

# Humorous Episodes

In the Life of a

# Provincial Publisher

*Extending over Fifty Years*

By

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## EPIISODES

To sit down and reproduce the reminiscences of an active, political life of fifty years is what cannot be done without a good memory. In 1850 I entered the Inland Revenue Office of the adjoining county town, where I got an insight into business amongst a large staff of clerks under two chiefs: Colonel Munro, a gentleman of about seventy-five, Collector of Taxes and Distributer of Stamps; and his colleague, James Morrison, probably the same age as his chief, but a fiery, swearing, quick-tempered man, while the Colonel was the very acme of politeness. His maxim was: "I am a man of few words, and speak but seldom." This maxim he kept to the letter. His usual expression was "God bless me," and it was impossible to engage in conversation with him without that expression being repeatedly used. The Colonel gave the office a wide berth. At ten A.M. he called to see his letters, which his colleague would put before him in his private room. "Any letters to-day, Mr Morrison?" "Yes, several; some of great importance." "God bless

me! I am on my way to the coffee-room, and will call at three o'clock to sign letters." At prompt three he called: "Anything for signature, Morrison?" "Yes; several letters, and one or two to the Controller General, Angus Fletcher, Esq." "God bless me!" Signs letters and hands them back. This programme was gone through every day, the Colonel never dreaming of spending more than half-an-hour twice daily in the office, though his income from the appointment would probably be £1000 per annum.

Morrison was the greater personality: he engaged and discharged the clerks, and was responsible for the proper discharge of the business and the general management of the office. My first interview with him was a characteristic one. He said: "You have had, I take it, a good education; meantime this will be your room, my own private room; I cannot allow you into the public office just yet as the 'trail of the serpent' is still visible. and you must not be contaminated; your first work is to write a gummed label stating the contents of each of these drawers in this room; write plain; none of your damnable flourishes; no henscaring; write so plain that a blind man might read it; stick them on and tell me when you are done." The work being completed in ordinary

course he said: "Now I must put you in close connection with the 'trail of the serpent,' but take care you don't get contaminated"; and he conducted me into the public office, where, between the collection of taxes and the sale of stamps, there was great traffic going on. He placed me at a desk behind the counter, and shouting to the chief clerk said: "Robert, give this youth the charge of the postage stamps," and then disappeared. Some hundreds of pounds in value of stamps were put in my hands, securely packed and labelled, and for these I was responsible. These I sold to the public as required, and balanced my cash at the close of each day. At the end of every week there was a slight shortage, which could not be accounted for, but thinking it might be due to some error of mine I paid it. This shortage was chronic, and it amounted to four or five shillings per week, while my salary was six shillings.

I found myself in an awkward position. I took counsel with the other clerks, and they said they had been losing money too, and that this sort of thing was not new. Before my entry on duty the shortage, they said, was so great that the two head clerks resolved to take night about of sleeping in the office, so as to find out how the cash

mysteriously disappeared. The chief clerk took the first night and slept among the papers under the counter. Half-an-hour after midnight he heard a key being quietly put into the lock of the front door, and it was gently opened, when a tall lady, dressed in white, walked stealthily to the counter and to the drawers where money was kept. With false keys she opened all the locks. When she had gone through several locked drawers the chief clerk crept noiselessly out of his den exclaiming: "Oh, Mrs Morrison, is this you? What in God's name are you doing here at this hour of the night?" The lady screamed, and all but fell on the floor in a swoon, but recovering herself said: "Robert, what are you doing here at this hour?" "I tell you what it is, Mrs Morrison, the whole staff has been losing money for some time and we resolved we would take night about of sleeping in the office until we discovered where the money was going." "Well, Robert, if you will undertake not to tell Mr Morrison, I will arrange to pay back all I have taken." "Done with you, Mrs Morrison; I agree." So ended this remarkable midnight scene and so ended the shortage question, but the money was never all paid back. The lady was a kleptomaniac; but her husband subsequently learned what had hap-

pened, took a dislike to Robert, and Robert was dismissed in a summary manner. He left behind him a feeling of dissatisfaction and unrest in the office, and this was called "the trail of the serpent."

Shortly after this the junior clerk had written some rent receipts for property factored by Morrison. There were no penny receipt stamps in those days. What the junior clerk used were one-and-sixpence and two-and-sixpence stamps. Morrison lifted one, read it, and beginning to foam at the mouth and puff at the nose (evidently a storm was coming), said to the innocent youth: "Who the devil wrote this?" The youth, trembling, replied: "I did." Morrison without saying a word silently folded it, then tore it into a hundred pieces, and threw them up into the air, exclaiming excitedly: "Where the devil were you educated, and who taught you to write? Look at your damnable flourishes and your hen-scarts. I would rather chap stones by the roadside than be troubled with you; you may make up your balances" (dismissal).

Morrison had a quick, fiery temper, and foamed at the mouth and shut his eyes when he broke out. We all knew when the storm was brewing by his loud, rapid breathing, and the sound of his



nose. He lived above the office, his house having entrance by a back outside stair. It was a rule not to disturb him between two and three o'clock, when he took his dinner, excepting only when one of two men called for whom he was factor. One day a very uncultivated-looking man called at two o'clock desiring to see Morrison urgently. The junior clerk, who had just come to the office, was quite ignorant of the rule. He at once went round to the house and rang the bell. Morrison excitedly answered the door. "Who in God's name is it, sir? Answer me." Without waiting for the boy's answer he jumped down the steps in two big jumps and buttonholed the caller rather roughly. "What is it, sir? What the devil is it? Answer me. Out with it." All this in one breath. Says the caller: "Mr Morrison, you are exciting me and putting me about. I am from the country; I am in no hurry." Morrison, excitedly: "Out with it, sir, quick, and the devil take you; I am at my dinner. What is it?" Says the excited man: "I am an auld acquaintance of yours, Mr Morrison, and I just called to ask you when the two-o'clock train started." And with these words the man ran out of the office, Morrison, bareheaded, pursuing him.

It was the rule to have the office open every

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morning at nine o'clock, although no business was done before ten. The first clerk to arrive had to take off the shutters and put them in the proper place. One morning at nine o'clock Morrison excitedly ran into the office puffing and breathing loud. The clerk was in the act of taking off the shutters and had pitched the keys of the front door on the counter for a little. Morrison : " Who the devil left those keys there? " " I did," said the youth. Morrison : " Then where the h—l were you educated. Never put those keys there again. Don't you know that one of those damned thieves of housebreakers will drop in, ask you for a postage stamp and hand you a pound note to pay it. The time you are fumbling among your drawers to find change for his miserable pound he has his hand full of putty, takes a squeeze of your keys when you have your back to him, and at midnight, having made a set of false keys, he gets access to the office and steals everything he can lay his hands on." This speech was delivered rapidly, with his eyes shut. Morrison was a personality, but an impossible man to serve under because of his temper and bad language. Clerks seldom stayed with him more than six months.

In 1851 I transferred my services to a more con-



genial sphere, to the leading newspaper office of the same town, and there I learned the rudiments of publishing. The proprietor was a handsome man of six feet six, dressed to perfection; but he had an ungovernable temper and a jealous disposition. I became cashier, an office of some responsibility. Instead of relieving me of the cash and initialing the cash-book once a week, his custom was to walk into the office at eight P.M. unexpectedly, as we were closing, dressed in a great loose mantle extending from his head to his feet, while he wore indiarubber shoes. As he walked stealthily and noiselessly along the lobbies the senior clerk gave him the name of "Hamlet's Ghost." When he arrived at his own private door he would exclaim in a stentorian voice: "Bring here the cash-book, also the cash." The cashier, trembling for fear of mistakes, walked into the room with his materials and faced the giant. On balancing up a penny would probably be short. The giant, having had his usual three tumblers of toddy after dinner, looked with disdain at the youth and said: "Why is your cash not right? Are you taking my money?" "Certainly not, sir," said the youth: "others have access to the cash drawer as well as me." This closed the interview. The giant wrote his leaders on Sundays,

and indulged in fishing and shooting during the season.

