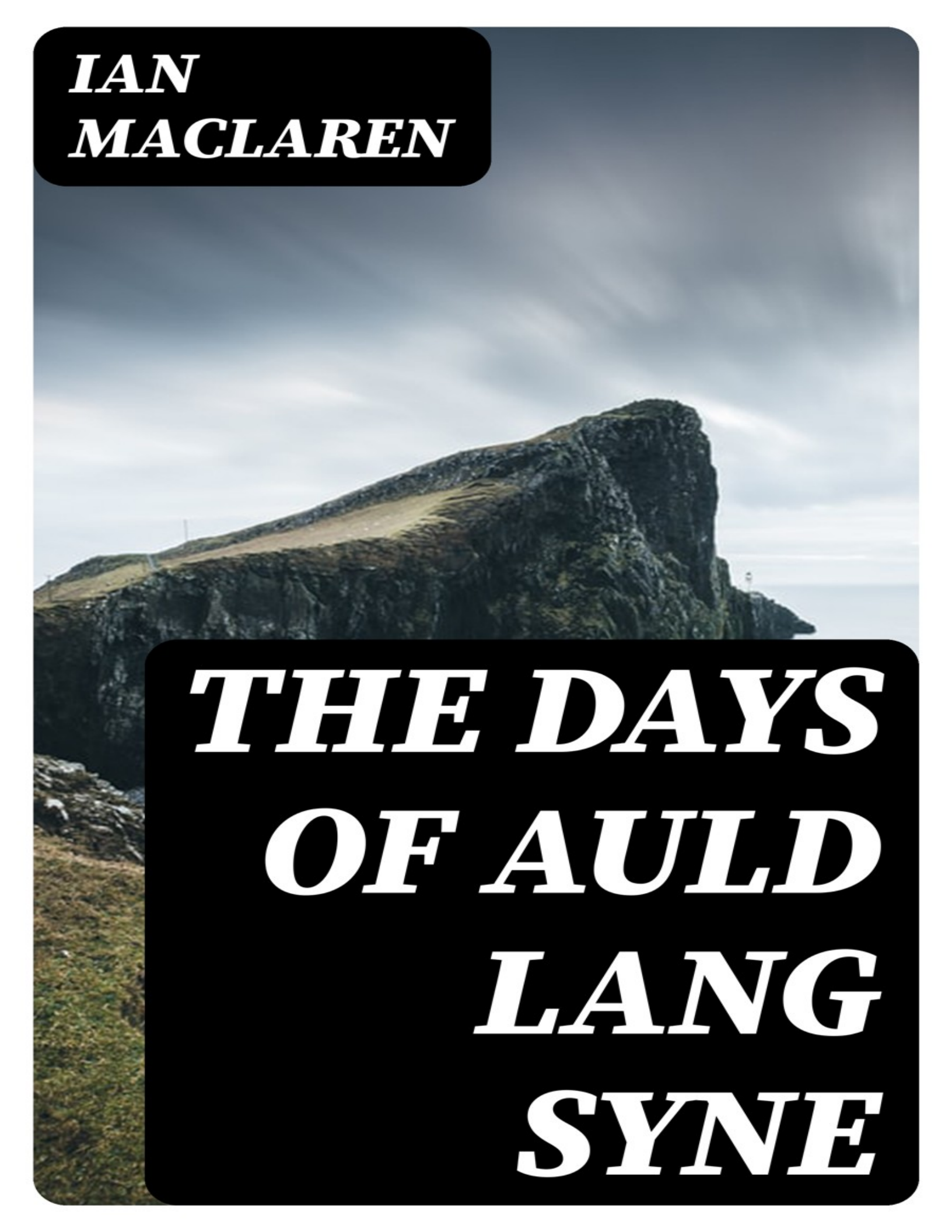
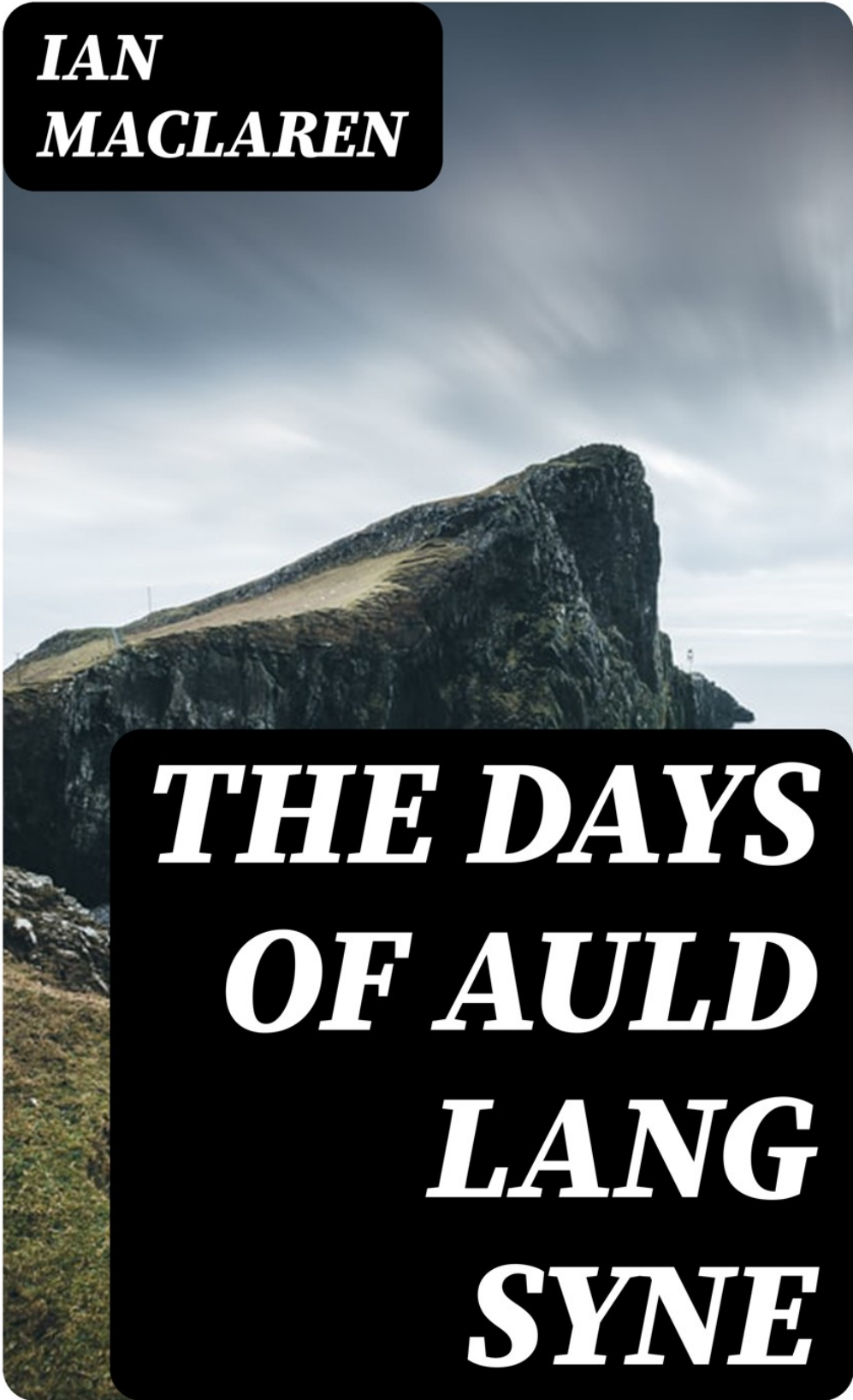


