

Cheptir Ane

Parnassus Brae

A wes sut at ma nyow wrytin daisk, i thochtish bon. The wie bit buird wes toukit queme-lik unner the oexter o the coum i ma chaumer. Throu the storm windae cuid be hard the raise an faw o the clishmacklaiverin o the louns outby on the causie, lik a hyne poutrie rie. The dorik tuin o the callans at bene tuimed out o the Croun Hottil owerby hed the samen saft soun o the contentit kekkin o hens, wi the reglar leirie-la o lauchter brustin out ivverie fyow meinits. A nivver trystit wi the tounsfowk at the barr, kiz ma mither, Margaret, hed a rinnin fecht wi aw hir neipours an thocht we wes ower gentele ti foirgaiter wi the liks o thaim, oniegates.

Als, we hed aye puirtith fur a ludger. A hae nivver wirkit aw ma leivin days. Nou ma puir mither bene awaw-taen til ane auld-fowks' hame. Thai tel me at A canna sei eftir hir richt. Sae A wes set thare skartin ma pow ti halp finnd a wey forrit. O a suddentie a norie spangit intil ma harn. A'l mak a buik i Scots. A hard the dorik uised ilka day. Bot whitwey cuid a dawlie docus lik masell well thegither aw the wirds an ditons o sicna a michtie projek? A wes dang down in a saicont. A thocht o ma kizzens, weill hained an bein doun-by i Embro an Lononburgh. Ma souch tirmed wersh. Whitwey suidna thai gie me a heize ti wun a skair o the faimlie's auld walth an facultie? A recognosed A wes wissin fur the muin an begoud ti reflek on ma faither, lang deid, at A wuid tryst wi i Heiven at ma lang hinner-en. A maun hae dovert-ower, sen the neist thing, The Lord God Almichtie kythit afoir me in aw hiz glore wi the exak swype o thon limnin bi Micheal Angell o Camprese (or is it Leonard o Vinci, A canna mynd.)

“Weill !” says God.

A’m eith bumbazed sae this A rale stamagaster.

“A’m geyan glaid ti be quent wi ye, Lord,” A stuttit out. Hiz eibrous cam thegither lik a storm clud.

“Ye socht ti speik wi yeir Faither I Heiven an nou ye hae Ma audisence. Gie me yeir inquere richt gleglie, fur A’m a verra beisie immortal,” says God, wi a voss lik thunner clourin aff the taps o the Cuillins. Ma tung wesna connekkit ti ma harns onie mair, an A hard masell peinge out,

“Whitwey speik ye the Scotch ?”

Wi the rummel o a yird-quaik God vainisht an ane hameart wicht wi lang haffits an a doun-hingin tash tuik Hiz plece.

“Aye, whit is’t nou ?” he sechtit. A wes a whein mair bauld-lik whan A fand at A hedna bene brunt til a shunner sae A says til the wicht,

“A’m Roland Vypont o Laurencekirk an wuid ken yeir nem, guid stir.”

He reponed in a dreich voss, “A’m Saunt Andra at dales wi Scotch maitters.”

“Guid,” A says (fur wir pawtron saunt wesna nerr sae terril biz God), “A wiss ti skreive a buikie i Scots, bot A hivna onie knowlege o the craift. A hae mister o yeir aveisement whitwey ti set about it.” Saunt Andra tuik a weill thoumed nott-buik out o’z plaidie an hed a bit skance throu’d. “A sei at yeir mither is lik ti cum by this airt, belyve. Shae’s a puir auld cailleach at’s hed a sair rowe ti hyowe, tho a littil carnaptiuss. Fur hir sake A’l gie ye a heize.”

He wheiched me out ma cheir intil a fremmit causie wi heich stane waws aw along o’d. We hirpled doun the rodd an eftir a wie, A notished at the wes mukkil houssis ahent the waws, ilkane wi a lokkit yett, a bell an a talieduce plett skreivit wi the inbyders nem an teitil.

“Whitlik fowk dwall i thon weill-faured wones ?” A axed, hummil-lik. The saunt didna awnser fur he wes haein a bit sneishin ! Eftir a michtie neize he replied,

“Luik at the nems fur yeirsell.”