The reporters' room was usually a lively place. The chief reporter was mentally finely strung, easily irritated, and as a rule constantly out of temper. It was with difficulty he could be civil. In the Western Bank branch there was a teller, an insinuating, self-asserting youth, who inflicted his company on this reporter every Wednesday night, that being the one late night of the week, for Thursday's paper. He invariably turned up at ten, occupied the best chair he could find, and usually sat till past midnight, seizing such proofs as he could lay his hands on, reading the same and suggesting corrections or punctuation, or pointing out a misspelled word. The reporter, who looked daggers, said: "Put that proof down, sir; and leave corrections to me: I don't allow you to make corrections." No response, the teller going on as if these words had not been spoken. His visits, however, became intolerable, and the reporter said to me: "That impudent fellow must be got rid of, and I know how to do it; but you must help me." The windows of the room were fitted with iron stanchions, so that access or egress by them was impossible. Wednesday night again arrived, and the teller appeared as usual. By

arrangement with me the reporter, a little before midnight, quietly left the room, locking the door gently behind him, but leaving the gas burning, and then went straight to his apartments, a mile distant, leaving the teller in undisturbed possession of the premises. The printers at the same time closed their premises for the night. When the door was locked the teller was in the midst of a proof, and did not for some time realise the practical joke that was being perpetrated. When his proof was finished he was unable to open the door, and found escape impossible. For two hours with a stentorian voice he cried for help, but there was no response. Every inhabitant was in bed. About four o'clock the landlord of the nearest hotel, awakened by the unearthly screams, came to the rescue, but he could do nothing but speak to the teller (now a prisoner) through the iron bars. "For God's sake, go for the police; I will be starved to death in this hole." The landlord proceeded to the police office, and left information, but keys had to be found before the teller could be extricated, and that meant time, the police having no idea where they were. They were, however, got, and the teller was liberated from his cold and solitary position, no doubt a sadder but wiser man. He was never seen upon

the premises again. The reporter made no secret of this incident, and how he "bowled over the Western Bank teller," and thus got rid of a persistent intruder.

It was the custom of this establishment to send out the cashier half yearly over the county with a horse and vehicle to collect the accounts. I had my turn of this work, which was wearing out and fatiguing, as it had to be done in spite of weather. The ignorance of some people in outlying districts is proverbial, and about money matters amusing. On one occasion I drove seven or eight miles into a remote district in order to collect an account two years overdue. The place being difficult of access, no collector would face the journey. When I reached the place I found a brick and tile work in full operation. On presenting my account to the proprietor he said : " I paid that account long ago, and hold your receipt." I asked him for a look of the receipt. He went to his cabinet and returned with what he called the receipt, but which turned out to be the actual post office order he had got at the post office. In his simplicity and innocence he thought this was all the receipt he needed ; it was two years old. I was permitted to take it home, but it involved great trouble at the post office before we got payment. This was before

the Education Act came into operation. The next incident was the marriage of a near relative of mine and I was invited to be groomsman. On application for permission to attend the ceremony the giant said : " Sir, when my grandmother died I was forbidden to attend her funeral and ordered to attend to my business ; that is my answer to you ; an emphatic No." I said I did not see the connection of the two things, to which he replied : " You have my answer ; you don't see past your nose."

Next morning he came in with the astounding intelligence that his friend the Rev. Mr Cuthbert had the previous night seen the devil, and at midnight had carried him a mile on his back ; he was almost out of his reason. This story was too good to remain in obscurity, and on making inquiry at Mr Cuthbert's house for particulars his housekeeper informed us that the previous night the minister had rushed into the house after midnight in a state of great mental and physical excitement, exclaiming that he had seen the devil, and had carried him on his back a mile, or all the way to his house, adding : " For God's sake give me some whisky and water instantly or I shall drop down a dead man." The housekeeper admitted it was an awful scene, but the devil disappeared when

the minister arrived home. It would appear that the minister on his return from a dinner-party, on a pitch dark night, encountered what turned out to be a pet goat. The goat jumped on the minister's back, put his forelegs on the minister's shoulders, and though the minister, in terrification, not knowing it was a goat, ran the rest of the road, he could not shake off the animal, it had taken a firm hold of him, and he concluded he had got entangled with the Prince of Darkness. It was some weeks before the minister recovered himself.

The clever reporter who locked in the teller was an extreme Radical in politics. Some time afterwards he was in London on a holiday trip, and I met him there accidentally. We went down to Chislehurst to see the funeral of the Imperial Prince, who was killed in Africa. When the cortège passed us the reporter and I stood uncovered, and immediately I said : “ I thought you did not recognise royalty? ” To which he replied : “ I could skin his father, but I take off my hat to misfortune.” On our way back from Chislehurst he called my attention to an unusually fine house, with the remark : “ That is where the successors of the Apostles mortify the flesh.” There was about that time the great scandal of



Governor Eyre and the massacres of coolies in Jamaica. Our conversation touched on that subject; says the reporter: "I would hang Governor Eyre, and after that I would myself pull his legs as my protest against his brutality. Governor Eyre's conduct makes me ashamed of my country."

This young man afterwards became sub-editor of the *Commonwealth* newspaper, published in Glasgow every Saturday. There he made the acquaintance of the reporter of one of the dailies. This reporter was in the habit of leaving on his table, during his dinner-hour, notes of late occurrences that had taken place the same day or the night before. The sub-editor called there occasionally during that interval and the daily newspaper reporter was once or twice surprised at seeing paragraphs of his appear in an opposition paper before appearing in his own. To put a stop to this he wrote a circumstantial account, of about half-a-column, of an imaginary murder, of an appalling character, that occurred the previous night in the neighbourhood of Dumbarton, giving the name of the victim, the hour of the murder, the promptitude of the police and the brutal nature of the deed. This note he left on his table, and next morning it appeared in the oppo-

sition paper in leaded type and bold letters, and was the most prominent piece of news in that publication. Not a line about the murder appeared in any of the other Glasgow papers, and for a short time there was considerable sensation in that city. The police soon discovered it was a practical joke, and gave notice to that effect. The sub-editor was not again seen at the daily newspaper office, as he had been confronted with the exclamation : " Who stole the murder ? "

After this incident an American citizen from Philadelphia called, with an introduction to me, when I asked him what I could do for him. " Sir, my object in calling is to ask you to accompany me to Alloway Kirk to-night, to the scene of the devil's and witches' dance, as I wish to stand under the belfry as the clock strikes twelve at midnight; I have come all the way from America for this express purpose." I reluctantly agreed to accompany him, and on the way he wished to make the acquaintance of Mrs Begg, Burns' sister, but he had no introduction. I said I could not help him, as I did not know the lady. He, however, like a true American, rang the bell, walked in, and shook hands with the venerable lady. Then we drove to Alloway Kirk, and passed away the time till midnight. At twelve o'clock we

stood under the belfry as the steeple chimed out the hour. Then my American friend exclaimed : " This is the happiest moment of my life." We then retraced our steps, passing the well " where Mungo's mither hanged hersel'," and reached our abode in due course.

