CHAPTER III. - THE AULD LICHT KIRK.

One Sabbath day in the beginning of the century the Auld Licht minister at Thrums walked out of his battered, ramshackle, earthen-floored kirk with a following and never returned. The last words he uttered in it were: "Follow me to the commonty, all you persons who want to hear the Word of God properly preached; and James Duphie and his two sons will answer for this on the Day of Judgment." The congregation, which belonged to the body who seceded from the Established Church a hundred and fifty years ago, had split, and as the New Lights (now the U.P.'s) were in the majority, the Old Lights, with the minister at their head, had to retire to the commonty (or common) and hold service in the open air until they had saved up money for a church. They kept possession, however, of the white manse among the trees. Their kirk has but a cluster of members now, most of them old and done, but each is equal to a dozen ordinary churchgoers, and there have been men and women among them on whom memory loves to linger. For forty years they have been dying out, but their cold, stiff pews still echo the Psalms of David, and the Auld Licht kirk will remain open so long as it has one member and a minister.

The church stands round the corner from the square, with only a large door to distinguish it from the other buildings in the short street. Children who want to do a brave thing hit this door with their fists, when there is no one near, and then run away scared. The door, however, is sacred to the memory of a white-haired old lady who, not so long ago, used to march out of the kirk and remain on the pavement until the psalm which had just been given out was sung. Of Thrums' pavement it may here be said that when you come, even to this day, to a level slab you will feel reluctant to leave it. The old lady was Mistress (which is Miss) Tibbie McQuhatty, and she nearly split the Auld Licht kirk over "run line." This conspicuous innovation was introduced by Mr. Dishart, the minister, when he was young and audacious. The old, reverent custom in the kirk was for the precentor to read out the psalm a line at a time. Having then sung that line he read out the next one, led the singing

of it, and so worked his way on to line three. Where run line holds, however, the psalms is read out first, and forthwith sung. This is not only a flighty way of doing things, which may lead to greater scandals, but has its practical disadvantages, for the precentor always starts singing in advance of the congregation (Auld Lichts never being able to begin to do anything all at once), and, increasing the distance with every line, leaves them hopelessly behind at the finish. Miss McQuhatty protested against this change, as meeting the devil half way, but the minister carried his point, and ever after that she rushed ostentatiously from the church the moment a psalm was given out, and remained behind the door until the singing was finished, when she returned, with a rustle, to her seat. Run line had on her the effect of the reading of the Riot Act. Once some men, capable of anything, held the door from the outside, and the congregation heard Tibbie rampaging in the passage. Bursting into the kirk she called the office-bearers to her assistance, whereupon the minister in miniature raised his voice and demanded the why and wherefore of the ungodly disturbance. Great was the hubbub, but the door was fast, and a compromise had to be arrived at. The old lady consented for once to stand in the passage, but not without pressing her hands to her ears. You may smile at Tibbie, but ah! I know what she was at a sick bedside. I have seen her when the hard look had gone from her eyes, and it would ill become me to smile too.

As with all the churches in Thrums, care had been taken to make the Auld Licht one much too large. The stair to the "laft" or gallery, which was originally little more than ladder, is ready for you as soon as you enter the doorway, but it is best to sit in the body of the kirk. The plate for collections is inside the church, so that the whole congregation can give a guess at what you give. If it is something very stingy or very liberal, all Thrums knows of it within a few hours; indeed, this holds good of all the churches, especially perhaps of the Free one, which has been called the bawbee kirk, because so many halfpennies find their way into the plate. On Saturday nights the Thrums shops are besieged for coppers by housewives of all denominations, who would as soon think of dropping a threepenny bit into the plate as of giving nothing. Tammy Todd had a curious way of tipping his penny into the Auld Licht plate while still keeping his hand to his side. He did it much as a boy fires a marble, and there was quite a talk in the congregation the first time he missed. A devout plan was to carry your penny in your hand all the way to church,

but to appear to take it out of your pocket on entering, and some plumped it down noisily like men paying their way. I believe old Snecky Hobart, who was a canty stock but obstinate, once dropped a penny into the plate and took out a halfpenny as change, but the only untoward thing that happened to the plate was once when the lassie from the farm of Curly Bog capsized it in passing. Mr. Dishart, who was always a ready man, introduced something into his sermon that day about women's dress, which every one hoped Christy Lundy, the lassie in question, would remember. Nevertheless, the minister sometimes came to a sudden stop himself when passing from the vestry to the pulpit. The passage being narrow, his rigging would catch in a pew as he sailed down the aisle. Even then, however, Mr. Dishart remembered that he was not as other men.

