheumatics, she having, one cold and raw Sunday morning, there being no bell to announce the time, come half an hour too soon to the kirk, made her bestir herself to get an interest awakened among the heritors in behalf of a steeple.

But when the steeple was built, a new contention arose. It was thought that the bell, which had been used in the ash-tree, would not do in a stone and lime fabric; so, after great agitation among the heritors, it was resolved to sell the old bell to a foundery in Glasgow, and buy a new bell suitable to the steeple, which was a very comely fabric. The buying of the new bell led to other considerations, and the old Lady Breadland, being at the time in a decaying condition, and making her will, she left a mortification to the parish, as I have intimated, to get a clock; so that, by the time the steeple was finished, and the bell put up, the Lady Breadland's legacy came to be implemented, according to the ordination of the testatrix.

Of the casualities that happened in this year, I should not forget to put down, as a thing for remembrance, that an aged woman, one Nanse Birrel, a distillator of herbs, and well skilled in the healing of sores, who had a great repute among the quarriers and colliers – she having gone to the physic well in the sandy hills to draw water, was found, with her feet uppermost in the well, by some of the bairns of Mr. Lorimore's school; and there was a great debate whether Nanse had fallen in by accident head foremost, or, in a temptation, thrown herself in that position, with her feet sticking up to the evil one; for Nanse was a curious discontented blear-eyed woman, and it was only with great ado that I could get the people keepit from calling her a witchwife.

I should likewise place on record, that the first ass that had ever been seen in this part of the country, came in the course of this year with a gang of tinklers, that made horn-spoons and mended bellows. Where they came from never was well made out; but being a blackaviced crew, they were generally thought to be Egyptians. They tarried about a week among us, living in tents, with their little ones squattling among the litter; and one of the older men of them set and tempered to me two razors, that were as good as nothing, but which he made better than when they were new.

Shortly after, but I am not quite sure whether it was in the end of this year, or the beginning of the next, although I have a notion that it was in this, there came over from Ireland a troop of wild Irish, seeking for work as they said; but they made free quarters, for they herrit the roosts of the clachan, and cutted the throat of a sow of ours, the carcass of which they no doubt intended to steal; but something came over them, and it was found lying at the back side of the manse, to the great vexation of Mrs. Balwhidder; for she had set her mind on a clecking of pigs, and only waited for the China boar, that had been brought down from London by Lord Eaglesham, to mend the breed of pork – a profitable commodity, that her father, Mr. Kibbock, cultivated for the Glasgow market. The destruction of our sow, under such circumstances, was therefore held to be a great crime and cruelty, and it had the effect to raise up such a spirit in the clachan, that the Irish were obligated to decamp; and they set out for Glasgow, where one of them was afterwards hanged for a fact, but the truth concerning how he did it, I either never heard, or it has passed from my mind, like many other things I should have carefully treasured.

CHAPTER VIII
YEAR 1767

All things in our parish were now beginning to shoot up into a great prosperity. The spirit of farming began to get the upper hand of the spirit of smuggling, and the coal-heughs that had been opened in the Douray, now brought a pour of money among us. In the manse, the thrift and frugality of the second Mrs. Balwhidder throve exceedingly, so that we could save the whole stipend for the bank.