***IAN
MACLAREN***



***THE DAYS
OF AULD
LANG
SYNE***

***IAN
MACLAREN***



***THE DAYS
OF AULD
LANG
SYNE***

Ian Maclaren

The Days of Auld Lang Syne

EAN 8596547018124

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A TRIUMPH IN DIPLOMACY

FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE

II.—THE ENDLESS CHOICE

III.—A DISPLENISHING SALE

V.—THE REPLENISHING OF BURNBRAE

A MANIFEST JUDGMENT

DRUMSHEUGH'S LOVE STORY

III.—DRUMSHEUGH'S REWARD

PAST REDEMPTION

GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY

JAMIE

I.—A NIPPY TONGUE

SERVANT LASS

I.—HOW SHE WENT OUT

II.—HOW SHE CAME HOME

OOR LANG HAME

A TRIUMPH IN DIPLOMACY

Table of Contents

Farms were held on lease in Drumtochty, and according to a good old custom descended from father to son, so that some of the farmers' forbears had been tenants as long as Lord Kilspindie's ancestors had been owners. If a family died out, then a successor from foreign parts had to be introduced, and it was in this way Milton made his appearance and scandalised the Glen with a new religion. It happened also in our time that Gormack, having quarrelled with the factor about a feeding byre he wanted built, flung up his lease in a huff, and it was taken at an enormous increase by a guileless tradesman from Muirtown, who had made his money by selling “pigs” (crockery-ware), and believed that agriculture came by inspiration. Optimists expected that his cash might last for two years, but pessimists declared their belief that a year would see the end of the “merchant's” experiment, and Gormack watched the course of events from a hired house at Kildrummie.