“Bot A canna rede thon auld warl lettirin,” A awned.

“Halp ma bob !” yellochs Saunt Andra, “Ye ar gaun ti be maist deiffekwalt ti halp. Can ye anerlie uise bairn’s haun o wryte?”

“Ay, bot A’m maist swythe wi thon,” A awnsert. “It’s juist at A canna manish aw thae pirlicues an eirieorums.”

“Weill dinna fash. A’l skreid thaim aff fur ye. Sei, thon’s Nummer Echtie-Sax, James Barrie, an this ane’s Kenneth Grahame wi John Buchan owerby.”

“A dinna ken onie o thae cheils. A’m feirt at thai’r aw lairdies or gentries, juidgin bi the bouk o thair dwallins an A hivna hed onie treffik wi sic kinkeind o fowk.” Saunt Andra gied anither depe secht.

“Ye puir sowel ye! Dae ye no ken whaurabouts A hae taen ye.”

He pyntit ti the nem on the sheth o the gauss lamp-stannart whaur the leirie up-praps hiz ledder. It wes kest-ern wi the strete nem in heich-releif sae at A cuid eisie rede it. The wirds wes “Parnassus Brae”. A shakkit ma heid, fur A aye didna unnerstaun.

“Ye wuid try the pacience o a saunt,” he says. “A hae brocht ye ti the hame o the deid Scotch leiterarie men, sae ye’l can be a stibbler eftir knowledge i thair stak-yaird.”

A bot gantit at’ m.

“Ach ! Ye ar ane awfu dult, richt eneuch,” ma wyser contined, “Howsomdevir, A’l haud at ma darg. Ye maun cum down til the kirk wi me, fur aw the indwallers ar lik ti be at the sairvice.”

The causie run straucht on about a myll.

“The’r a guid whein houss heirabout,” A says, ti lichten the seilence.

“Ye maun mynd the Guid Buik. ‘I ma Faither’s houss the’r monie mansiouns!’”

Eftir thon A contryned onie mair attemps at cantautioun. Suin tho, we tirded roun a blunt neuk i the waw an sein afoir’z a congregautioun skailin frae a snod, plainstane kirk. The wes a guid hantil fowk, wi dugs walcummin thair maisters an bairns rinnin ower the grene, a cantie sicht. Thusgates A fand masell skonsed in a cosie howff, owerby the kirk an neist the smiddie, wi ma doup on an aik bink, a gless o tippennie ti haun an a bourach o bairds i thair potestaters fu o guid adveise fur thair nyow pupil. The howff wes cryed “The Gill Bell”.

A didna ken ae sowel frae anither, bot bi a ferlie, Saunt Andra maun

THE SEIVEN KIZZENS



"We cam roun a blunt neuk"

syndit out ma memore an praisentlie A fand A cuid recaw ivverie nem an fece, furby aw the idaias, redes, evins an the lik at wes on offer. Thai'r i ma mynd yit. Ti pruiwe at thon's trewth, A'l tel ye ilkane parteiklaritie o ma first sermonin, tho it wes liker a lagamachie (i the auncient Grew sinse o a battailie o wirds) nor a communin.

Roun ma taibil wes set Eric Blair, a gentie sowel wi a soupil mainner, ane auld tirrand cryed Schir James Murray at hed a mukkil berde, ma guid gyder an a wie blak-avysed bantim at sayed hiz nem wes Kiplin. He spak wi ane Inglish tuin sae A didna follae hiz menin at first. He cam ower frae Parnassus-on-Avon ti hae a crak wi'z auld billie Schir James an wes gied permeissioun as hiz mither wes cryed Macdonald, sae the Saunt telt me.

Murray grippit me bi the lug an wes suin gaun simmer an wintir inti bygane wrangs. Frae ma compreisin o't he hed guid cause. A mentioun tho at the ither wrytars semed ti hae hard it aw afoir, a tyme or twa!