About this time a new reporter arrived on the scene, a native of Dundee, and a young man of eccentric habits. He never appeared on duty before noon. As he shared apartments with me I became well acquainted with him. He never went to bed till three or four A.M., and was usually engaged writing letters of twelve or sixteen pages to his friends; he slept from four to eleven A.M., was very timid, and could not face danger. One night a rather comical scene occurred. Shortly after two o'clock A.M. a violent noise was heard on our flat, and we could not make out what it was. The reporter was sitting at the fire writing his letters; I was reading. At once he put the poker in the fire. It soon became red hot, and he, thinking burglars were in the house, locked the door, and from three to four o'clock stood behind it, with the red-hot poker in his hand, exclaiming : " The man who opens this door is a dead man." No burglar, however, appeared, and we retired to bed. At breakfast next morning I informed the land-

lady what had happened, and she burst out into loud laughter, saying : “ What cowards ! A cat got on to the staircase window, knocked over a great flower-pot, and it rolled downstairs, causing a huge noise.” No more of the red-hot poker after this. This youth had a story that was fired off on several occasions—viz. that when he was a boy, living in Kirriemuir, one of the Viscounts Duncan occasionally drove through the streets at midnight with a carriage drawn by four white horses, blowing a trumpet and announcing that the Judgment Day had come.

About this same time occurred what was called in the local vernacular the “ Hat Trick.” One afternoon a pedlar or hawker called at a well-known hat shop and ordered and paid for a twelve-shilling hat, tendering therefor a sovereign. The hatter went out for change, which he got from the baker, two doors down, gave the pedlar eight shillings, and retained the balance. Half-an-hour afterwards the baker called with the sovereign, threw it down on the counter, said it was base coin and useless, and requested the hatter to give him back his twenty shillings. The hatter, in blank astonishment, did so, and after the baker had gone he sat down to count up what he had lost. It was too compli-

cated, and he could arrive at no finding. He consulted two neighbours, and they said he had lost two pounds, while his own feeling was one pound eight shillings or one pound sixteen shillings, but he was undecided. He resolved to consult a solicitor, and the solicitor said he had lost two pounds—viz. the hat and eight shillings given to the pedlar, and twenty shillings given back to the baker for the bad sovereign. The “ Hat Trick ” amused the people in the locality as an arithmetical puzzle for many a day. What the hatter really lost I leave to the mental capacity of the reader. The solicitor and friends were all wrong.

Ten years after the Disruption religious feeling continued bitter among all parties. At Newton-on-Ayr the Free Church minister was a very cautious, high-principled man of conspicuous integrity. He was asked one day by the Auld Kirk minister to do duty in the Old Church (Established Church), afternoon and evening. To this he replied: “ Certainly not; if I should preach in the Old Church the very walls would tumble down about me.” In the same town a young lady one day went into the shop of a well-known bookseller, who was a miser. She requested him to give her *The Family Friend*, *The Family Herald*, and another, making up ninepence, and

tendered a shilling. Having got what she wanted the bookseller said: "What can I give you to make up the odd threepence?" "Nothing," said the lady; "give me my change." Says the miser: "There is no change in me," and he handed her threepenceworth of notepaper.

My apartments were in the house of a very aristocratic old lady, whose daily duty was regulated by principle. In the house was an old gentleman, a boarder and local chemist, who was of a very quiet, retiring demeanour, but furious if aroused. He was always in full dress to meet his county customers; in the house he seldom spoke. He and I and the old lady one night went out to a lecture, and returning at ten o'clock found the house locked up. Great was the astonishment of the chemist, and crimson enveloped the cheeks of the old lady. Margaret, the servant, had gone out to see her young man, locked the door, and forgot to return till ten-thirty, which half-hour we paraded the streets. Margaret appeared, unlocked the door, said nothing, and we all went in. She immediately came into the parlour and set the supper. Says the chemist: "Margaret, you deserve to be horsewhipped." Says the old lady: "The like of this never happened before in my house." Margaret in



solemn silence retired to the kitchen, but returned immediately, flourishing the poker in her right hand. She walked up to the chemist, and swinging it round her head exclaimed in a stentorian voice: "I daur you, sir, to put a hand on me"; and to complete the scene Margaret winked with one eye at the old lady and me, and disappeared.

The principal grocer and wine merchant in the place was a man named Peter Donaldson, who had a large county connection. He appeared in his place of business, daily, in full black professional dress, satin hat, etc., and when he entered the shop he put on his white apron and served certain customers himself. He had several assistants, and was a violent, determined sort of man, but highly respected. One day he noticed a man fumbling about his back window, which window looked into a lane. Peter immediately seized a fully charged lemonade bottle, and threw it right through the window, smashing the glass to atoms. The man got such a fright that he bolted down the lane, pursued by the grocer, but the latter could not catch him. Peter on one occasion invited a well-known townsman into his apartments at lunch-time—one-thirty P.M. This townsman was a total abstainer, which Peter well knew. Peter locked the door of his dining-room

and put the key in his pocket, then proceeded to put on the table a decanter of whisky and two glasses. "Now," he says to the abstainer, filling both glasses, "you drink your glass to the bottom and I will do the same." And suiting the action to the word Peter drank off his at once. The abstainer: "You know, Mr Donaldson, I am an abstainer, and drink nothing stronger than water." Says Peter: "I don't care a brass farthing for your abstinence principles; let them go to the devil; what I say is, you drink off that whisky, and till you do so you don't leave this room, for I have locked the door and have the key in my pocket." A pause followed. Says Peter: "Don't say I am keeping you from your business, for the moment you drink that I shall let you out." These two men sat there for three hours before either would give in, and eventually the abstainer drank his whisky and was liberated, saying that he would advertise his behaviour all over the town.

On one occasion James Moir, a local bookseller, made the discovery that the Rev. John Edward of St Marnock's, where Moir was an elder, was owing him five pounds for stationery. This sum, as he could get it no other way, he resolved, as he had charge of the plate on the following Sunday, he would help himself to.

This he did, and the "biter was bit." When he reached the session-house, at the close of the service, with the collection, he addressed minister and elders as follows:—"Gentlemen, this is your collection under deduction of five pounds which Mr Edward was due me for stationery. That money is in my breast pocket, and it will remain there. So good-bye." Moir, on returning to duty on Monday morning, squared the ledger account, adding the words: "This account is closed, for ever—and for ever."

The Irishman and the penny bowl was not without humour. A traveller called one day at his shop and presented an account for fifteen pounds. That was a huge sum for the son of the Emerald Isle. A girl called for a penny bowl. Addressing the traveller, and handing him his first penny as a first instalment, the Irishman said: "Take that as a first instalment, and if you wait long enough you will get your account in full."

In the busy manufacturing and commercial town of Kilmarnock in the days when I was a youth there was not only life but humour. James Moir was a great personality. One day when I was in his shop, and he with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, folding his papers excitedly, suddenly two men of great importance walked

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in. "Mr Moir, we are a deputation of the church appointed to confer with you." Mr Moir: "Very busy. No time. No time: too busy with my papers and magazines to fold up." "But, Mr Moir, we wish to speak to you very seriously." "Can't help it, gentlemen; go on while I fold my papers." "Mr Moir, do you know the author of 'A Pig in a Poke'? A base libel, that is what we have called it." Moir, without taking his eye off the counter: "Know nothing about it, gentlemen; never heard of it. Lies! Lies! Not a word of truth in it. Simply damnable having these lies told. Is that all you want? Good-morning, gentlemen." (Moir was well aware of "A Pig in a Poke," and knew all about it.)

In the early fifties, when we were a good deal about Kilmarnock, it was suggested to myself and friend that we should visit the ancient hamlet of Fenwick, five miles distant; and we accordingly drove out on the following Sunday morning and put up at James Archer's, of the King's Arms. The Established Church was in the immediate neighbourhood, and he had no difficulty in finding a pew for ourselves. In due course the text was given out and the minister with great earnestness proceeded. He appeared to be quite oblivious of

everything around him, and went through the sermon notwithstanding the circumstances. The congregation dropped off immediately to sleep, until there was not a wide-awake person in the whole building. The snoring became terrific, sometimes resembling the sound of thunder. The moment the minister shut the Book with a "thud" the congregation started into life again as if nothing had happened. The congregation was principally composed of shepherds and domestic servants, who had come for no other purpose than to have a substantial sleep.