Jamie Soutar used to give him “a cry” on his way to the station, and brought him the latest news.

“It's maybe juist as weel that ye retired frae business, Gormack, for the auld fairm's that spruced up ye wud hardly ken it wes the same place.

“The merchant's put ventilators intae the feedin' byre, and he's speakin' aboot glass windows tae keep the stots frae wearyin', an' as for inventions, the place is fair scatted

up wi' them. There's ain that took me awfu'; it's for peelin' the neeps tae mak them tasty for the cattle beasts.

“Ye hed nae method, man, and a' dinna believe ye hed an inspection a' the years ye were at Gormack. Noo, the merchant is up at half eicht, and gaes ower the hale steadin' wi' Robbie Duff at his heels, him 'at he's got for idle grieve, an' he tries the corners wi' his handkerchief tae see that there's nae stoor (dust).

“It wud dae ye gude tae see his library; the laist day I saw him he wes readin' a book on 'Comparative Agriculture' afore his door, and he explained hoo they grow the maize in Sooth Ameriky; it wes verra interestin'; a' never got as muckle information frae ony fairmer in Drumtochty.”

“A'm gled ye cam in, Jamie,” was all Gormack said, “for I wes near takin' this hoose on a three-year lease. Ae year 'ill be eneuch noo, a'm thinkin'.”

Within eighteen months of his removal Gormack was again in possession at the old rent, and with a rebate for the first year to compensate him for the merchant's improvements.

“It 'ill tak the feck o' twa years,” he explained in the kirkyard, “tae bring the place roond an' pit the auld face on it.

“The byres are nae better than a pair o' fanners wi' wind, and if he hesna planted the laighfield wf berry bushes; an' a've seen the barley fifty-five pund wecht in that very field.

“It's a doonricht sin tae abuse the land like yon, but it 'ill be a lesson, neeburs, an' a'm no expeekin' anither pig merchant 'ill get a fairm in Drumtochty.”

This incident raised Gormack into a historical personage, and invested him with an association of humour for the rest of his life, so that when conversation languished in the third some one would ask Gormack “what he hed dune wi' his ventilators,” or “hoo the berry hairst wes shapin' this year.”

One could not expect a comedy of this kind twice in a generation, but the arranging of a lease was always an event of the first order in our commonwealth, and afforded fine play for every resource of diplomacy. The two contracting parties were the factor, who spent his days in defending his chief's property from the predatory instincts of enterprising farmers, and knew every move of the game, a man of shrewd experience, imperturbable good humour, and many wiles, and on the other side, a farmer whose wits had been sharpened by the Shorter Catechism since he was a boy,—with the Glen as judges. Farms were not put in the *Advertiser* on this estate, and thrown open to the public from Dan to Beersheba, so that there was little risk of the tenant losing his home. Neither did the adjustment of rent give serious trouble, as the fair value of every farm, down to the bit of hill above the arable land and the strips of natural grass along the burns, was known to a pound. There were skirmishes over the rent, of course, but the battle-ground was the number of improvements which the tenant could wring from the landlord at the making of the lease. Had a tenant been in danger of eviction, then the Glen had risen in arms, as it did in the case of Burnbrae; but this was a harmless trial of strength which the Glen watched with critical impartiality. The game was played slowly between seedtime and harvest, and each move was reported in the

kirkyard. Its value was appreciated at once, and although there was greater satisfaction when a neighbour won, yet any successful stroke of the factor's was keenly enjoyed—the beaten party himself conceding its cleverness. When the factor so manipulated the conditions of draining Netherton's meadow land that Netherton had to pay for the tiles, the kirkyard chuckled, and Netherton admitted next market that the factor “wes a lad”—meaning a compliment to his sharpness, for all things were fair in this war—and when Drumsheugh involved the same factor in so many different and unconnected promises of repairs that it was found cheaper in the end to build him a new steading, the fathers had no bounds to their delight; and Whinnie, who took an hour longer than any other man to get a proper hold of anything, suddenly slapped his leg in the middle of the sermon.