"Weill ma lathie, ye hae a guid dorik tuin til ye, frae Kincardineshire A rek. A'm geyan profyete on the Borders tung masell an wrate a buikie on'd. A wareit maist o ma days on the Inglish langage tho an gatna thanks furd. The college at Oxenfuird didna ein gie me a doctourat fur ma darg, tho thai wesna blate ti tak the creidit an cry it the Oxenfuird Inglish Dictionar."

Kiplin wes the deil's advocat.

"At laist ye wun a k'nichtheid. A wes the makkar o impyre an wesna gien ane inveit ti bou ma craig afoir the keing."

"Smaw gainyeld A gat furd. Ither lexicographars is lik til gleds an reif yeir wark. Sei thon Ingin Johnnie at haggit aff the Shorter Oxenfuird Inglish Dictionar frae ma mukkil darg. He becam fawmous!"

"The winna be monie lexicographars sein in wir cauf kintra?" A speired. A wissed A hedna spak tho.

"Scotland's hotchin wi thaim," says Maister Murray.

"Thon Doctour Johnson hed a Scotch faither."

"James hissell wes the foirmaist wurd-hund o'z aige," inpit Kiplin.

"William Smellie out-brocht the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' in Embro in 1771".

“A wes menin i the Scotch tung,” A lied, fur ma wuts wes hottered wi aw this natterin.

Schir James cawed on wi ein mair airnest patients.

“Jamieson duin a guid Scotch Dictionar in 1808 an syne the’r bene monie braw dictionars i the langage.” Saunt Andra at lest hed ti interrump the man.

“A awn at fowk suid ken aw thur faks, bot A maun fess ye baklins ti ma beisnes. Roland ettils ti endyte a novelle i Scots an A wiss ti redd out anc-twa owthars ti haud ane ei on’m.”

“A novelle i Scots ! A’m proud ti awn at m’ain Scots tung wes raicognosced in Ingland whanivver A apened ma mou,” reponed Murray, “an A hae a guid whein expairience o owersettin bot a nivver thoct o siclik, a kittil haunnlin. Ye mynd, Rudyard, o the ‘Air English Text Soshietic’, an Prence Louis Lucien Bonaparte at ettilt ti hae Saunt Matthew’s Gospel translaitit intil Scots. Maist peitiefu it wes - nae idaia o the leivin langage.”

“Bot ye edited ‘The Complaynt o Scotland’ did ye no?” says Kiplin, “an ye fand at the langage o 1549 wes as fameiliar til ye as the tuins o bairnheid.”

“Ay,” says Murray, “A aye hed a guid Scotch tung i ma heid.”

Eric Blair claired hiz thrappil.

“We dinna aw wiss ti soun Scotch,” he obsairved.

“Bot thons the kinch.” awnsert Kiplin, a geyan k’nefe mannie A thoct, “Ye nivver escheve yeir innative polatie. Ye’r the best exempil. Yeir mither wes Frainche an yeir faither Scotch. Ye schawed in aw yeir wark the qualities o thon naitiouns, the rede-craift o the mither an the threiprie o the faither. An did ye no die i Jura ?”

Eric Blair sayed nocht an supped hiz yill.

Saunt Andra tuik advantage o the lowden i the gandiegow.

“A hivna brocht Roland heir ti gang ower auld grun. A maun warsil the maitter forrit. A think A’l daunner ower an hae a wurd wi Schir Wattie !”

Immediantlie the saunt skailed frae our core James Murray pit’z whuskerie mou ti ma lug an whuspert out the weke o’d,

“Andra isna leised on the lexicographars enou fur he caught’z layin wudgers on wir nyow gemm. We serss out auld farrant wirds an inpit thaim

ti the Scotch Leid. Ma ettil is ti eik the Saxon wurd 'leoth' fur 'poetrie' sae A'm axin ye ti yaise 'leith' wi the lik menin i yeir littil buik."

A didna hae tyme ti repone, fur Saunt Andra wes waggin me ower ti ane ither buird i the mids o the ruim whaur A wes gied a discrete innins ti Wattie Scott, Chris Grieve an Robert Stevenson, a douce thriesum. A hauddit ma coy an med reddies ti leir.

"Whitlik adveise wuid ye gie ti a leiterarie tyro than?" stertit Saunt Andra.

The Laird o Abbotsfuird spak first.