White is not a religious color, and the walls of the kirk were of a dull gray. A cushion was allowed to the manse pew, but merely as a symbol of office, and this was the only pew in the church that had a door. It was and is the pew nearest to the pulpit on the minister's right, and one day it contained a bonnet, which Mr. Dishart's predecessor preached at for one hour and ten minutes. From the pulpit, which was swaddled in black, the minister had a fine sweep of all the congregation except those in the back pews downstairs, who were lost in the shadow of the laft. Here sat Whinny Webster, so called because, having an inexplicable passion against them, he devoted his life to the extermination of whins. Whinny for years ate peppermint lozenges with impunity in his back seat, safe in the certainty that the minister, however much he might try, could not possibly see him. But his day came. One afternoon the kirk smelt of peppermints, and Mr. Dishart could rebuke no one, for the defaulter was not in sight. Whinny's cheek was working up and down in quiet enjoyment of its lozenge, when he started, noticing that the preaching had stopped. Then he heard a sepulchral voice say "Charles Webster!" Whinny's eyes turned to the pulpit, only part of which was visible to him, and to his horror they encountered the minister's head coming down the stairs. This took place after I had ceased to attend the Auld Licht kirk regularly; but I am told that as Whinny gave one wild scream the peppermint dropped from his mouth. The minister had got him by leaning over the pulpit door until, had he given himself only another inch, his feet would have gone into the air. As for Whinny he became a God-fearing man.

The most uncanny thing about the kirk was the precentor's box beneath the pulpit. Three Auld Licht ministers I have known, but I can only conceive one precentor. Lang Tammas' box was much too small for him. Since his disappearance from Thrums I believe they have paid him the compliment of enlarging it for a smaller man, no doubt with the feeling that Tammas alone could look like a Christian in it. Like the whole congregation, of course, he had to stand during the prayers--the first of which averaged half an hour in length. If he stood erect his head and shoulders vanished beneath funereal trappings, when he seemed decapitated, and if he stretched his neck the pulpit tottered. He looked like the pillar on which it rested, or he balanced it on his head like a baker's tray. Sometimes he leaned forward as reverently as he could, and then, with his long, lean arms dangling over the side of his box, he might have been a suit of "blacks" hung up to dry. Once I was talking with Cree Queery in a sober, respectable manner, when all at once a light broke out on his face. I asked him what he was laughing at, and he said it was at Lang Tammas. He got grave again when I asked him what there was in Lang Tammas to smile at, and admitted that he could not tell me. However, I have always been of opinion that the thought of the precentor in his box gave Cree a fleeting sense of humor.

Tammas and Hendry Munn were the two paid officials of the church, Hendry being kirk-officer; but poverty was among the few points they had in common. The precentor was a cobbler, though he never knew it, shoemaker being the name in those parts, and his dwelling-room was also his workshop. There he sat in his "brot," or apron, from early morning to far on to midnight, and contrived to make his six or eight shillings a week. I have often sat with him in the darkness that his "cruizey" lamp could not pierce, while his mutterings to himself of "ay, ay, yes, umpha, oh ay, ay man," came as regularly and monotonously as the tick of his "wag-at-the-wa'" clock. Hendry and he were paid no fixed sum for their services in the Auld Licht kirk, but once a year there was a collection for each of them, and so they jogged along. Though not the only kirk-officer of my time Hendry made the most lasting impression. He was, I think, the only man in Thrums who did not quake when the minister looked at him. A wild story, never authenticated, says that Hendry once offered Mr. Dishart a snuff from his mull. In the streets Lang Tammas was more stern and dreaded by evil-doers, but Hendry had first place in the kirk. One of his duties was to precede the minister

