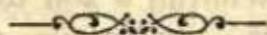


# SCOTTISH LIFE AND CHARACTER IN ANECDOTE AND STORY.



## I.—GOWN AND BANDS.

THE most important man in the parish was the minister. He lived and moved and had his being in a sphere into which nobody penetrated except the beadle, and he was recognised with something nearer awe than reverence. On Sabbath he seemed to condescend a little to speak with his people, and during his parochial visitation appeared to have something in common with other folk. At all other times he was the "minister," and the word embodies much that allows of little interpretation. It may have been this importance that gave the ministry such attractions, and led to the remark that every father hoped one son would "wag his pow in a poopit." That the sacred profession was highly esteemed by the average work-a-day Scotsman is evidenced by the remark which an auld man made to a friend—"If I had kent," he said, "that one of my

sons was to be a medical man and the other a meenister, I would never ha'e had auld Jenny M'Cosh for their mither." Much of this importance, however, has passed away, and the parish minister of to-day is only mortal. But it is hardly of him we have to speak. It is chiefly the acquaintance of the minister of earlier days that we wish to make.

The thought of sending a son to college was well pondered over by the ambitious parent, and frequently advice was taken on the subject. This advice was not always of a pleasant nature.

Dr. John Brown, of Haddington, a godly minister of the last century, speaking to a farmer of his congregation who was desirous to put his son into the ministry, for which profession the worthy Doctor saw the lad was ill-fitted, said—"If he ha'na knowledge, he may get that; if he ha'na learnin', he may get that; if he ha'na Hebrew and Greek, he may get them; if he ha'na experience, he may get that; if he ha'na the grace o' God, he may even get that; but if he ha'na common sense, the college 'ill never gi'e him that."

Notwithstanding advice of this kind, the child frequently passed to college, and in due time received license to preach the Gospel.

A good old lady, who seems to have been of the same mind as the worthy Doctor mentioned above, said to her nephew, a poor preacher, whom nobody wanted to hear, "James, why did you enter the ministry?" "Because I was called," answered the

probationer. "James," said the old lady, anxiously, as she looked up from wiping her spectacles, "are you sure it wasn't some *other noise* you heard?"

Although parents strove as best they could to give a son a college education, and lived to a large extent on the hope that one day the son would bring honour to the family, many of the parents were themselves altogether illiterate.

"This letter's frae Andra," remarked Mrs. Thomson, a rich farmer's wife, whose son was preparing for the ministry. "He says he's gettin' on vera weel, an' that he's takin' fencin' lessons." "I'm gey gled to hear it," rejoined old Thomson. "It's time he was tryin' to pick up some knowledge o' farmwork noo. I'll set him to the fencin' o' that park ahint the stackyard when he comes hame."

Despite the austerity of his religion, and the soberness with which he had to look upon life, the minister in the pulpit was sometimes unconsciously led to afford his hearers some humour.

A worthy preacher, who ministered for the welfare of a small country parish in the south, was a great lover of the pipe, but, for reasons best known to himself, always indulged in it secretly. One Sabbath morning he was enjoying a quiet smoke while looking over the notes of his discourse, when an unexpected visitor was announced. Anxious to conceal the pipe (though in the atmosphere there were abundant proofs of its presence), he hurriedly put it into the breast pocket of his coat, which also

contained his handkerchief. The interview lasted until the bells began to ring, so that the reverend gentleman hurried off to church, quite forgetful of the fact that he carried his pipe with him. He had chosen for his subject that day, "The worship of idols," and towards the middle of his sermon began to wax eloquent. "We have seen," said he, "my hearers, the dire punishment which those people brought upon themselves by their idolatrous sins. In our minds we condemn them for having yielded to those sins, and we admit the justice of the punishment meted out to them. And yet may we not be condemning others for what we ourselves are guilty of? Have we, I ask, no idols which we worship public'y or in secret? A moment's reflection shows us that we have. Then, what is our duty? Is it not this, that here and now we take and cast those idols from us—cast them from us, I say for ever?" Just as he uttered the words, he snatched forth his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, with the result that his much-loved "clay" was drawn at the same time from its place of concealment, and circling in the air, it fell and broke in a hundred pieces at the feet of the startled precentor. The congregation was amazed, not knowing whether to treat the matter seriously, or as a joke, when the minister, quickly recovering his presence of mind, added—"And, my brethren, I have always endeavoured to strengthen my pulpit exhortations with the force of example!"