"Ma foirmaist prencipil wes aye ti lat the caracts shaw thair inner growthe bi thair aks an no bi the owthar deskreivin the ben chynge frae outby."

"Mynes wes steidit on thon bot A mint ti kythe whitwey fowk aften dae deifferand things frae thair professit belefes," sayed Stevenson in a craichil o a voss.

Grieve gied out hiz thochts wiouten hukein the ither awnsers.

"Caledonian Anti-Syzygie," he staitit wi a pawkie glent in hiz ei. Bot he eikit til this say wi mair aveisement. "Whitivver ye dae, mak siccar at the evin o yeir leid is weill kent til ye afoir ye stert." Thai aw nid-noddit griement.

Andra wes fidgin fain ti feinis hiz beisnes.

"Whit kinkeind o nouvelle suid he attemp?" he speired.

"Whitlik warl dae ye ken, ma lathie?" Scott inquired, saft-lik.

"A anerlie ken ma faimlie. Ma kizzens ar ma ae kin."

"Than ye maun finnd out aw about thaim an endyte a faimlie histore," Scott concludit.

A wes strak down bi dout.

"A canna ontak sicna moniment o a yokin masell. Whitwey wul ye can halp me?" A squaikit. Ilkane skriptar luikit the ither. Thai didna wiss ti gang bak ti the sair auld warl ablo A jaloused. Robert Louis Stevenson cam forrit tho.

"A propone, Andra, at ye appunct a comatie ti gy an manish the wark. A rek a cuid dae a whein guid, fur A wes yit i the mids o 'Weir o Hermiston'

whan A wes cawed up heirabouts an A wuid lyk fine ti pit the lave o ma idaias intil prent.”

Saunt Andra wes awreddies on hiz feit chappin on the buird ti grup the tent o aw the ither Sabbath drouths. He telt thaim in a fyow wirds o the sitivaution an axed volunteres ti list wi Robert Stevenson.

Rabbie Burns wes a kenspekkil feigur.

“A propone ‘Schir Precentor’ at wes weiched awaw lang afoir hiz gorb genie wes fu feddered.”

Aw the makkars saicontit the nem o Robert Fergusson wi a gousterous shout o appreival.

Andra chappit on the buird agane to cowshin the dirdum fur anither feigur wes etllin ti mak hissell hard. It wes Robert Gordon an hiz oratrye wes fu sair.

“A maun cum forrit fur A hae a det ti pey ti ma kintra. Ye ken at A died fechtin fur frieryke i Grewe. A suid hae duin the liks fur Scotland bot A med the wrang deceisioun on the heid o a tint buik. Fur A wrate ti John Murray ma publishar priggin a copie o Lockart o Carnwarth’s “Memorials” at A ken nou wuid airtit ma hert hamelins. Bot the pistil wes tint i the post. A beseik ye ti gie me a chance ti jyne ma colligs i the comatie.” The gild at upspang eftir this cuid anerlie bene a merk o respek fur Lord Byron bot it owercam the quate speik frae ma syde offerin ti gie me a haun furby. It wes Eric Blair at spak sae lown an laich doun at nane hard’m.

A wes sairie fur this dowie man wi’z lang phizz an insoukit ginnels. A socht ti halp.

“Gie the kirk-yaird deserter a chance,” cam frae ma mou juist whan the bellum devauled. A gryte clap o lauchter frae the gaitherin accepit ma propone an thusgates A fand masell hame i ma chaumer wi ma first sair heid frae the remein swats. A aye bene total aw ma days, ye ken, an wesna uised ti’d.

Declaratioun o Entent bi the Comatie o Editars

We, the signators, tak on haun ti gy the effairs o Roland Vypont, at bydes at Croun Allay, Laurencekirk i the endyte o the buik ti be intitulat “The Seiven Kizzens” an ti haud the wark perquere an ordourlic, aw fur the aise o the peruissar.

We als wiss ti extend the Auld Scotch Leid forrit til its outmaist flourish whyle schawin respek fur its strang, siccar ruits.

Seignyied—

Dodd Gordon

Eric Blair

Robert Fergusson

Robert Stevenson