from the session-house to the pulpit and open the door for him. Having shut Mr. Dishart in he strolled away to his seat. When a strange minister preached, Hendry was, if possible, still more at his ease. This will not be believed, but I have seen him give the pulpit-door on these occasions a fling to with his feet. However ill an ordinary member of the congregation might become in the kirk he sat on till the service ended, but Hendry would wander to the door and shut it if he noticed that the wind was playing irreverent tricks with the pages of Bibles, and proof could still be brought forward that he would stop deliberately in the aisle to lift up a piece of paper, say, that had floated there. After the first psalm had been sung it was Hendry's part to lift up the plate and carry its tinkling contents to the session-house. On the greatest occasions he remained so calm, so indifferent, so expressionless, that he might have been present the night before at a rehearsal.

When there was preaching at night the church was lit by tallow candles, which also gave out all the artificial heat provided. Two candles stood on each side of the pulpit, and others were scattered over the church, some of them fixed into holes on rough brackets, and some merely sticking in their own grease on the pews. Hendry superintended the lighting of the candles, and frequently hobbled through the church to snuff them. Mr. Dishart was a man who could do anything except snuff a candle, but when he stopped in his sermon to do that he as often as not knocked the candle over. In vain he sought to refix it in its proper place, and then all eyes turned to Hendry. As coolly as though he were in a public hall or place of entertainment, the kirk-officer arose and, mounting the stair, took the candle from the minister's reluctant hands and put it right. Then he returned to his seat, not apparently puffed up, yet perhaps satisfied with himself; while Mr. Dishart, glaring after him to see if he was carrying his head high, resumed his wordy way.

Never was there a man more uncomfortably loved than Mr. Dishart. Easie Haggart, his maid-servant, reproved him at the breakfast table. Lang Tammas and Sam'l Mealmaker crouched for five successive Sabbath nights on his manse-wall to catch him smoking (and got him). Old wives grumbled by their hearths when he did not look in to despair of their salvation. He told the maidens of his congregation not to make an idol of him. His session saw him (from behind a haystack) in conversation with a strange woman, and asked grimly if he remembered that he had a wife. Twenty were his years when he came to Thrums, and

on the very first Sabbath he knocked a board out of the pulpit. Before beginning his trial sermon he handed down the big Bible to the precentor, to give his arms free swing. The congregation, trembling with exhilaration, probed his meaning. Not a square inch of paper, they saw, could be concealed there. Mr. Dishart had scarcely any hope for the Auld Lichts; he had none for any other denomination. Davit Lunan got behind his handkerchief to think for a moment, and the minister was on him like a tiger. The call was unanimous. Davit proposed him.

Every few years, as one might say, the Auld Licht kirk gave way and buried its minister. The congregation turned their empty pockets inside out, and the minister departed in a farmer's cart. The scene was not an amusing one to those who looked on at it. To the Auld Lichts was then the humiliation of seeing their pulpit "supplied" on alternate Sabbaths by itinerant probationers or stickit ministers. When they were not starving themselves to support a pastor the Auld Lichts were saving up for a stipend. They retired with compressed lips to their looms, and weaved and weaved till they weaved another minister. Without the grief of parting with one minister there could not have been the transport of choosing another. To have had a pastor always might have made them vain-glorious.

They were seldom longer than twelve months in making a selection, and in their haste they would have passed over Mr. Dishart and mated with a monster. Many years have elapsed since Providence flung Mr. Watts out of the Auld Licht kirk. Mr. Watts was a probationer who was tried before Mr. Dishart, and, though not so young as might have been wished, he found favor in many eyes. "Sluggard in the laft, awake!" he cried to Bell Whamond, who had forgotten herself, and it was felt that there must be good stuff in him. A breeze from Heaven exposed him on Communion Sabbath.