No genuine Scotchman ever thought the less of a neighbour because he could drive a hard bargain, and any sign of weakness in such encounters exposed a man to special contempt in our community. No mercy was shown to one who did not pay the last farthing when a bargain had been made, but there was little respect for the man who did not secure the same farthing when the bargain was being made. If a Drumtochty farmer had allowed his potatoes to go to “Piggie” Walker at that simple-minded merchant's first offer, instead of keeping “Pig-gie” all day and screwing him up ten shillings an acre every second hour, we would have shaken our heads over him as if he had been drinking, and the well-known fact that Drumsheugh had worsted dealers from far and near at Muirtown market for a generation was

not his least solid claim on our respect. When Mrs. Macfadyen allowed it to ooze out in the Kildrummie train that she had obtained a penny above the market price for her butter, she received a tribute of silent admiration, broken only by an emphatic "Sall" from Hillocks, while Drumsheugh expressed himself freely on the way up:

"Elsbeth's an able wumman; there 's no a slack bit about her. She wud get her meat frae among ither fouks' feet."

There never lived a more modest or unassuming people, but the horse couper that tried to play upon their simplicity did not boast afterwards, and no one was known to grow rich on his dealings with Drumtochty.

This genius for bargaining was of course seen to most advantage in the affair of a lease; and a year ahead, long before lease had been mentioned, a "cannie" man like Hillocks would be preparing for the campaign. Broken panes of glass in the stable were stuffed with straw after a very generous fashion; cracks in a byre door were clouted over with large pieces of white wood; rickety palings were ostentatiously supported; and the interior of Hillocks' house suggested hard-working and cleanly poverty struggling to cover the defects of a hovel. Neighbours dropping in during those days found Hillocks wandering about with a hammer, putting in a nail here and a nail there, or on the top of the barn trying to make it water-tight before winter, with the air of one stopping leaks in the hope of keeping the ship afloat till she reaches port. But he made no complaint, and had an air of forced cheerfulness.

"Na, na, yir no interruptin' me; a 'm rael gled tae see ye; a' wes juist doin' what a' cud tae keep things thegither.

“An auld buildin's a sair trachle, an' yir feared tae meddle wi 't, for ye nicht bring it doon aboot yir ears.

“But it's no reasonable tae expeck it tae last for ever; it's dune weel and served its time; a' mind it as snod a steadin' as ye wud wish tae see, when a' wes a laddie saxty year past.

“Come in tae the hoose, and we 'ill see what the gude wife hes in her cupboard. Come what may, the 'ill aye be a drop for a freend as lang as a'm leevin.”

“Dinna put yir hat there, for the plaister's been failin', an' it nicht white it; come ower here frae the window; it's no very fast, and the wind comes in at the holes. Man, it 's a pleasure tae see ye, an' here's yir gude health.”

When Hillocks went abroad to kirk or market he made a brave endeavour to conceal his depression, but it was less than successful.

“Yon 's no a bad show o' aits ye hae in the wast park the year, Hillocks; a'm thinkin' the 'ill buke weel.”

“Their lukes are the best o' them, Netherton; they 're thin on the grund an' sma' in the head, but a' cudna expeck better, for the land 's fair worn oot; it wes a gude fairm aince, wi' maybe thirty stacks in the yaird every hairst, and noo a'm no lookin' for mair than twenty the year.”

“Weel, there's nae mistak aboot yir neeps, at ony rate; ye canna see a dreel noo.”

“That wes guano, Netherton; a'hed tae dae something tae get an ootcome wi' ae crap, at ony rate; we maun get the rent some road, ye ken, and pay oor just debts.”

Hillocks conveyed the impression that he was gaining a bare existence, but that he could not maintain the fight for

more than a year, and the third became thoughtful.

“Div ye mind, Netherton,” inquired Drumsheugh on his way from Muirtown station to the market, “hoo mony years Hillocks's 'tack' (lease) hes tae rin?”

“No abune twa or three at maist; a 'm no sure if he hes as muckle.”

“It's oot Martinmas a year as sure yir stannin' there; he 's an auld farrant (far-seeing) lad, Hillocks.”

It was known within a week that Hillocks was setting things in order for the battle.