Tom King was a notable church officer of the olden time. On one occasion a lady was interred in the churchyard and evidently the gravedigger's fees were not paid. Some time afterwards the husband again appeared at a funeral, when the officer took him to task for his carelessness in a few words but pithy: "Down with the dust or up she comes." Soon after this the minister of the parish in a serious speech said to Tom: "If you never enter Mrs M'Call's public-house again I will give you half-a-sovereign." "Done with you, minister; I agree." "Then come round to the manse this afternoon at dinner-time and I will pay you." Tom appeared at the hour prompt, and the minister handed him the half-sovereign, with

the words : " See and keep your promise." Tom slyly replied in the affirmative : " Oh yes, 'doctor; I will just step into the Crown."

During the official life of the late Provost Murrie of Stirling, a lady in the congregation in an excited state rose in her pew at the close of the service and exclaimed in the hearing of her audience : " Remember, Provost Murrie, though you are Provost of Stirling you are not provost of this congregation ! "

Jock the Rover fifty years ago was one of the notable characters of the town of Ayr. It was his invariable practice to walk down the street on the foot-pavement and nowhere else. He walked at a great pace, taking strides of three or four feet each step. Woe to the man who came in Jock's way, or even crossed his path. Every individual, young and old, who crossed his path was sent spinning into the street in a regular " somersault." Jock never opened his mouth, never stood for a moment, but threw every man in his way right and left and walked on. Most people at his approach left the pavement, but there were always a few left behind for Jock's benefit. It was not an uncommon thing to see a number of " sprawling " youths pitchforked into the street in the most uncereemonious manner, and all the work of an instant.



About the same period a notable character called "Rumpy" appeared on the scene and made the round of the shops and made a good deal of money at what was called the "roaring business." Very little connection was needed. "Go out to the 'crown of the causeway,' " says the shop-boy, "and give me a rumpy roar, and there's a penny for yourself." By some of the shops this was repeated several times in the absence of principals for the amusement of the young men. The "rumpy" roar resembled thunder, and the effect was overwhelming. It was heard from one end of the town to another and was an unmitigated nuisance.

The Western Bank of Scotland came to grief in the fifties, and shortly after leaving the Inland Revenue I joined the staff of a local newspaper. This office was in the Corn Exchange Court. The inner door of the counting-house was glass as regards the upper half. One very stormy December night, close on shutting time, a loud knock was heard at the door, and it had scarcely died away when the large head of a man came against the glass door with great violence, and sent the upper half into shivers. The door then violently opened, with the stentorian words from an unknown voice: "Do you know who I am, sir?"

" No," I replied; " I have not the remotest idea." Says the stranger : " I am John Taylor, manager of the Western Bank; I want to leave an advertisement with you." I replied : " Who is to pay that broken door? " Taylor : " Send your bill for it and the advertisement to me." As his face was very red and he was excited by the incident and the loss of his cigar, he at once disappeared.

My next movement was a bold venture to do business on my own account. I then purchased, edited and published a newspaper of my own. This paper was bought from an eccentric old man who could not be dealt with except through his solicitors. We came to terms for the newspaper, but the premises I rented from him. His wife was as eccentric and aged as himself, and she collected the rents of the property and granted receipts. On term day, 15th May, I went upstairs to her house to pay my rent, and found her sitting in state at the receipt of custom, when the following scene occurred. She was flourishing in her hand a sheet of foolscap paper closely written on both sides, and said : " Sir, sit down; I have something to say to you." I sat down, and she proceeded to read the various counts of this indictment—viz. On 18th March last your printing office was open two hours after closing time, and

there was a great noise; what is your answer to that, sir? The following week, on Wednesday night, there was a great noise in the office which lasted several hours, and my husband lost his sleep; what is your answer to that, sir? No further gone than last week two panes of glass were broken in the printing office; what is your answer to that, sir? Last week, on Wednesday, the lobby door in the passage down to the printing office opened three times after business hours; what is your answer to that? I have still another full page of charges against you; will you hear them now or will you come back?" I replied: "Madam, I will not come back; I have only one answer to what you have read, and what is to come I know nothing about, but I will caution my overseer to be careful in future; now will you take your rent and give me your receipt and let there be no more of this." This closed a characteristic interview.

Our Member of Parliament was a very genial and popular man, and had my full support. On one occasion, in London, I called for him at the House of Commons. He immediately came out, but before taking me into the House he went away and brought his friend, John Bright, and warmly introduced me to that great statesman. The

## THE TREE THAT DISAPPEARED 33

Member treated us—Mr Bright and I to coffee, and himself to gin sling. We had a most interesting conversation, and I found Mr Bright a fascinating man to talk to. On every conceivable subject he was up to date, and at the close said to me : “ I have correspondents all over the globe, and every morning when I get my letters I know everything that is going on all over the world.”

On acquiring the newspaper I selected, as a residence, apartments in a tasteful house in the suburbs having garden and pleasure grounds. My dining-room window was darkened by a great tree that leaned on the house, and its branches almost covered the window. One night the doctor and the public teacher of a neighbouring village fifteen miles distant came to spend a night with me. Before going to bed they rang the bell violently and asked the servant to bring two coal axes. These being brought they, without consulting me, proceeded to cut down every branch of the tree that was connected with the window, and they succeeded. Next morning the proprietor, a very crusty old gentleman, demanded of the housekeeper if she knew who had disfigured his beautiful tree, but she gave a negative answer. He then inquired of the neighbours, but all in vain. At last he called at my office, to put a notice

in the papers offering a reward of five pounds for the discovery of the miscreants who had committed the outrage. I wrote out the notice for him by request, and I expressed the hope that he would be able to trace the rascals and have them duly punished. The notice was published, but without results, and the matter dropped. When I told my two friends what was going on they took the first train home, and were in a considerable state of nervous excitement.

There was here a notable Free Church, with a large congregation, having a bold, but popular, outspoken minister, a man who totally disregarded public opinion, albeit a dangerous man to offend. A lady in the gallery took a fit of coughing, one day, as the doctor was in the midst of his sermon. He at once stopped, and calmly said: "There are a number of persons in this congregation who evidently come here with no other intention than to disturb the speaker." This had the desired effect; no more coughing that day. On another Sunday he gave out the annual collection for the London City Mission, adding at the close of the intimation: "My own opinion is that the London City Mission is amply able to support itself." The result of this was no collection. On another Sunday he gave out a local collection, and found

fault with the congregation for being niggardly. Then waxing eloquent he said : " My friends, the first question that will be asked at you when you go to the kingdom of heaven will be this : How much money had you in the bank ? And the second question will be : How much have you given for the cause of Christ ? " Some weeks after an appeal was made to improve the church door collections. He said : " I am surprised that a wealthy congregation like this is scarcely able to pay its way ; I protest against the everlasting penny ; some of you can well give a sovereign ; some half-a-sovereign ; some five shillings ; let that have your consideration, and leave the eternal copper to those who cannot afford more." This graphic appeal doubled the future collections.

The Prince of Wales visited Stirling on his way to Loch Lomond in 1865-1866. The manager of the Forth and Clyde Railway invited about thirty of the leading citizens, of which I was one, to accompany the Prince to Balloch and Loch Lomond, as an escort. We all accepted the invitation, and by special train the Prince and ourselves were conveyed to Balloch. On arrival there the Prince and his suite left the train and went on board the Loch Lomond steamer. We were requested to await the Prince's pleasure, when a



considerable pause ensued. Nobody was allowed to go on board unless by the Prince's consent. After a delay of half-an-hour the royal message came informing us that the Prince would prefer to sail to the head of the loch alone. This was a great disappointment: those forming the escort had no alternative but to return home, and pocket their feelings; although one of them maintained on the return journey that his nose was bleeding.

