

strangers had found their way, was dissatisfied; and it would probably have overturned in conclave our agreement, and punished the old man, my master, for the niggardly stringency of his terms, had I not craved, by way of special favor, to be permitted to give them a week's trial. One evening early in the week, when the old man had gone out, I mixed up the better part of a peck of meal in a pot, and, placing two of the larger chests together in the same plane, kneaded it out into an enormous cake, at least equal in area to an ordinary-sized Newcastle grindstone. I then cut it up into about twenty pieces, and, forming a vast semicircle of stones round the fire, raised the pieces to the heat in a continuous row, some five or six feet in length. I had ample and ready assistance vouchsafed me in the "firing,"—half the barrack were engaged in the work,—when my master entered, and, after scanning our employment in utter astonishment,—now glancing at the ring of meal which still remained on the united chests, to testify to the huge proportions of the departed bannock,—and now at the cones, squares, rhombs, and trapeziums of cake that hardened to the heat in front of the fire, he abruptly asked,—“What's this, laddie?—are ye baking for a wadding?” “Just baking one of the two cakes, master,” I replied; “I don't think we'll need the other one before Saturday night.” A roar of laughter from every corner of the barrack precluded reply; and in the laughter, after an embarrassed pause, the poor man had the good sense to join. And during the rest of the season I baked as often and as much as I pleased. It is, I believe, Goldsmith who remarks, that “wit generally succeeds more from being happily addressed, than from its native poignancy,” and that “a jest calculated to spread at a gaming table, may be received with perfect indifference should it happen to drop in a mackerel-boat.” On Goldsmith's principle, the joke of what was termed, from the well-known fairy tale, “the big bannock wi' the Malison,” could have perhaps succeeded in only a masons' barrack; but never there at least could joke have been more successful.

As I had not yet ascertained that the Old Red Sandstone