On the evening of this solemn day the door of the Auld Licht kirk was sometimes locked, and the congregation repaired, Bible in hand, to the commonty. They had a right to this common on the Communion Sabbath, but only took advantage of it when it was believed that more persons intended witnessing the evening service than the kirk would hold. On this day the attendance was always very great.

It was the Covenanters come back to life. To the summit of the slope a wooden box was slowly hurled by Hendry Munn and others, and round this the congregation quietly grouped to the tinkle of the cracked Auld Licht bell. With slow, majestic tread the session advanced upon the steep common with the little minister in their midst. He had the people in his hands now, and the more he squeezed them the better they were pleased. The travelling pulpit consisted of two compartments, the one for the minister and the other for Lang Tammas, but no Auld Licht thought that it looked like a Punch and Judy puppet show. This service on the common was known as the "tent preaching," owing to a tent's being frequently used instead of the box.

Mr. Watts was conducting the service on the commonty. It was a fine, still summer evening, and loud above the whisper of the burn from which the common climbs, and the labored "pechs" of the listeners, rose the preacher's voice. The Auld Lichts in their rusty blacks (they must have been a more artistic sight in the olden days of blue bonnets and knee-breeches) nodded their heads in sharp approval, for though they could swoop down on a heretic like an eagle on carrion, they scented no prey. Even Lang Tammas, on whose nose a drop of water gathered when he was in his greatest fettle, thought that all was fair and above-board. Suddenly a rush of wind tore up the common, and ran straight at the pulpit. It formed in a sieve, and passed over the heads of the congregation, who felt it as a fan, and looked up in awe. Lang Tammas, feeling himself all at once grow clammy, distinctly heard the leaves of the pulpit Bible shiver. Mr. Watts' hands, outstretched to prevent a catastrophe, were blown against his side, and then some twenty sheets of closely written paper floated into the air. There was a horrible, dead silence. The burn was roaring now. The minister, if such he can be called, shrank back in his box, and as if they had seen it printed in letters of fire on the heavens, the congregation realized that Mr. Watts, whom they had been on the point of calling, read his sermon. He wrote it out on pages the exact size of those in the Bible, and did not scruple to fasten these into the Holy Book itself. At theatres a sullen thunder of angry voices behind the scene represents a crowd in a rage, and such a low, long-drawn howl swept the common when Mr. Watts was found out. To follow a pastor who "read" seemed to the Auld Lichts like claiming heaven on false pretences. In ten minutes the session alone, with Lang Tammas and Hendry, were on the common. They were watched by many

from afar off, and (when one comes to think of it now) looked a little curious jumping, like trout at flies, at the damning papers still fluttering in the air. The minister was never seen in our parts again, but he is still remembered as "Paper Watts."

Mr. Dishart in the pulpit was the reward of his upbringing. At ten he had entered the university. Before he was in his teens he was practising the art of gesticulation in his father's gallery pew. From distant congregations people came to marvel at him. He was never more than comparatively young. So long as the pulpit trappings of the kirk at Thrums lasted he could be seen, once he was fairly under way with his sermon, but dimly in a cloud of dust. He introduced headaches. In a grand transport of enthusiasm he once flung his arms over the pulpit and caught Lang Tammas on the forehead. Leaning forward, with his chest on the cushions, he would pommel the Evil One with both hands, and then, whirling round to the left, shake his fist at Bell Whamond's neckerchief. With a sudden jump he would fix Pete Todd's youngest boy catching flies at the laft window. Stiffening unexpectedly, he would leap three times in the air, and then gather himself in a corner for a fearsome spring. When he wept he seemed to be laughing, and he laughed in a paroxysm of tears. He tried to tear the devil out of the pulpit rails. When he was not a teetotum he was a windmill. His pump position was the most appalling. Then he glared motionless at his admiring listeners, as if he had fallen into a trance with his arm upraised. The hurricane broke next moment. Nanny Sutie bore up under the shadow of the windmill--which would have been heavier had Auld Licht ministers worn gowns--but the pump affected her to tears. She was stone-deaf.