A distiller not a hundred miles away was twice in the Court of Session, and on each occasion fined £500 for defrauding the Excise in connection with the duty on spirits. A friend said to him, in Edinburgh, on the second occasion: "Can you not simply obey the law and save this £500?" Says the distiller: "No; I find it more profitable to pay the £500 and go on as I am doing."

There was a very clever lawyer in Stirling who died in the early sixties. He was a Gladstonian in politics, an elder in the Free Church, and from his position was a man of great influence, probably the most influential man in that district in his day. He was strongly opposed to such a thing as personally addressing the Deity in public. On one occasion he attended a funeral at Gargunnock, but no ministers turned up, and

in their absence he was asked to offer up prayer at the service. He significantly shook his head, but asked a farmer standing opposite to do duty. The farmer instantly obeyed, and prayed as follows :—" O Lord, have mercy on those who refuse to call upon Thy Name when specially requested so to do; for Christ's sake, Amen." This incident created much amusement there for many a day thereafter. A worthy citizen was once elected to the Town Council of Stirling, and after three years' service some of the electors intimated that they would not vote for him again, as during his term of office he only made one speech, and it consisted of only three words, these words being : " And right too." The council had agreed to open up a new street and spend £1000; the councillor, satisfied of the expediency of this step, expressed his opinion with Spartan brevity : " And right too." And that was his maiden speech.

The Wallace Monument was then in full swing, championed by the chaplain of the garrison, a man well adapted for such work, having elastic feelings and plenty of self-assertion. Five times I was buttonholed to give him a subscription, and I did so. On the last occasion I told him not to come back. He said I should

rather sympathise with him, as an ungrateful public tried his feelings very much at times. For instance, in Glasgow, one day, he sent in his subscription-book to Mr James Burns, of the Cunard Company. Mr Burns, who was a man of humour, ordered the chaplain to appear before him. When he entered the room Mr Burns rose quietly and handed him the shut pass-book with the words : " There never was such a man as Wallace." The chaplain was struck dumb, and was so astounded that he made a speedy exit without uttering a word. Then at Cupar, on one occasion, when he was collecting subscriptions for the Ettrick Shepherd's Monument, he rang the chief magistrate's bell and presented his pass-book. The magistrate went to the door, and handed back the pass-book with an emphatic "No." Then says the chaplain : " My next call is the junior magistrate; please direct me to his house." Says the chief magistrate : " A man like you, who can solicit subscriptions for the Ettrick Shepherd, can easily find out the junior magistrate's house without my help. Good-morning."

In 1866 I became permanently connected with Perth.

The first big event was the Parliamentary Election of 1868. At that date the county sent up only one member to the House of Commons and

the old roll was then the official register of voters. I was waited on by a deputation of the electors (tenant farmers), who invited me to help them to get a Liberal member for the county, as the sitting member was an old-fashioned Tory, and for fourteen years they had never seen him.

This election came off before the Corrupt Practices Act came into operation, and when there was no limit to reckless expenditure. In a large county like Perth the expenses were then a serious obstacle to any candidate coming forward. I was instructed to communicate with Mr Gladstone, which I did. Mr Gladstone wrote me as follows, under date October 1868 :—

“ DEAR SIR,—I congratulate you on your proposal to have the County of Perth contested, and I will be happy to send you a suitable Candidate, a young friend of my own, conditionally that the expenses do not exceed £2000.”

I at once accepted Mr Gladstone's offer, and immediately proceeded to secure a working committee for the whole county, of volunteers, who would give their services *ex gratia*. At that period there was no political organisation of any kind in the county, and we had the entire work to do from

the foundation. This meant a regular canvass from door to door, but that was done. I directed the western district of the county myself, and personally canvassed for several weeks in very trying weather (November and December), but had the use of horses as required, for great stretches in the Highlands. I had a committee of twelve in West Perthshire to help me, and to do their share of canvassing. One night their senior informed me that I must treat the committee, seeing their work was honorary and heavy. I said I would do so, and on going into the hotel the same night found the committee waiting my arrival. I said to the senior: "Tell me what you would like." And he said: "Order a gallon of the 'Cream of Ben Nevis,' and put three bottles in each of the large punch bowls, now on the table." This was done, the senior and myself taking charge of the punch bowls, one at each end of the table. One would naturally suppose that a gallon of the "Cream of Ben Nevis" was a liberal supply for twelve men at one sitting. Not so, however, for at ten P.M. both punch bowls were empty and the request was sent along to me to order another gallon. To this I said No emphatically, "but any of you who want more order it and pay it yourselves."

Poll day came, and we found the Conservatives

had bought up or engaged all the available horses and vehicles in the county so as to take the feet from us. We had anticipated these tactics, and in Edinburgh and Glasgow we got as many horses and vehicles as we required. We carried our candidate by a majority of 500. Our expenses amounted to £1900, while those of the other side amounted to the huge sum of £7000. And so ended one of the best-fought elections that has ever taken place in Perthshire. Hearty congratulations and thanks were sent to me by Mr Gladstone, Mr Brand the Speaker, and Lord Wolverton. The event was a brilliant episode of the time, in respect that it roused the county from its long lethargy. With one exception I am the only survivor of this gallant band who accomplished this great political victory. When the contest was in full swing a local shopkeeper went over to Pitlochry daily for some weeks with the ostensible object of helping the candidate and canvassing for votes; but it transpired afterwards that what he actually did was merely to interview the hotelkeeper, take lunch, drink two tumblers of toddy and return home. His visits were voluntary, but he played his cards so well that after the election was over he got a small present of silver plate from the candidate for contributing so substantially to the success of the election. Those of



us "in the know," such as the election agent and myself, kept a discreet silence rather than disclose what would have spoiled the joke.

Several years after this, Sir Andrew Clark, Mr Gladstone's physician, took a lease of St Martin's Abbey and shootings in the neighbourhood of Perth. I was at that time one of the magistrates, and Sir Andrew invited the Lord Provost and myself to meet Mr Gladstone at dinner. We accepted the honour, and drove out fully equipped for the distinguished occasion. There was a company of about thirty, mostly Mr Gladstone's retinue. Mrs Gladstone was also there, and the Lord Provost and myself were in due course introduced to Mr and Mrs Gladstone. After dinner we were allowed to sit down in the drawing-room beside the Premier, and have a few minutes' conversation with him. I felt as if I were in the presence of a supreme being; his conversation was learned and academical, and any conceivable subject he could present to us in a scholarly light, with abundant proof of the superhuman knowledge he possessed. When he spoke everyone in the room was silent. At last I said, as we rose to go: "Do you remember, Mr Gladstone, the Parliamentary Election of 1868?" To which he responded: "I do remember that sacred time." At the dinner-

table the whole conversation stopped instantly whenever Mr Gladstone opened his mouth; everyone being eager to hear what he said.

Queen Victoria frequently passed Perth *en route* to Balmoral, and the magistrates for many years never went to the General Station as a Guard of Honour, having the impression they were not wanted. During my term of office one of the magistrates and myself disregarded this policy, resolved we would equip ourselves and see her Majesty escorted from her saloon carriage to the refreshment-room and *vice versa*. The first time we went down in full dress and white gloves we stood uncovered till her Majesty went past us to the refreshment-room. She had evidently been irritated on the journey, for she passed us with a high-coloured face, looking at nobody and putting down her foot firmly as she walked. We waited her return, which was about an hour after, when she passed us smiling, and bowed specially to my brother magistrate and myself.

