

pleted in a style that defied criticism; and, his tartan coat again buttoned around him, he sat resting himself beside it. The foreman went out, and greeted him. "Well," he said, "you have beaten us all: you certainly *can* hew!" "Yes," said David; "I *thought* I could hew columns. Did the other men take much more than a week to learn?" "Come, come, *David Fraser*," replied the foreman; "we all guess who you are: you have had your joke out; and now, I suppose, we must give you your week's wages, and let you away." "Yes," said David; "work waits for me in Glasgow; but I just thought it might be well to know how you hewed on this east side of the country."

John Fraser was a shrewd, sarcastic old man, much liked, however, by his brother workmen; though his severe sayings—which, never accompanied by any ill nature, were always tolerated in the barrack—did both himself and them occasional harm when repeated outside. To men who have to live for months together on oatmeal and salt, the difference between porridge with and porridge without milk is a very grave difference indeed, both in point of salutariness and comfort; and I had succeeded in securing, on the ordinary terms, ere the arrival of John, what was termed a *set* of skimmed milk from the wife of the gentleman at whose dwelling-house we were engaged in working. The skimmed milk was, however, by no means good; it was thin, blue, and sour; and we received it without complaint only because we knew that, according to the poet, it was "better just than want aye," and that there was no other dairy in that part of the country. But old John was less prudent; and, taking the dairy-maid to task in his quiet ironical style, he began by expressing wonder and regret that a grand lady like her mistress should be unable to distinguish the difference between milk and wine. The maid indignantly denied the fact *in toto*: her mistress, she said, did know the difference. Oh no, replied John; wine always gets better the longer it is kept, and milk always the worse; but your mistress, not knowing the difference, keeps her milk very long, in order to make it better, and makes it so very bad in