

down to two members, whereof one was much incapacitated by old age and deafness, and the other was but an unstable pillar at best, seeing that he not unfrequently got publicly tipsy on the market-day, and had been known to ride his pony belly-deep in a neighbour's dung-hill on his way home, and then, when the animal could get no farther on, sit up in the saddle and shout to some supposed waitress, "Anither half-mutchkin, lassie!" The necessity of recruiting the eldership was patent, and the eyes of not a few were directed to Johnny Gibb as one fit and suitable person for the office. Others hinted at Roderick M'Aul, the souter; but, in those days, in the parish of Pyketillim, we liked to select men of substance for the eldership. Besides, the souter was reckoned very wild in his religious opinions, inasmuch as he had agitated the question of a Sunday-School, and was believed to maintain family worship in his household.

The parish minister, the Rev. Andrew Sleekaboot, was a very peaceable man in the main, albeit a man that liked extremely well to have his own way, which, indeed, he generally got among his parishioners. The idea had been suggested to him before by Jonathan Tawse that, in order to keep Johnny Gibb docile and submissively attached to the Kirk, he should have him made an elder; and Mr. Sleekaboot was not indisposed to think that this might have prevented certain aberrations on the part of Johnny, who had been guilty of the irregularity of hearing and even entertaining as his guest a "missionar" minister, that came to the quarter occasionally on the invitation of the souter—a thing which no elder, so far as known in that region, had ever presumed to do. But now the daring course taken by Gushetneuk in setting his laird's political opinions and wishes at defiance fairly staggered Mr. Sleekaboot, and he determined to try the effect of