The shrewdest people have some weak point, and Drumtochty was subject to the delusion that old Peter Robertson, the land steward, had an immense back-stairs influence with the factor and his lordship. No one could affirm that Peter had ever said as much, but he never denied it, not having been born in Drumtochty in vain. He had a habit of detaching himself from the fathers and looking in an abstracted way over the wall when they were discussing the factor or the prospects of a lease, which was more than words, and indeed was equal to a small annual income.

“Ye ken mair o' this than ony o' us, a 'm thinkin', Peter, if ye cud open yir mooth; they say naebody's word gaes farther wi' his lordship.”

“There's some fouk say a lot of havers, Drumsheugh, an' it 's no a' true ye hear,” and after a pause Peter would purse his lips and nod. “A 'm no at leeberty tae speak, an' ye maunna press me.”

When he disappeared into the kirk his very gait was full of mystery, and the fathers seemed to see his lordship and

Peter sitting in council for nights together.

“Didna a' tell ye, neeburs?” said Drumsheugh triumphantly; “ye 'ill no gae far wrang gin ye hae Peter on yir side.”

Hillocks held this faith, and added works also, for he compassed Peter with observances all the critical year, although the word lease never passed between them.

“Ye wud be the better o' new seed, Peter,” Hillocks remarked casually, as he came on the land steward busy in his potato patch. “A 've some kidneys a' dinna ken what tae dae wi'; a 'll send ye up a bag.”

“It's rael kind of ye, Hillocks, but ye were aye neeburly.”

“Dinna speak o't; that 's naething atween auld neeburs. Man, ye micht gie 's a look in when yir passin' on yir trokes. The gude wife hes some graund eggs for setting.”

It was considered a happy device to get Peter to the spot, and Hillocks's management of the visit was a work of art.

“Maister Robertson wud maybe like tae see thae kebbocks (cheeses) yir sending aff tae Muirtown, gude wife, afore we hae oor tea.

“We canna get intae the granary the richt way, for the stair is no chancy noo, an' it wudna dae tae hae an accident wi' his lordship's land steward,” and Hillocks exchanged boxes over the soothing words.

“We 'ill get through the corn-room, but Losh sake, tak care ye dinna trip in the holes o' the floor. A' canna mend mair at it, an' it's scandalous for wastin' the grain.

“It's no sae bad a granary if we hedna tae keep the horses' hay in it, for want o' a richt loft.

“Man, there's times in winter a 'm at ma wits' end wi' a' the cattle in aboot, an' naethin' for them but an open reed (court), an' the wife raging for a calves' byre; but that's no what we cam here for, tae haver aboot the steadin'.”

“Ay, they're bonnie kebbocks, and when yir crops fail, ye 're gled eneuch tae get a pund or twa oot o' the milk.”

And if his Lordship had ever dreamt of taking Peter's evidence, it would have gone to show that Hillocks's steading was a disgrace to the property.

If any one could inveigle Lord Kilspindie himself to visit a farm within sight of the new lease, he had some reason for congratulation, and his lordship, who was not ignorant of such devices, used to avoid farms at such times with carefulness. But he was sometimes off his guard, and when Mrs. Macfadyen met him by accident at the foot of her garden and invited him to rest, he was caught by the lure of her conversation, and turned aside with a friend to hear again the story of Mr. Pittendriegh's goat.

“Well, how have you been, Mrs. Macfadyen, as young as ever, I see, eh? And how many new stories have you got for me? But, bless my soul, what's this?” and his lordship might well be astonished at the sight.

Upon the gravel walk outside the door, Elspeth had placed in a row all her kitchen and parlour chairs, and on each stood a big dish of milk, while a varied covering for this open-air dairy had been extemporised out of Jeems' Sabbath umbrella, a tea-tray, a copy of the *Advertiser*, and a picture of the battle of Waterloo Elspeth had bought from a packman. It was an amazing spectacle, and one not lightly to be forgotten.

“A 'm clean ashamed that ye sud hae seen sic an exhibition, ma lord, and gin a 'd hed time it wud hae been cleared awa.”

“Ye see oor dairy 's that sma' and close that a' daurna keep the mulk in 't a' the het days, an' sae a' aye gie it an airin'; a' wud keep it in anither place, but there's barely room for the bairns an' oorsels.”

Then Elspeth apologised for speaking about household affairs to his lordship, and delighted him with all the gossip of the district, told in her best style, and three new stories, till he promised to build her a dairy and a bed-room for Elsie, to repair the byres, and renew the lease at the old terms.