The king's highway, as I have related in the foregoing, ran through the Vennel, which was a narrow and a crooked street, with many big stones here and there, and every now and then, both in the spring and the fall, a gathering of middens for the fields; insomuch that the coal-carts from the Douray moor were often reested in the middle of the causey, and on more than one occasion some of them laired altogether in the middens, and others of them broke down. Great complaint was made by the carters anent these difficulties, and there was, for many a day, a talk and sound of an alteration and amendment; but nothing was fulfilled in the matter till the month of March in this year, when the Lord Eaglesham was coming from London to see the new lands that he had bought in our parish. His lordship was a man of a genteel spirit, and very fond of his horses, which were the most beautiful creatures of their kind that had been seen in all the country side. Coming, as I was noting, to see his new lands, he was obliged to pass through the clachan one day, when all the middens were gathered out, reeking and sappy, in the middle of the causey. Just as his lordship was driving in with his prancing steeds, like a Jehu, at one end of the vennel, a long string of loaded coal-carts came in at the other, and there was hardly room for my lord to pass them. What was to be done? His lordship could not turn back, and the coal-carts were in no less perplexity. Every body was out of doors to see and to help; when, in trying to get his lordship's carriage over the top of a midden, the horses gave a sudden loup, and couped the coach, and threw my lord, head foremost, into the very scent-bottle of the whole commodity, which made him go perfect mad, and he swore like a trooper that he would get an act of parliament to put down the nuisance – the which now ripened in the course of this year into the undertaking of the trust-road.

His lordship, being in a woeful plight, left the carriage and came to the manse, till his servant went to the castle for a change for him; but he could not wait nor abide himself: so he got the lend of my best suit of clothes, and was wonderful jocose both with Mrs. Balwhidder and me, for he was a portly man, and I but a thin body, and it was really a droll curiosity to see his lordship clad in my garments.

Out of this accident grew a sort of a neighbourliness between that Lord Eaglesham and me; so that when Andrew Lanshaw, the brother that was of the first Mrs. Balwhidder, came to think of going to India, I wrote to my lord for his behoof, and his lordship got him sent out as a cadet, and was extraordinary discreet to Andrew when he went up to London to take his passage, speaking to him of me as if I had been a very saint, which the Searcher of Hearts knows I am far from thinking myself.

But to return to the making of the trust-road, which, as I have said, turned the town inside out. It was agreed among the heritors, that it should run along the back side of the south houses; and that there should be steadings fued off on each side, according to a plan that was laid down; and this being gone into, the town gradually, in the course of years, grew up into that orderlyness which makes it now a pattern to the country side – all which was mainly owing to the accident that befell the Lord Eaglesham, which is a clear proof how improvements come about, as it were, by the immediate instigation of Providence, which should make the heart of man humble, and change his eyes of pride and haughtiness into a lowly demeanour.

But although this making of the trust-road was surely a great thing for the parish, and of an advantage to my people, we met, in this year, with a loss not to be compensated – that was the death of

Nanse Banks, the schoolmistress. She had been long in a weak and frail state; but being a methodical creature, still kept on the school, laying the foundation for many a worthy wife and mother. However, about the decline of the year her complaints increased, and she sent for me to consult about her giving up the school; and I went to see her on Saturday afternoon, when the bit lassies, her scholars, had put the house in order, and gone home till the Monday.

She was sitting in the window-nook, reading THE WORD to herself, when I entered; but she closed the book, and put her spectacles in for a mark when she saw me; and, as it was expected I would come, her easy-chair, with a clean cover, had been set out for me by the scholars, by which I discerned that there was something more than common to happen, and so it appeared when I had taken my seat.

"Sir," said she, "I hae sent for you on a thing troubles me sairly. I have warsled with poortith in this shed, which it has pleased the Lord to allow me to possess; but my strength is worn out, and I fear I maun yield in the strife;" and she wiped her eye with her apron. I told her, however, to be of good cheer; and then she said, "That she could no longer thole the din of the school, and that she was weary, and ready to lay herself down to die whenever the Lord was pleased to permit." "But," continued she, "what can I do without the school; and, alas! I can neither work nor want; and I am wae to go on the session, for I am come of a decent family." I comforted her, and told her, that I thought she had done so much good in the parish, that the session was deep in her debt, and that what they might give her was but a just payment for her service. "I would rather, however, sir," said she, "try first what some of my auld scholars will do, and it was for that I wanted to speak with you. If some of them would but just, from time to time, look in upon me, that I may not die alane; and the little pick and drap that I require would not be hard upon them – I am more sure that in this way their gratitude would be no discredit, than I am of having any claim on the session."