In the sixties I made the acquaintance of Gavazzi, the great Italian patriot. I had heard him deliver an oration in Italian some years before, and I had a profound impression of his oratory and his conspicuous earnestness. I invited him to be my guest for a week, and he at once

accepted the invitation. For twenty-five years thereafter he regularly spent a week annually under my roof. His company was of the most entertaining and lively description. I eventually assisted him to promote the cause of his Church in Scotland, and some years afterwards was appointed chairman of his Edinburgh committee. In his time I paid a visit to Rome, and the distinguished Italian was constant in his attention to me, and gave me a young friend of his own to show me the sights of Rome. He then gave my wife and myself a personal letter of introduction to Garibaldi, who was then (1878) living in the suburbs of Rome.

We went out enthusiastically to see the great General, and got a hearty reception. We spent a pleasant and memorable hour or two with the grand old soldier. We found him lying on his back, because of a wound received on the battlefield, but he spoke English well, and entered into a lively conversation with us, inquiring after every person in Scotland whom he knew.

During the time that Sir George Trevelyan was Secretary for Scotland the Garve and Ullapool Railway scheme came up for consideration. As a public journalist, at the head of an influential paper, well circulated in the north, I took part in

that movement, and supported it, believing that it would bring the thriving little town of Ullapool, thirty miles distant from a railway, to within an hour of the main line of the Highland Railway at Garve. During one of my visits to London I was appointed one of a deputation to wait on Sir George Trevelyan, and put the facts before him, so as to induce him to give the scheme a grant to enable the promoters to make the line. Sir George cordially received us, and I put the whole case before him as briefly as I could, but he calmly told us, at the close of the interview, that he had no money, and was obliged to decline our request. This disheartened us, but there was no alternative, and we returned home. Three weeks thereafter Sir George, in the House of Commons, agreed to give the sum of one million sterling to promote the Uganda Railway in Central Africa, thus showing the Garve and Ullapool promoters that "where there is a will there is a way." I went over to Ullapool, in Ross-shire, some time after this and addressed a public meeting of the inhabitants on the whole scheme of this railway. The late Sir John A. Fowler presided, and I had an enthusiastic reception. Next day Sir John invited me to a sail on Loch Broom, in his private yacht, and we spent a delightful day. On one

occasion Sir John invited me to lunch in his London hotel, adjoining the Houses of Parliament. The lunch was all that could be desired, and consisted of Sir John's favourite dish, cream cheese, and other viands.

Travelling one day to Ayr with the late Rev. Norman Macleod the porter at Paisley opened our carriage door and shouted out : " Any gentleman coming out at Paisley ? " Said Dr Macleod : " No ; no gentleman comes out at Paisley." Dr Macleod's London publisher said to me on one occasion : " Dr Macleod, Dr Watson of Dundee and myself went a trip to the Holy Land ; on our return journey we halted at Hamburg and discovered after our apartments were taken that not one of us possessed a shilling ; I telegraphed to London for a cheque, which came in due course, but the hotel people detained us till they got their money ; this incident for long after was a source of great amusement to Dr Macleod."

On one occasion it was my duty to preside at the Perth Police Court, when the Court was crowded : and to realise that the indictment stated that a sash of a window was deliberately shut down on a lady's neck—the lady of the house. There was a great sensation at the commencement, and during the trial I was com-

pelled more than once to threaten the servants of the household with imprisonment for contempt of court. The trial was protracted and I was compelled to adopt strong measures. Eventually a fine of five pounds was imposed.

The amusing thing was that in *The Police News* of the following morning there appeared a huge illustration of the President of the Court confronted with a witness in the witness-box and having the sash of the window ready to fall down on the lady's neck.

My banker one day about this time said to me : " I have a grim story to tell you. I was invited to the late duke's funeral and I went over to the palace and attended. While I was there it was discovered that the coffin was too short and, in place of getting a new one made, what do you think was done? You could not guess; they cut off the duke's feet and enclosed them in the coffin along with the body."

Sir James Falshaw, the well-known engineer, was frequently about Perth, and knew a good deal of the social life of the Fair City. One day he said to me : " I went over to Edinburgh on some professional business a few days ago, hoping to have got a compartment to myself, but a passenger stepped in just as the train was moving out of the



General Station. He commenced to talk at once, and I soon got tired of him; immediately we emerged from the Moncrieffe Tunnel he said: 'Sir, what is the length of that tunnel?' I replied rather impatiently: '1300 yards 19 feet 11½ inches.' This answer was followed by absolute silence, a great relief to me, and I was not further disturbed on the journey."

Early in the seventies I was engaged printing books for London publishers, and made the acquaintance of Captain Mayne Reid, the famous novelist. My first interview with the Captain was peculiar. He wired me to come up to London on a certain day of that week, and meet him at eleven A.M. at Nicoll's fashionable restaurant in Regent Street, to discuss some matters of business. I reached Nicoll's at the appointed time, and found the Captain waiting for me. He was a slender little man, of fully forty years of age, dressed in a short black velvet shooting coat, white vest, trousers almost white, a white felt hat, with gloves and silver-mounted cane. Without consulting me he ordered a bottle of champagne. The wine being put on the table we talked over business, and he said: "I want you to print all my novels—thirty volumes. I will find a good publishing firm who will pay you, but I want you first to lend me £250.

I agreed with some reluctance to his proposal, and after I had advanced the money all went well for some years, the publishing firm paying all charges for printing. The Captain, however, never repaid the loan. After this I became acquainted with Mr Frederick Chapman (Chapman & Hall), and we had many business transactions. He cautioned me against lending money to authors, as some of them had treated him badly. About this time I had the honour of dining, by special invitation, with Miss Braddon, the novelist, and her family, as also her husband. I found Miss Braddon an extremely well-informed, charming woman, and she entered into a lively political conversation with me. Her husband was a great personality, a man who could not be contradicted, and at times rather unreasonable. Once he published a Mayne Reid copyright novel without authority, giving it an entirely new title, and advertising it as a new volume. The author was dead at this date, but his widow raised an Action of Interdict, and succeeded. In the witness box a publisher in Paternoster Row was examined as to whether this was a Mayne Reid novel in reality. Counsel cross-questioned him and said: "Have you read this book?" Said the witness; "No; I don't read books, I publish them." Counsel to the judge:

"My Lord, this witness does not take his own medicine." Judge: "Decree for plaintiff, with costs."

The transference of businesses is a great trade in London, involving a vast deal of money changing hands. On one occasion an old business in Shoe Lane and St Bride Street came into the market, a great novel-selling business, with the handling of a great deal of money. It was eventually carried on by two young men named Macadam, who succeeded their father. A purchaser turned up, a rising young publisher, who inherited money at his father's death. The day of settlement arrived. Old Macadam, who was totally out of it, and his two sons appeared at the receipt of custom, and the purchaser arrived and presented his cheque for £10,000—the accepted price. Old Macadam requested the purchaser to give him a look of the cheque. That being done the old man slipped it into his pocket, put on his hat and walked off. The two sons, the legal owners of the business, said to the purchaser: "You must give us your cheque, sir, before we allow you to take possession; we have nothing to do with the old man who has walked away with it." Says the purchaser: "I have handed it to your father, and that is enough." "No," they said;

“ the old man has nothing whatever to do with this business; we are sole owners, and you have not given us the cheque; you ought to have handed it to us, and until we get it we don't leave the premises.” Says the purchaser: “ If you don't turn out immediately I shall apply to the police, and have you removed forcibly.” A row ensued, and the young men had ultimately to walk out, but what became of the cheque was not disclosed.

Finding a publisher for an author's MS. is often a difficult business. In one of my interviews with the late Mr Bentley, that eminent publisher said to me: “ How many authors' MSS. do you think we accept of all that are offered to us? ” I said I had no idea—perhaps 25 per cent. “ You are mistaken,” said Mr Bentley; “ we accept two, three or four out of a hundred.” I expressed my surprise, adding: “ Though you reject so many, yet they get published notwithstanding.” “ Yes,” he said; “ I am aware of that.”

