

quarrel at the tryst, and the much more serious affair among the bushes, had arisen out of this disposition; for though well-nigh in his sixtieth year, he was still as warlike in his habits as ever. Thomson sat fronting him beside the fire, admiring his muscular frame, huge limbs, and immense structure of bone. Age had grizzled his hair and furrowed his cheeks and forehead; but all the great strength, and well-nigh all the activity of his youth, it had left him still. His wife, a sharp-featured little woman, seemed little interested in either the details of his adventure or his guest, whom he described as the "brave, hardy chield, wha had beaten twasome at the cudgel, — the vera littlest o' them as big as himsel'."

"Och, gudeman," was her concluding remark, "ye aye stick to the auld trade, bad though it be; an' I'm feared that or ye mend ye maun be aulder yet. I'm sure ye ne'er made your ain money o't."

"Nane o' yer nonsense," rejoined the farmer. "Bring butt the bottle an' your best cheese."

"The gudewife an' I dinna aye agree," continued the old man, turning to Thomson. "She's baith near-gaun an' new-fangled; an' I like aye to hae routh o' a' things, an' to live just as my faithers did afore me. Why sould I bother my head wi' *improvidments*, as they ca' them? The country's gane clean gite wi' pride, Thomson! Naething less sairs folk noo, forsooth, than carts wi' wheels to them; an' it's no a fortnight syne sin' little Sandy Martin, the trifling cat, jeered me for yoking my owson to the plough by the tail. What ither did they get tails for?"

Thomson had not sufficiently studied the grand argument of design, in this special instance, to hazard a reply.

"The times hae gane clean oot o' joint," continued the man. "The law has come a' the length o' Cromarty noo;