As I had always a great respect for an honest pride, I assured her that I would do what she wanted; and accordingly, the very morning after, being Sabbath, I preached a sermon on the helplessness of them that have no help of man, meaning aged single women, living in garret-rooms, whose forlorn state, in the gloaming of life, I made manifest to the hearts and understandings of the congregation, in such a manner that many shed tears, and went away sorrowful.

Having thus roused the feelings of my people, I went round the houses on the Monday morning, and mentioned what I had to say more particularly about poor old Nanse Banks, the schoolmistress, and truly I was rejoiced at the condition of the hearts of my people. There was a universal sympathy among them; and it was soon ordered that, what with one and another, her decay should be provided for. But it was not ordained that she should be long heavy on their good-will. On the Monday the school was given up, and there was nothing but wailing among the bit lassies, the scholars, for getting the vacance, as the poor things said, because the mistress was going to lie down to dee. And, indeed, so it came to pass; for she took to her bed the same afternoon, and, in the course of the week, dwindled away, and slipped out of this howling wilderness into the kingdom of heaven, on the Sabbath following, as quietly as a blessed saint could do. And here I should mention, that the Lady Macadam, when I told her of Nanse Banks's case, enquired if she was a snuffer, and, being answered by me that she was, her ladyship sent her a pretty French enamel box full of macabaw, a fine snuff that she had in a bottle; and, among the macabaw, was found a guinea, at the bottom of the box, after Nanse Banks had departed this life, which was a kind thing of Lady Macadam to do.

About the close of this year there was a great sough of old prophecies, foretelling mutations and adversities, chiefly on account of the canal that was spoken of to join the rivers of the Clyde and the Forth, it being thought an impossible thing to be done; and the Adam and Eve pear-tree, in our garden, budded out in an awful manner, and had divers flourishes on it at Yule, which was thought an ominous thing, especially as the second Mrs. Balwhidder was at the downlying with my eldest son Gilbert, that is, the merchant in Glasgow; but nothing came o't, and the howdie said she had an easy time when the child came into the world, which was on the very last day of the year, to

the great satisfaction of me, and of my people, who were wonderful lifted up because their minister had a man-child born unto him.

CHAPTER IX
YEAR 1768

It's a surprising thing how time flieth away, carrying off our youth and strength, and leaving us nothing but wrinkles and the ails of old age. Gilbert, my son, that is now a corpulent man, and a Glasgow merchant, when I take up my pen to record the memorables of this Ann. Dom., seems to me yet but a suckling in swaddling clothes, mewing and peevish in the arms of his mother, that has been long laid in the cold kirkyard, beside her predecessor, in Abraham's bosom. It is not, however, my design to speak much anent my own affairs, which would be a very improper and uncomely thing, but only of what happened in the parish, this book being for a witness and testimony of my ministry. Therefore, setting out of view both me and mine, I will now resuscitate the concerns of Mrs. Malcolm and her children; for, as I think, never was there such a visible preordination seen in the lives of any persons, as was seen in that of this worthy decent woman, and her well-doing off-spring. Her morning was raw, and a sore blight fell upon her fortunes; but the sun looked out on her midday, and her evening closed loun and warm; and the stars of the firmament, that are the eyes of heaven, beamed as it were with gladness, when she lay down to sleep the sleep of rest.

