

PORTLETHEN CHURCH

1876 .

There is a FAMA in this district about the Rev. W Bruce. This came about because a number of members of the Congregation had officially alluded that (An improper intimacy subsisting between the Rev, William Bruce , Minister of Portlethen Church , and Mrs. Stevenson residing lately at Hillside House Portlethen now at Muchalls Cottage , that there is a child in Glasgow , Born about two years ago , of which the mother is Mrs. Stevenson , and Mr Bruce the father , and that Mr. Bruce had accompanied Mrs. Stevenson to Perth immediately before her confinement on that occasion , and it is reported met her on her return about two months afterwards . According to the rumour there was no child brought home with her .It was understood that before and after the above mentioned event took place , Mr Bruce was in the habit of very frequently visiting Mrs . Stevenson .It was farther intimated that a rumour as to improper intimacy between Mr Bruce and the above mentioned Mrs Stevenson had existed in the parish for two or three years .. It was stated further by Mr. Walker and Mr. Christie , that the

rumour or rumours above mentioned were universally spoken about throughout the congregation, that , to their certain knowledge , a communication was made to Mr. Bruce on this subject , to the effect that a widely spread rumour prevailed against him , prejudicial to his reputation , and consequently that he was bound to have the matter investigated , for the sake of his own character , and the good of the church .

Mr. Bruce stated generally that the misconception on the subject had partly arisen from his being frequently called upon during the night to visit parties on a medical capacity , inasmuch as his attendance in this respect was earnestly desired by many of the people ,and, so far as lay in his power he made it a practise never to disappoint them ..When returning under such circumstances , he was sometimes met late at night , or early in the morning, and by people he did not know how he had been engaged ..This had been used to his disadvantage when the rumours which had thus arisen had been combined with further rumours , originating in the declination of the nomination in his behalf to New Deer , and which declination had been made for totally different reasons and having nothing to do with

charge brought against him ,he believed an explanation of the real source of the FAMA adverted to is afforded

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Mr. Bruce further stated that when Mr. Stevenson and his family came to the parish of Portlethen ,Mr Stevenson showed and expressed a very warm regard for him , and being in a retired situation he frequently sought his society ..Mr Stevenson , at the time of his death , expressed great confidence in him as a friend , and earnestly requested Mr. Bruce to do what was in his power , after his death , to assist his widow and family.. From what subsequently took place , Mr. Bruce ,while most anxious to carry forth this request of the deceased Mr. Stevenson , found that , from the state of his affairs , the duty thus assigned him involved matters of great delicacy and difficulty , and necessarily led to frequent communication with Mrs. Stevenson , especially from the amount of correspondence carried on , and the attestation of bank drafts , In consequence of this , Mr. Bruce believed that his frequent visits to Mrs Stevenson on mere matters of business , and in a pure spirit of friendship , was attributed by his enemies to unworthy causes , and constituted thus a

further element in generating those rumours which had prevailed against him .

In reply to questions put to Mr. Bruce by the FAMA committee , he declared that ,” I never remained in Mrs Stevenson”s house after 10 oclock , except in the case of serious illness in the family .One of Mrs Stevenson”s children was subject to a frequent affection in the throat , and I have sat up several nights with him to prevent choking . Mrs Stevenson is subject to severe bilious attacks , relapsing frequently into a fever and I have been asked to see her or send medicine when so attacked . About six months before Mrs Stevenson left Hillside she burst a blood vessel in her nose , and I had to be in constant attendance to stop the bleeding .. I have heard of some gossiping people who said that they had seen me going frequently to Mrs Stevenson”s and insinuated that I must have improper motives for going there so often..

In a reply to one Specific question as to whether he had heard any statement prejudicial to Mrs Stevenson”s character??, he answered YES , and it had been made by Mrs. Stevenson herself...I was very indignant at what she told me which was to the effect that she was with child , but thinking it was not my

duty to crush the fallen , at her own earnest request , sent by her children , I visited her a fortnight after ..But , at a subsequent meeting with her , I gave her my advice to call in a medical man that he might give her advice as to keeping the matter as private as possible for the sake of the family , This advice was given probably four months before her confinement . Soon after this , and under the advice of her medical man , she left for Glasgow.. She returned to the parish of Portlethen about three months after(that is her confinement) .

Mrs Stevenson was not taken upon discipline , the whole matter adverted to have been conducted privately for the sake of the family..

After her return from Glasgow Mr. Bruce said that he was not in the habit of visiting so frequently as before, and only then business , or family matters , made claim upon him . He stated further that since her removal to Muchalls about six months ago , he had been frequently sent for in cases of illness in the family ..

Asked at what date did Mr. Stevenson die? Mr. Bruce replied , about three years ago ...

I never noticed or suspected that Mrs Stevenson was with child until she told me of it . She never told me who the father was. I have since then come to the knowledge of who he is . I have seen him at Hillside since Mr Stevenson”s death once or twice. I do not wish to say how I came to know who was the father of the child ...

I have never had any formal meal in Mrs. Stevenson”s house , but when visiting through the Parish. I have frequently called there on my way home , and have had tea there, I have occasionally met with Mr. Watt Advocate, on business “he was agent for Mrs Stevenson) and he generally had some refreshments as well as myself ..Occasionally Mr. Watt directed his communications about Mrs Stevenson”s matters to myself direct , and this led to my calling more frequently on her , in order to get her signature .

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOKS OF FORSYTH'S

TEMPERANCE HOTEL ABERDEEN .

Show that a Mr. John Hunter Commercial Traveller London stayed here six times from May 1873 to May 1874 .

The following is a copy of a letter sent by John Hunter to Mrs Stevenson dd. 25th December 1875 Kendal ..

Dear Mrs Stevenson , I need not write again at length on what has proved to be so painful , and a matter of so much regret to both of us; but on this day , when so many things are brought to remembrance , and those absent are brought to mind , I thought it might be acceptable to ask you for forgiveness , as I feel much to blame in this very unfortunate affair . Things cannot now be altered, will you kindly accept the enclosed draft , which may be useful under existing circumstances . I am spending Christmas here with some old friends , shall be glad to have a line acknowledging the receipt of this . As I leave here tomorrow , I enclose an envelope with my address for the next five days .

Wishing you the compliments of the season

I remain

Dear Mrs Stevenson

Yours Sincerely

John Hunter

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CATHERINE ROBINSON STEVENSON WIDOW OF
JOHN STEVENSON (DCD) TEA MERCHANT .

DIED ON THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER 1877 AGE 38 .

AT MUCHALLS COTTAGE OF(BRIGHTS DISEASE OF THE
KIDNEYS)

Peer quine .

Fred Stewart