For the first year or more of his ministry an Auld Licht minister was a mouse among cats. Both in the pulpit and out of it they watched for unsound doctrine, and when he strayed they took him by the neck. Mr. Dishart, however, had been brought up in the true way, and seldom gave his people a chance. In time, it may be said, they grew despondent, and settled in their uncomfortable pews with all suspicion of lurking heresy allayed. It was only on such Sabbaths as Mr. Dishart changed pulpits with another minister that they cocked their ears and leaned forward eagerly to snap the preacher up.

Mr. Dishart had his trials. There was the split in the kirk, too, that comes once at least to every Auld Licht minister. He was long in

marrying. The congregation were thinking of approaching him, through the medium of his servant, Easie Haggart, on the subject of matrimony; for a bachelor coming on for twenty-two, with an income of eighty pounds per annum, seemed an anomaly--when one day he took the canal for Edinburgh and returned with his bride. His people nodded their heads, but said nothing to the minister. If he did not choose to take them into his confidence, it was no affair of theirs. That there was something queer about the marriage, however, seemed certain. Sandy Whamond, who was a soured man after losing his eldership, said that he believed she had been an "Englishy"--in other words, had belonged to the English Church; but it is not probable that Mr. Dishart would have gone the length of that. The secret is buried in his grave.

Easie Haggart jagged the minister sorely. She grew loquacious with years, and when he had company would stand at the door joining in the conversation. If the company was another minister, she would take a chair and discuss Mr. Dishart's infirmities with him. The Auld Lichts loved their minister, but they saw even more clearly than himself the necessity for his humiliation. His wife made all her children's clothes, but Sanders Gow complained that she looked too like their sister. In one week three of the children died, and on the Sabbath following it rained. Mr. Dishart preached, twice breaking down altogether and gaping strangely round the kirk (there was no dust flying that day), and spoke of the rain as angels' tears for three little girls. The Auld Lichts let it pass, but, as Lang Tammas said in private (for, of course, the thing was much discussed at the looms), if you materialize angels in that way, where are you going to stop?

It was on the fast-days that the Auld Licht kirk showed what it was capable of, and, so to speak, left all the other churches in Thrums far behind. The fast came round once every summer, beginning on a Thursday, when all the looms were hushed, and two services were held in the kirk of about three hours' length each. A minister from another town assisted at these times, and when the service ended the members filed in at one door and out at another, passing on their way Mr. Dishart and his elders, who dispensed "tokens" at the foot of the pulpit. Without a token, which was a metal lozenge, no one could take the sacrament on the coming Sabbath, and many a member has Mr. Dishart made miserable by refusing him his token for gathering wild-flowers, say, on a Lord's Day (as testified to by another member). Women were lost who

cooked dinners on the Sabbath, or took to colored ribbons, or absented themselves from church without sufficient cause. On the fast-day fists were shaken at Mr. Dishart as he walked sternly homeward, but he was undismayed. Next day there were no services in the kirk, for Auld Lichts could not afford many holidays, but they weaved solemnly, with Saturday and the Sabbath and Monday to think of. On Saturday service began at two and lasted until nearly seven. Two sermons were preached, but there was no interval. The sacrament was dispensed on the Sabbath. Nowadays the "tables" in the Auld Licht kirk are soon "served," for the attendance has decayed, and most of the pews in the body of the church are made use of. In the days of which I speak, however, the front pews alone were hung with white, and it was in them only the sacrament was administered. As many members as could get into them delivered up their tokens and took the first table. Then they made room for others, who sat in their pews awaiting their turn. What with tables, the preaching, and unusually long prayers, the service lasted from eleven to six. At half-past six a two hours' service began, either in the kirk or on the common, from which no one who thought much about his immortal soul would have dared (or cared) to absent himself. A four hours' service on the Monday, which, like that of the Saturday, consisted of two services in one, but began at eleven instead of two, completed the programme.