Her son Charles was by this time grown up into a stout buirdly lad, and it was expected that, before the return of the Tobacco trader, he would have been out of his time, and a man afore the mast, which was a great step of preferment, as I heard say by persons skilled in seafaring concerns. But this was not ordered to happen; for, when the Tobacco trader was lying in the harbour of Virginia in the North Americas, a pressgang, that was in need of men for a man-of-war, came on board, and pressed poor Charles, and sailed away with him on a cruise, nobody, for many a day, could tell where, till I thought of the Lord Eaglesham's kindness. His lordship having something to say with the king's government, I wrote to him, telling him who I was, and how jocose he had been when buttoned in my clothes, that he might recollect me, thanking him, at the same time, for his condescension and patronage to Andrew Lanshaw, in his way to the East Indies. I then slipped in, at the end of the letter, a bit nota-bene concerning the case of Charles Malcolm, begging his lordship, on account of the poor lad's widow mother, to enquire at the government if they could tell us any thing about Charles. In the due course of time, I got a most civil reply from his lordship, stating all about the name of the man-of-war, and where she was; and at the conclusion his lordship said, that I was lucky in having the brother of a Lord of the Admiralty on this occasion for my agent, as otherwise, from the vagueness of my statement, the information might not have been procured; which remark of his lordship was long a great riddle to me; for I could not think what he meant about an agent, till, in the course of the year, we heard that his own brother was concerned in the admiralty; so that all his lordship meant was only to crack a joke with me, and that he was ever ready and free to do, as shall be related in the sequel, for he was an excellent man.

There being a vacancy for a schoolmistress, it was proposed to Mrs. Malcolm, that, under her superintendence, her daughter Kate, that had been learning great artifices in needle-work so long with Lady Macadam, should take up the school, and the session undertook to make good to Kate the sum of five pounds sterling per annum, over and above what the scholars were to pay. But Mrs. Malcolm said she had not strength herself to warsle with so many unruly brats, and that Kate, though a fine lassie, was a tempestuous spirit, and might lame some of the bairns in her passion; and that selfsame night, Lady Macadam wrote me a very complaining letter, for trying to wile away her companion; but her ladyship was a canary-headed woman, and given to flights and tantrums, having in her youth been a great toast among the quality. It would, however, have saved her from a sore heart, had she never thought of keeping Kate Malcolm. For this year her only son, who was learning the art of war at an academy in France, came to pay her, his lady mother, a visit. He was a brisk and light-

hearted stripling, and Kate Malcolm was budding into a very rose of beauty; so between them a hankering began, which, for a season, was productive of great heaviness of heart to the poor old cripple lady; indeed, she assured me herself, that all her rheumatics were nothing to the heart-ache which she suffered in the progress of this business. But that will be more treated of hereafter; suffice it to say for the present, that we have thus recorded how the plan for making Kate Malcolm our schoolmistress came to nought. It pleased, however, Him, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, to send at this time among us a Miss Sabrina Hooky, the daughter of old Mr. Hooky, who had been schoolmaster in a neighbouring parish. She had gone, after his death, to live with an auntie in Glasgow, that kept a shop in the Gallowgate. It was thought that the old woman would have left her heir to all her gatherings, and so she said she would, but alas! our life is but within our lip. Before her testament was made, she was carried suddenly off by an apoplectick, an awful monument of the uncertainty of time and the nearness of eternity, in her own shop, as she was in the very act of weighing out an ounce of snuff to a professor of the College, as Miss Sabrina herself told me. Being thus destitute, it happened that Miss Sabrina heard of the vacancy in our parish, as it were, just by the cry of a passing bird, for she could not tell how; although I judge myself that William Keckle the elder had a hand in it, as he was at the time in Glasgow; and she wrote me a wonderful well-penned letter bespeaking the situation, which letter came to hand on the morn following Lady Macadam's stramash to me about Kate Malcolm, and I laid it before the session the same day; so that, by the time her auntie's concern was taken off her hands, she had a home and a howf among us to come in, to the which she lived upwards of thirty years in credit and respect, although some thought she had not the art of her predecessor, and was more uppish in her carriage than befitted the decorum of her vocation. Hers, however, was but a harmless vanity; and, poor woman, she needed all manner of graces to set her out; for she was made up of odds and ends, and had but one good eye, the other being blind, and just like a blue bead. At first she plainly set her cap for Mr. Lorimore, but after oggling and goggling at him every Sunday in the kirk for a whole half-year and more, Miss Sabrina desisted in despair.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.