

repeated, « I mind once, I caused an awfu' bletcher by simply nodding an appreciation tae a quotation frae Rabbie Burns, yet I mind when the same lassie kissed me for whispering the self same words in her ear . . . ye'll ken the lines ?

Their tricks and crafts hae put me daft,

*They've taen me in and a' that,
But clear your decks and—here's
the sex !*

I like the jades for a' that.

Mind it's a' a matter o' the circumstance for a woman will nae be hurried and nae be laughed at among her friends, but provided the girl is nae pushed or hurried they can be the maist forgiving creatures in the wurrl'd.»

Having delivered himself of this profundity the old man stroked his mutton chop whiskers and returned to his pipe for a moment, then with an eye on the decanter standing on the low table beside the fire, again called up the bard with:

*A man may drink an no be drunk
A man may fight an no be slain
A man may kiss a bonnie lass
An aye be welcome back again.*

Not slow to take the hint, and feeling more hopeful than before, Duncan said, « Will you have a whisky, Grandfather ? » Though his tone was cordial it was tremulous, but his hand he noticed was, however, quite steady as he poured out two glasses in response to the old man's « Weel it's a dry business talking.»

They both stood up to drink the toast. Duncan giving « Merry Christmas » in reply to the old man's « S'lante, » and now the ice was broken it was Duncan who did the talking.

« Of course grandfather, the smug sentimentality of Robbie Burns may have fitted in O.K. in your day and age, but the woman of to-day is damned independent. They're individualists and this kiss and come again business doesn't work. Our modern poets sum it up in words like this—

*Peace in our time oh Lord but no
time to be bored,
Peace to be strenuous
Lesbian Horsey
Yet look ingenuous
Though a divorcee
Peace in our time oh Lord !*

We like to please ourselves without interference and this especially applies to women. I dunno; I guess we're different; life's more difficult or something ! »

« Heh ! A poor thing that bard of yours, wi nae lilt tae his song, an' man, the kirk and the taproom gang ill taegether . . . the things nae respectable ! A fine peace ye'll find; ye make life deeficult with that lay.»

It was clear that the old man was indignant, for he puffed mightily at his pipe so that Duncan's next utterance was cut short by a cough—it was strong tobacco ! The smoke seemed to envelop him. He coughed again—the door must be ajar—the chimney smoked abominably when the door was left open. Suddenly he was awake—the fire was smoking and instinctively he kicked it into a blaze again. Then, in an atmosphere still distinctly eerie, discovered two things. The picture was as he'd always remembered it and the door was ajar ! With unsteady gait he made his way to the light switch and with eyes still fixed on the picture, snapped on the light.

The old man sat, as always, surrounded by his painted paraphernalia—an enigmatic smile on his bewhiskered face—but tucked between the frame and the canvas was a note. With some trepidation Duncan opened the folded paper and his heart leaped as he read in the bold, round hand he knew so well—

Darling,

It was silly of us both and I came to tell you; but you were asleep, simply buried in cretonne cushions—

Bad lad, you'd been drinking with your rowdy friends for I picked up a broken glass from the carpet before I crept away home.

I did want to say « Merry Xmas » to you at—12 o'clock. I've been feeling awful blue ! « Ye'll aye be welcome back again, » lad.

Sally.

With a whoop of delight he was gone. The old man still wore his enigmatic smile, the clock ticked steadily and chimed 11.30, and the fire still smoked, for in his haste Duncan, too, had forgotten to close the door.