On one of my visits to London I went down to the pro-cathedral at Kensington. When I reached the entrance the doorkeeper said: “ Threepence, sixpence or a shilling, sir? ” I gave him a shilling, and he opened a door that led to the best seats in the area, and desired me to take the best I could find. The priest did the devotional part of the service.

The Cardinal walked into the pulpit and began : “ My dear children, our text to-day is from St Luke’s Gospel, chapter twenty-four.” And he proceeded with an eloquent sermon, which was undistinguishable from a sermon by a Presbyterian minister. The same week I was invited to an At Home to meet the Cardinal, but my business arrangements did not permit of my accepting the invitation.

Forty years ago on account of some of the Glasgow daily papers changing hands I was invited by a Glasgow syndicate who had acquired *The Morning Journal* to go through and conduct the commercial department of that daily paper. I did so, but the work was so laborious that at the end of six months I resigned the appointment. During that period my wife and I sat in Sandyford Parish Church under Dr Macduff, and we enjoyed our Sabbaths there immensely. Dr Macduff, when he heard of my being one of his congregation, frequently came round to my residence and spent the evening. He was a fine specimen of a Scottish minister; the very sound of his voice in the pulpit had a poetic ring, and was fascinating.

In the nineties I occasionally spent a holiday in Tiree, one of the Western Islands, having for its owner the Duke of Argyle. The landing of pass-

engers there in mid-ocean, there being no pier, is a barbarous affair, and has greatly restricted passenger traffic. The Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) in 1891 issued a Report recommending among other things that a pier should be erected at Tiree : the Treasury to contribute three-fourths of the cost, and the people the other fourth. I was desired by some of the islanders to lend them a helping hand in the matter. I took the question up as Commissioner for the islanders, and for upwards of eight years fought the entire scheme single-handed with the County Council, the Treasury and the Congested Districts Board. The engineer, Mr St George Moore, London, was the Duke's nominee. He made surveys, drew plans, submitted estimates, and was of great assistance in promoting the scheme. Whole schedules of printed questions were sent by the County Council for the engineer and myself to answer. All this was promptly done, the County Council safeguarding themselves against any attempt to make them liable for any portion of the cost. If anyone would like to inspect the remarkable opposition to the scheme from the County Council and the Congested Board let them read the correspondence between them and the law agents and myself. In one of my visits to Tiree



I addressed a public meeting in the schoolroom specially called on my account. I was supported by Lord Archibald Campbell and Dr Buchanan, the popular medical officer of the island, etc. Two of the local ministers attended, put my address into Gaelic, and redelivered it in Gaelic before the meeting broke up. I was appointed one of a deputation along with others to wait on the Duke of Argyle at Inveraray for the purpose of enlisting his help and sympathy. On arrival, the Duke, smiling, said to me : " You are only throwing £10,000 into the sea, for no pier you put up there will stand the storm." To which I replied : " Not at all, your Grace; Sir John Fowler is satisfied that a pier can be put there that will not be blown over." His Grace could not contradict so great an authority on piers as Sir John Fowler, and after some conversation with the deputation he invited us to inspect his picture gallery. This we did with much gratification, and were privileged to see many beautiful works of art. One in particular was specially pointed out. This was Archibald, the eighth Earl of Argyle, and first Marquis, who was invited to Whitehall to kiss the King's hand, and was basely captured by a trick of Charles II. for an imaginary offence, and executed by order of that tyrannical ruler on 27th May 1661. We

then withdrew, and thanked his Grace for his courtesy, while he responded that he would give the scheme all the help in his power. Shortly after this I visited the Scottish Office, Dover House, and found the assistant secretary in full sympathy with us. I had several interviews with him. After more than eight years' fighting we got the Congested Districts Board to move at last. Our scheme, however, though elaborated by so eminent an authority as St George Moore, and admired by all who saw it, did not meet the approval of this Board, for some frivolous reason not explained to us. After throwing cold water on the scheme they began to see that the public wanted this pier, and that further procrastination might lead to a debate in the House of Commons, and the existence of the Board might be jeopardised. This would have taken place if the Board had not reconsidered their position. We reminded them that the Treasury, before this Board was established, had sanctioned the matter of a pier at Tiree, and we did not recognise their right to overturn the recommendation. Their first move was to appoint their own engineer to take surveys, and draw plans and specifications. They also got a Provisional Order passed unopposed. Their scheme will cost £14,000; Mr Moore's was

£10,000. We now wait to see how this Board will carry out their undertaking. The present Duke, since the death of his father, has been most anxious to help forward the movement. His Grace informed me he was willing to sell the island if I could get this Board to purchase it. The Board informed me in reply they had no money, to which I said : " When you want money you know where to get it."

The lord lieutenant of a Scottish county was in the habit of revising, for an Edinburgh publication, proof sheets of *The Scottish Nobility*. When that publication came into my hands I sent proof sheets as usual to the lord lieutenant, but, curiously enough, got no answer. I then called on the Clerk of Lieutenancy and put the matter before him, asking his advice. He said, with a smile : " Did you send him a postage stamp ? " I replied in the negative, and he said : " Try that, and let me know the result." I acted on this advice, and sent a stamped envelope, and got the proof sheets back revised in direct course.

Going along Princes Street, Edinburgh, one day an Italian carrying a tray of sculpture on his head was walking before me. The figures were in alabaster, and were beautiful. All of a sudden the crowd from behind, which was considerable,

pressed on the Italian and instantly the tray was overturned and its contents broken to pieces on the pavement. When the crowd had passed the Italian in great perturbation looked askance at his disaster and exclaimed in broken English : “ De Vergen Mary, de Apostel Paul, de Apostel Peter, all gone to de Debil.”

In the nineties what may be called an earthquake occurred in the Church of Scotland offices, Queen Street, Edinburgh. For a considerable time there had been going on a sixpenny magazine called *The Scottish Church*, edited by Dr Story. The church has always been niggardly in the dissemination of literature, and has never been able to rise above the “ penny dreadful.” On the present occasion this magazine was reduced to a penny at a stormy meeting of the Executive, in spite of the opposition of Dr Story ; and, as might be expected, he threw up the sponge, and would have nothing more to do with it. Dr Story thereupon wrote me that if I would join him in starting a magazine, to be called *The Scots Magazine*, price sixpence, he would be honorary editor, if I would be honorary publisher, as he had no sympathy with “ penny dreadfuls.” I agreed, and Dr Story and I carried on this magazine for a time, about twelve years, but it was discontinued.

as the Church gave it no support. A file copy for these twelve years was placed in the Sandeman Public Library, Perth.

It was about this date that I received an invitation from a Haddington banker and lawyer to go over there and start a weekly paper in the Liberal Unionist interest, the capital for which would be found. I accepted the invitation, and went over and started the paper. I spent some time there so as to make a proper start. There was plant, steam engine and machinery to buy, paper and various other things, a staff of compositors to find, while I had a horse and vehicle to go over the county to enable me to select a proper staff of agents and correspondents. This was done in December and January, when the ground was covered with snow. Part of these journeys was done by a sleigh, which the banker had provided, the snow being at certain places too deep for the horse. The new paper was well received, and is still going on. During my visit I was introduced by the banker to Mr Arthur Balfour, afterwards Prime Minister, and Lord Connemara. Both these gentlemen were closely connected with the county, and were warm supporters of the new paper.

When I published my life of Queen Mary, in two volumes, in 1900, and included in the work

sixteen standard portraits of the Queen, the demand was so great that the first edition was sold out in New York in fourteen days after its arrival. A second edition was put to press and is sold out long ago. As the work was a defence of the Queen some of the leading Catholics suggested that I should present a copy to his Holiness, Pius X. I agreed to do so, and forwarded a copy to the Cardinal Secretary, Cardinal Merry del Val, for presentation to his Holiness. The book was promptly accepted and his Holiness did me the honour to send the following communication in acknowledgment of the gift:—

“ROME, 2nd March 1903.