Elspeth said so at least to the factor, and when he inquired concerning the truth of this foolish concession, Kilspindie laughed, and declared that if he had sat longer he might have had to rebuild the whole place.

As Hillocks could not expect any help from personal fascinations, he had to depend on his own sagacity, and after he had laboured for six months creating an atmosphere, operations began one day at Muirtown market. The factor and he happened to meet by the merest accident, and laid the first parallels.

“Man, Hillocks, is that you? I hevna seen ye since last rent time. I hear ye 're githering the bawbees thegither as usual; ye 'ill be buying a farm o' yir own soon.”

“Nae fear o' that, Maister Leslie; it's a' we can dae tae get a livin'; we 're juist fechtin' awa'; but it comes harder on me noo that a'm gettin' on in years.”

“Toots, nonsense, ye're makin' a hundred clear off that farm if ye mak a penny,” and then, as a sudden thought, “When is your tack out? it canna hae lang tae run.”

“Weel,” said Hillocks, as if the matter had quite escaped him also, “a' believe ye 're richt; it dis rin oot this verra Martinmas.”

“Ye'll need tae be thinkin', Hillocks, what rise ye can offer; his lordship 'ill be expeckin' fifty pund at the least.”

Hillocks laughed aloud, as if the factor had made a successful joke.

“Ye wull hae yir fun, Maister Leslie, but ye ken hoo it maun gae fine. The gude wife an' me were calculating juist by chance, this verra mornin', and we baith settled that we cudna face a new lease comfortable wi' less than a fifty pund reduction, but we micht scrape on wi' forty.”

“You and the wife 'ill hae tae revise yir calculations then, an' a'll see ye again when ye 're reasonable.”

Three weeks later there was another accidental meeting, when the factor and Hillocks discussed the price of fat cattle at length, and then drifted into the lease question before parting.

“Weel, Hillocks, what aboot that rise? will ye manage the fifty, or must we let ye have it at forty?”

“Dinna speak like that, for it 's no jokin' maitter tae me; we micht dae wi' five-and-twenty aff, or even twenty, but a' dinna believe his lordship wud like to see ain o' his auldest tenants squeezed.”

“It's no likely his lordship 'ill take a penny off when he's been expecting a rise; so I 'll just need to put the farm in the

Advertiser—'the present tenant not offering ' ; but I 'll wait a month to let ye think over it."

When they parted both knew that the rent would be settled, as it was next Friday, on the old terms.

Opinion in the kirkyard was divided over this part of the bargain, a minority speaking of it as a drawn battle, but the majority deciding that Hillocks had wrested at least ten pounds from the factor, which on the tack of nineteen years would come to £190. So far Hillocks had done well, but the serious fighting was still to come.

One June day Hillocks sauntered into the factor's office and spent half an hour in explaining the condition of the turnip "breer" in Drumtochty, and then reminded the factor that he had not specified the improvements that would be granted with the new lease.

"Improvements," stormed the factor. "Ye're the most barefaced fellow on the estate, Hillocks; with a rent like that ye can do yir own repairs," roughly calculating all the time what must be allowed.

Hillocks opened his pocket-book, which contained in its various divisions a parcel of notes, a sample of oats, a whip lash, a bolus for a horse, and a packet of garden seeds, and finally extricated a scrap of paper.

"Me and the wife juist made a bit note o' the necessaries that we maun hae, and we 're sure ye 're no the gentleman tae refuse them.

"New windows tae the hoose, an' a bit place for dishes, and maybe a twenty pund note for plastering and painting; that's naething.

“Next, a new stable an' twa new byres, as weel as covering the reed.”

“Ye may as well say a new steadin' at once and save time. Man, what do you mean by coming and havering here with your papers?”

“Weel, if ye dinna believe me, ask Peter Robertson, for the condeetion o' the oot-houses is clean reediklus.”

So it was agreed that the factor should drive out to see for himself, and the kirkyard felt that Hillocks was distinctly holding his own although no one expected him to get the reed covered.

Hillocks received the great man with obsequious courtesy, and the gude wife gave him of her best, and then they proceeded to business. The factor laughed to scorn the idea that Lord Kilspindie should do anything for the house, but took the bitterness out of the refusal by a well-timed compliment to Mrs. Stirton's skill, and declaring she could set up the house with the profits of one summer's butter. Hillocks knew better than try to impress the factor himself by holes in the roof, and they argued greater matters, with the result that the stable was allowed and the byres refused, which was exactly what Hillocks anticipated. The reed roof was excluded as preposterous in cost, but one or two lighter repairs were given as a consolation.