On those days, if you were a poor creature and wanted to acknowledge it, you could leave the church for a few minutes and return to it, but the creditable thing was to sit on. Even among the children there was a keen competition, fostered by their parents, to sit each other out, and be in at the death.

The other Thrums kirks held the sacrament at the same time, but not with the same vehemence. As far north from the school-house as Thrums is south of it, nestles the little village of Quharity, and there the fast-day was not a day of fasting. In most cases the people had to go many miles to church. They drove or rode (two on a horse), or walked in from other glens. Without "the tents," therefore, the congregation, with a long day before them, would have been badly off. Sometimes one tent sufficed; at other times rival publicans were on the ground. The tents were those in use at the feeing and other markets, and you could get anything inside them, from broth made in a "boiler" to the firiest whiskey. They were planted just outside the kirk-gate--long, low tents of dirty white canvas--

so that when passing into the church or out of it you inhaled their odors. The congregation emerged austerely from the church, shaking their heads solemnly over the minister's remarks, and their feet carried them into the tent. There was no mirth, no unseemly revelry, but there was a great deal of hard drinking. Eventually the tents were done away with, but not until the services on the fast-days were shortened. The Auld Licht ministers were the only ones who preached against the tents with any heart, and since the old dominie, my predecessor at the school-house, died, there has not been an Auld Licht permanently resident in the glen of Quharity.

Perhaps nothing took it out of the Auld Licht males so much as a christening. Then alone they showed symptoms of nervousness, more especially after the remarkable baptism of Eppie Whamond. I could tell of several scandals in connection with the kirk. There was, for instance, the time when Easie Haggart saved the minister. In a fit of temporary mental derangement the misguided man had one Sabbath day, despite the entreaties of his affrighted spouse, called at the post-office, and was on the point of reading the letter there received when Easie, who had slipped on her bonnet and followed him, snatched the secular thing from his hands. There was the story that ran like fire through Thrums and crushed an innocent man, to the effect that Pete Todd had been in an Edinburgh theatre countenancing the play-actors. Something could be made, too, of the retribution that came to Charlie Ramsay, who woke in his pew to discover that its other occupant, his little son Jamie, was standing on the seat divesting himself of his clothes in presence of a horrified congregation. Jamie had begun stealthily, and had very little on when Charlie seized him. But having my choice of scandals I prefer the christening one--the unique case of Eppie Whamond, who was born late on Saturday night and baptized in the kirk on the following forenoon.

To the casual observer the Auld Licht always looked as if he were returning from burying a near relative. Yet when I met him hobbling down the street, preternaturally grave and occupied, experience taught me that he was preparing for a christening. How the minister would have borne himself in the event of a member of his congregation's wanting the baptism to take place at home it is not easy to say; but I shudder to think of the public prayers for the parents that would certainly have followed. The child was carried to the kirk through rain, or snow, or sleet, or wind; the father took his seat alone in the front pew, under the

minister's eye, and the service was prolonged far on into the afternoon. But though the references in the sermon to that unhappy object of interest in the front pew were many and pointed, his time had not really come until the minister signed to him to advance as far as the second step of the pulpit stairs. The nervous father clenched the railing in a daze, and cowered before the ministerial heckling. From warning the minister passed to exhortation, from exhortation to admonition, from admonition to searching questioning, from questioning to prayer and wailing. When the father glanced up, there was the radiant boy in the pulpit looking as if he would like to jump down his throat. If he hung his head the minister would ask, with a groan, whether he was unprepared; and the whole congregation would sigh out the response that Mr. Dishart had hit it. When he replied audibly to the minister's uncomfortable questions, a pained look at his flippancy travelled from the pulpit all round the pews; and when he only bowed his head in answer, the minister paused sternly, and the congregation wondered what the man meant. Little wonder that Davie Haggart took to drinking when his turn came for occupying that front pew.

If wee Eppie Whamond's birth had been deferred until the beginning of the week, or humility had shown more prominently among her mother's virtues, the kirk would have been saved a painful scandal, and Sandy Whamond might have retained his eldership. Yet it was a foolish but wifely pride in her husband's official position that turned Bell Dundas' head--a wild ambition to beat all baptismal record.