“DEAR SIR,—In reply to your favour of the 18th ultimo I beg to say that the two volumes on Queen Mary duly reached me. I had the honour to present them to the Holy Father, who graciously accepted your homage. In thanking you for them on the part of his Holiness I desire to express regret that owing to an oversight you have not had an earlier acknowledgment. As to the third volume, there is no need to have it specially bound, as you kindly propose.—Yours faithfully in Christ, G.C.,

“MERRY DEL VAL.

“SAMUEL COWAN, Esq., J.P., Perth.”



These volumes got an enthusiastic reception from the newspaper press, as the following abridged criticisms will show:—

The latest exposition of the case for the defence.—*Standard*.

A book which subsequent historians of the period cannot overlook, and it contains the finest collection of portraits of Mary Stuart ever gathered together in one work.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Beautiful these volumes undoubtedly are, and most thrilling reading.—Sir HERBERT MAXWELL, in *Daily Mail*.

One realises with overwhelming poignancy the tragic fate of Mary.—*Contemporary Review*.

The case for Mary could not be more strongly put.—*St James's Gazette*.

Mr Cowan has done his work thoroughly.—*Daily Express*.

A thorough-going defence of Queen Mary.—*Illustrated London News*.

The classic "Life" of the Queen.—*Catholic Times*.

No student of Queen Mary's life can afford to neglect Mr Cowan as an authority.—*Saturday Review*.

Mr Cowan is to be congratulated on the hand-

some appearance of the volumes he has contributed to the "Casket Letters" controversy.—*Scotsman*.

Mr Cowan treats his subject with infinite sobriety and cool judgment.—*Publishers' Circular*.

When my third volume on Queen Mary was published I sent his Holiness Pius X. a presentation copy, and had the honour to receive the following reply from Mgr. Fraser of the Scots College, Rome, probably Cardinal Merry del Val's representative at the Vatican Palace:—

"COLLEGIO SCOZZESE,  
"ROME, 10th March 1907.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am commanded by his Holiness, Pope Pius X., to convey to you his grateful acknowledgment of your courtesy in forwarding to him a copy of 'The Last Days of Mary Stuart,' of which you are the Author. I had the honour of presenting it.—Yours truly,

"ROBERT FRASER.

"SAMUEL COWAN, Esq., J.P., Perth."

The late Principal John Caird and myself were always on terms of cordial friendship. I was an adherent of his congregation when he had his first charge. About a year before his death he wrote

me : " You are one of the very few men now living who attended my service in my first charge. Newton-on-Ayr." This would be in the early fifties, and I heard him long afterwards preach his notable sermon " Religion in Common Life," from the words " Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." That sermon was published, and went through several editions.

In the seventies a good practical joke was perpetrated on the leading citizens of Perth. The lessee of the Tay Salmon Fisheries caught in the morning a huge salmon, weighing sixty-five pounds, the largest fish ever caught in the Tay. It was too large for his London market, and he resolved to invite the leading townspeople to the Royal George Hotel to help him to eat it. Everyone invited accepted the invitation on account of its rarity, as the lessee seldom gave hospitality. At least fifty, including the Provost and Magistrates, attended, and the fish was divided in two and placed at each end of the table, and ample justice done to it. Glasses and tumblers were then put down for toddy. At the close of the second round two waiters went round with the hat and demanded three shillings and sixpence from each guest. Immediately there followed a good many expressions of dissatisfaction, *sub rosa*, as

nobody had any intention of paying. Some toasts followed and the Provost, who had a touch of humour, proposed the health of the lessee, "complimented him as a most successful fisher, as, for instance, look round this table: here were fifty good lively fish in his creel, and that was something to be proud of. A wonderful fisher was the lessee." This joke lasted many a day.

A very clever trick took place in London during one of my visits there. About two P.M. on a summer day two men without jackets, but with white aprons and white caps, a ladder and tools planted the ladder on to a wall in the Strand where there was a case of jewellery of considerable value permanently fixed there by the eminent firm of Attenborough & Co., jewellers. In the midst of the crowds passing up and down the Strand, those two men, having the look of tradesmen, mounted the ladder, removed the fixtures of the jewellery case in double quick time, took it down, disappeared with it and never were again heard of.

On another occasion in Ludgate Hill a well-dressed professional-looking man entered a jeweller's shop and asked to be shown some gold rings. They were duly shown to him, and in replacing them the keen eye of the watchman behind the glass noticed that he pocketed one or two of

them unobserved by the shopman. Immediately the alarm was given and the customer told that he must be given in charge. A cab with a police constable drove up to the door and the customer was handed over, the shopman being told that he must appear at court. The cab and its occupants drove off and never were again heard of—the police constable being evidently an accomplice in disguise.

On another occasion a friend and myself visited Madame Tussaud's exhibition, but being very tired we sat down in silence, beside the group of Henry VIII. and his six wives, to take a breath. Presently a lady and gentleman, evidently on honeymoon, passed us, but the lady looked back for a moment, then said to her husband: "You would actually think these fellows were living."

The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh were walking one day on the railway platform at Aboyne station when a bright little fellow, not knowing who the distinguished visitors were, walked up to the Prince of Wales and said: "Who are you, sir?" Says the Prince: "I am the Prince of Wales." Then to the Duke of Edinburgh the boy said: "Who are you, sir?" Says the Duke: "I am the Duke of Edinburgh." The Prince then said to the boy: "My boy, who

are you? ” To which he retorted at once : “ I am the Czar of Russia.”

Passing through Glasgow on one occasion a shepherd and his dog were watching the fish in a large fishmonger’s shop in Renfield Street. Suddenly a huge crab fastened itself on the dog’s tail. The dog, in terror, as he could not shake it off, bolted along Sauchiehall Street as fast as his legs could carry him. The shopman came out and said excitedly to the shepherd : “ Whistle on your dog, sir.” To which the shepherd responded : “ Whustle on your parton, ye deevil,” and walked off.



## THE SORROWS OF A COUNTRY PRINTER

No. 1. A publisher in the midland counties of England came to me forty years ago and said : “ I have a valuable magazine copyright to offer you, but it requires £ 500 to buy out the present holder. It has a good circulation at 2s. 6d. per copy.” I said I was open to entertain a good thing, to which he replied in flattering terms of the high standing of the magazine ; also that if we came to terms I would print and he would publish it. Further, he added, if I gave my acceptance for the amount he would be responsible for one half and would hand over the acceptance and get in exchange a legal transference of copyright. The acceptance was granted. When it matured he would retire the whole and charge the sales with my half. This seemed all right and in due course the transaction was completed. I printed the magazine and my correspondent published it and collected the revenues. When the bill became due I had to pay it in full, my partner in the venture declaring he had no money. He had evidently paid his private debts with the magazine receipts. I declined to proceed further unless he

found money to pay his way. He could not do so and the magazine was therefore stopped.

No. 2. A London publisher, long since dead, said to me one day: "If you lend me £500 I will send you the stereo plates of a popular series of novels, probably twenty volumes, and which will all require reprinting immediately. I agreed to this proposal and got the plates, but the publisher never repaid a shilling of the loan. All the volumes were reprinted. I learned afterwards that this man borrowed money wherever he could get it and never repaid a shilling of it.

No. 3. The manager of a large publishing firm not now in existence requested from me the loan of £500 in return for sending, as he called it, "as much book printing as I could do." He showed me his first list of books—about thirty—which he wanted done at once, and more to follow. The loan was granted, but the firm collapsed and no printing order was sent. The same man deposited with me works of art, oil paintings and water colours. These he eventually removed, but allowed me to retain some as a security for the loan.