Hillocks considered that on the whole he was doing well, and he took the factor round the farm in fair heart, although his face was that of a man robbed and spoiled.

Hillocks was told he need not think of wire-fencing, but if he chose to put up new palings he might have the fir from the Kilspindie woods, and if he did some draining, the estate

would pay the cost of tiles. When Hillocks brought the factor back to the house for a cup of tea before parting, he explained to his wife that he was afraid they would have to leave in November—the hardness of the factor left no alternative.

Then they fought the battle of the cattle reed up and down, in and out, for an hour, till the factor, who knew that Hillocks was a careful and honest tenant, laid down his ultimatum.

“There's not been a tenant in my time so well treated, but if ye see the draining is well done, I'll let you have the reed.”

“A' suppose,” said Hillocks, “a 'll need tae fall in.” And he reported his achievement to the kirkyard next Sabbath in the tone of one who could now look forward to nothing but a life of grinding poverty.

FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE

[Table of Contents](#)

No man was better liked or more respected than Burnbrae, but the parish was not able to take more than a languid interest in the renewal of his

lease, because it was understood that he would get it on his own terms.

Drumsheugh indeed stated the situation admirably one Sabbath in the kirkyard.

“Whatever is a fair rent atween man an' man Burnbrae 'ill offer, and what he canna gie is no worth hevin' frae anither man.

“As for buildings, he 'ill juist tell the factor onything that's needfu', an' his lordship 'ill be content.

“Noo, here's Hillocks; he'd argle-bargle wi' the factor for a summer, an' a'm no blamin' him, for it 's a fine ploy an' rael interestin' tae the pairish, but it's doonricht wark wi' Burnbrae.

“A 've kent him since he wes a laddie, and a tell ye there's nae dukery-packery (trickery) aboot Burnbrae; he's a straicht man an' a gude neebur. He 'ill be settlin' wi' the new factor this week, a' wes hearin'.”

Next Sabbath the kirkyard was thrown into a state approaching excitement by Jamie Soutar, who, in the course of some remarks on the prospects of harvest, casually mentioned that Burnbrae had been refused his lease, and would be leaving Drumtochty at Martinmas.

“What for?” said Drumsheugh sharply; while Hillocks, who had been offering his box to Whinnie, remained with outstretched arm.

“Naethin' that ye wud expeck, but juist some bit differ wi' the new factor aboot leavin' his kirk an' jining the lave o' us in the Auld Kirk. Noo, if it hed been ower a cattle reed ye cud hae understude it, but for a man——”

“Nae mair o' yir havers, Jamie,” broke in Drumsheugh, “and keep yir tongue aff Burnbrae; man, ye gied me a fricht.”

“Weel, weel, ye dinna believe me, but it wes the gude wife hersel' that said it tae me, and she wes terrible cast doon. They 've been a' their merried life in the place, an' weemen tak ill wi' changes when they're gettin' up in years.”

“A' canna believe it, Jamie”—although Drumsheugh was plainly alarmed; “a 'll grant ye that the new factor is little better than a wauvie, an' a peetifu' dooncome frae Maister Leslie, but he daurna meddle wi' a man's releegion.

“Bigger men than the factors tried that trade in the auld days, and they didna come oot verra weel. Eh, Jamie, ye ken thae stories better than ony o' us.”

“Some o' them cam oot withoot their heads,” said Jamie, with marked satisfaction.

“Forby that,” continued Drumsheugh, gaining conviction. “What dis the wratch ken aither aboot the Auld Kirk or Free Kirk? if he didna ask me laist month hoo mony P. and O.'s we hed in the glen, meanin' U.P.'s, a'm jidgin'.

“He's an Esculopian (Episcopalian) himsel', if he gaes onywhere, an' it wud be a scannal for the like o' him tae mention the word kirk tae Burnbrae.”

“Ye never ken what a factor 'ill dae,” answered Jamie, whose prejudices were invincible, “but the chances are that it 'ill be mischief, setting the tenant against the landlord and the landlord against the tenant; tyrannising ower the ane till he daurna lift his head, an' pushioning the mind o' the ither till he disna ken a true man when he sees him.”

“Preserve 's!” exclaimed Hillocks, amazed at Jamie's eloquence, for the wrong of Burnbrae had roused our cynic to genuine passion, and his little affectations had melted in the white heat.