Among the wives she was esteemed a poor body whose infant did not see the inside of the kirk within a fortnight of its birth. Forty years ago it was an accepted superstition in Thrums that the ghosts of children who had died before they were baptized went wailing and wringing their hands round the kirk-yard at nights, and that they would continue to do this until the crack of doom. When the Auld Licht children grew up, too, they crowed over those of their fellows whose christening had been deferred until a comparatively late date, and the mothers who had needlessly missed a Sabbath for long afterward hung their heads. That was a good and creditable birth which took place early in the week, thus allowing time for suitable christening preparations; while to be born on a Friday or a Saturday was to humiliate your parents, besides being an extremely ominous beginning for yourself. Without seeking to vindicate Bell Dundas' behavior, I may note, as an act of ordinary fairness, that, being

the leading elder's wife, she was sorely tempted. Eppie made her appearance at 9:45 on a Saturday night.

In the hurry and skurry that ensued, Sandy escaped sadly to the square. His infant would be baptized eight days old--one of the longest deferred christenings of the year. Sandy was shivering under the clock when I met him accidentally, and took him home. But by that time the harm had been done. Several of the congregation had been roused from their beds to hear his lamentations, of whom the men sympathized with him, while the wives triumphed austerely over Bell Dundas. As I wrung poor Sandy's hand, I hardly noticed that a bright light showed distinctly between the shutters of his kitchen-window; but the elder himself turned pale and breathed quickly. It was then fourteen minutes past twelve.

My heart sank within me on the following forenoon, when Sandy Whamond walked, with a queer twitching face, into the front pew under a glare of eyes from the body of the kirk and the laft. An amazed buzz went round the church, followed by a pursing up of lips and hurried whisperings. Evidently Sandy had been driven to it against his own judgment. The scene is still vivid before me: the minister suspecting no guile, and omitting the admonitory stage out of compliment to the elder's standing; Sandy's ghastly face; the proud godmother (aged twelve) with the squalling baby in her arms; the horror of the congregation to a man and woman. A slate fell from Sandy's house even as he held up the babe to the minister to receive a "droukin'" of water, and Eppie cried so vigorously that her shamed godmother had to rush with her to the vestry. Now things are not as they should be when an Auld Licht infant does not quietly sit out her first service.

Bell tried for a time to carry her head high; but Sandy ceased to whistle at his loom, and the scandal was a rolling stone that soon passed over him. Briefly it amounted to this: that a bairn born within two hours of midnight on Saturday could not have been ready for christening at the kirk next day without the breaking of the Sabbath. Had the secret of the nocturnal light been mine alone all might have been well; but Betsy Mund's evidence was irrefutable. Great had been Bell's cunning, but Betsy had outwitted her. Passing the house on the eventful night, Betsy had observed Marget Dundas, Bell's sister, open the door and creep cautiously to the window, the chinks in the outside shutters of which she cunningly closed up with "tow." As in a flash the disgusted Betsy saw

what Bell was up to, and, removing the tow, planted herself behind the dilapidated dyke opposite and awaited events. Questioned at a special meeting of the office-bearers in the vestry, she admitted that the lamp was extinguished soon after twelve o'clock, though the fire burned brightly all night. There had been unnecessary feasting during the night, and six eggs were consumed before breakfast-time. Asked how she knew this, she admitted having counted the eggshells that Marget had thrown out of doors in the morning. This, with the testimony of the persons from whom Sandy had sought condolence on the Saturday night, was the case for the prosecution. For the defence, Bell maintained that all preparations stopped when the clock struck twelve, and even hinted that the bairn had been born on Saturday afternoon. But Sandy knew that he and his had got a fall. In the forenoon of the following Sabbath the minister preached from the text, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and in the afternoon from "Pride goeth before a fall." He was grand. In the evening Sandy tendered his resignation of office, which was at once accepted. Webs were behind-hand for a week, owing to the length of the prayers offered up for Bell; and Lang Tammas ruled in Sandy's stead.