“What richt hes ony man to hand ower the families that hev been on his estate afore he wes born tae be harried an' insulted by some domineering upstart of a factor, an' then tae spend the money wrung frae the land by honest fouks among strangers and foreigners?”

“What ails the landlords that they wanna live among their ain people and oversee their ain affairs, so that laird and farmer can mak their bargain wi' nae time-serving interloper atween, an' the puirest cottar on an estate hae the richt tae see the man on whose lands he lives, as did his fathers before him?”

“A'm no sayin' a word, mind ye, against Maister Leslie, wha's dead and gaen, or ony factor like him; he aye made the maist he cud for his lordship, an' that wes what he wes paid for; but he wes a fair-dealin' and gude-hearted man, an' he 'ill be sairly missed an' murred afore we 're dune wi' his successor.

“Gin ony man hes sae muckle land that he disna know the fouk that sow an' reap it, then a'm judgin' that he hes ower muckle for the gude o' the commonwealth; an' gin ony landlord needs help, let him get some man o' oor ain flesh an' bluid tae guide his affairs.

“But div ye ken, neeburs, what his lordship hes dune, and what sort o' man he's set ower us, tae meddle wi' affairs he kens naethin' aboot, an' tae trample on the conscience o'

the best man in the Glen? Hae ye heard the history o' oor new ruler?"

Drumtochty was in no mood to interrupt Jamie, who was full of power that day.

"A 'll tell ye, then, what a've got frae a sure hand, an' it's the story o' mony a factor that is hauding the stick ower the heids o' freeborn Scottish men.

"He's the cousin of an English lord, whose forbears got a title by rousing their votes, an' ony conscience they hed, tae the highest bidder in the bad auld days o' the Georges—that's the kind o' bluid that 's in his veins, an' it 's no clean.

"His fouk started him in the airmy, but he hed tae leave—cairds or drink, or baith. He wes a wine-merchant for a whilie an' failed, and then he wes agent for a manure company, till they sent him about his business.

"Aifterwards he sorned on his freends and gambled at the races, till his cousin got roond Lord Kilspindie, and noo he 's left wi' the poor o' life an' death ower fower pairishes while his lordship's awa' traivellin' for his health in the East.

"It may be that he hes little releegion, as Drumsheugh says, an' we a' ken he hes nae intelligence, but he hes plenty o' deevilry, an' he 's made a beginnin' wi' persecutin' Burnbrae.

"A'm an Auld Kirk man," concluded Jamie, "an' an Auld Kirk man a 'll dee unless some misleard body tries tae drive me, an' then a' wud jine the Free Kirk. Burnbrae is the stiffest Free Kirker in Drumtochty, an' mony an argument a've hed wi' him, but that maks nae maitter the day.

"Ilka man hes a richt tae his ain thochts, an' is bund tae obey his conscience accordin' tae his lichts, an' gin the best

man that ever lived is tae dictate oor relegion tae us, then oor fathers focht an' deed in vain.”

Scottish reserve conceals a rich vein of heroic sentiment, and this unexpected outburst of Jamie Soutar had an amazing effect on the fathers, changing the fashion of their countenances and making them appear as new men. When he began, they were a group of working farmers, of slouching gait and hesitating speech and sordid habits, quickened for the moment by curiosity to get a bit of parish news fresh from Jamie's sarcastic tongue; as Jamie's fierce indignation rose to flame, a “dour” look came into their faces, turning their eyes into steel, and tightening their lips like a vice, and before he had finished every man stood straight at his full height, with his shoulders set back and his head erect, while Drumsheugh looked as if he saw an army in battle array, and even Whinnie grasped his snuff-box in a closed fist as if it had been a drawn sword. It was the danger signal of Scottish men, and ancient persecutors who gave no heed to it in the past went crashing to their doom.

“Div ye mean tae say, James Soutar,” said Drumsheugh in another voice than his wont, quieter and sterner, “ye ken this thing for certain, that the new factor hes offered Burnbrae the choice atween his kirk an' his fairm?”

“That is sae, Drumsheugh, as a 'm stannin' in this kirkyaird—although Burnbrae himsel', honest man, hes said naething as yet—an' a' thocht the suner the pairish kent the better.”

“Ye did weel, Jamie, an' a' tak back what a' said aboot jokin'; this 'ill be nae jokin' maitter aither for the factor or Drumtochty.”