While a minister in the north was lecturing one forenoon on "I have the keys of death and of hell," one of his hearers took ill, and was carried into the vestry, the door of which being open, admitted the interior being seen from the pulpit. The key of the press containing cordials could not, however, be found; and the reverend doctor, suddenly pausing in his discourse upon "the keys," brought a smile to the faces of many in the congregation by loudly declaring, "I think I have the keys in my pocket" (meaning the press keys, but not the other keys of which he had been solemnly speaking).

A Highland clergyman near Inverness was preaching one Sabbath from the New Testament, where the Apostle Peter said—"Lo, we have left *all* and followed thee." "Ay, ay," remarked the divine, "this is like you, Peter, aye pouncin' an' poastin'. What had you to be leavin'? Naethin' but an *auld fisher's poat* an' a *puckle nets*."

"Guid Scotch drink," as it was called, is well known as the curse of Scotland. It is perhaps a matter of thankfulness that this national vice is not now so general as it was many years ago, when it received vigorous denunciation in the following terms from a northern pulpit:—"My freen's, you would all like to go to heaven, but what kind of heaven would ye like to go to? Ye would just like the Cromarty Firth to be bilin' watter, the Black Isle to be loaf sugar, and the Beauly rinnin' whusky; and ye would just brew and drink and

drink and brew to all eternity." Rudyard Kipling, with his "Ten league canvases" and "brushes of comets' hair," seems to have been anticipated after all. This northern divine evidently also held the idea that the work begun here will be completed yonder.

A guileless old minister one day told some boys of the chapter he was to read at the morning service.

The boys, finding the place, glued together the connecting pages, and on the Sabbath the preacher read to his astounded congregation that "when Noah was 120 years old he took unto himself a wife who was" (then turning the page) "130 cubits long, 40 cubits wide, built of gopher wood, and covered with pitch in and out." He was naturally puzzled at this. He read it again, verified it, and then said—"My friends, this is the first time I ever read this in the Bible, but I accept it as evidence of the asertion that we are fearfully and wonderfully made."

Dr Blair, of the High Church, Edinburgh, once allowed an old homely Highland minister, who also had found evidence that "we are fearfully and wonderfully made," to preach for him. The congregation never forgot the sermon. It was on the duty of humiliation, and the church was crowded with the refinement of the city. "An' noo, ma freen's," said the preacher, "in the thirteenth place, I shall proceed to set before you another reason for humeeliation, an' it's taken frae the sheeance o'

anawtomy. The skeeled in sheeance tell us we have got aw the puddens o' a soo, but e'en this is a guid reason for humeeliation, an' taken frae the sheeance o' anawtomy."

Preached to the refinement of Edinburgh the worthy Highlander's disquisition on humiliation may seem to have been out of place, but occasionally in text and phrase the preacher could suit himself to circumstances.

Skinner, the author of "Tullochgorum," began his ministry in 1742, just on the eve of the '45. He was but twenty-one, and as he passed through the crowd of assembled worshippers to conduct his first service, he overheard a member of the flock remark—"it's surely no' that beardless boy that's going to minister to us?" and chose for his text—"Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown." On another occasion, when, his chapel having been burned down, he was obliged to preach from a temporary desk placed in the entry of his little thatch-roofed parsonage, he was equally appropriate in phrase if not in text. He had just begun his sermon when a hen, which had got into one of the apartments, made an excited exit through the passage, scattering the loose leaves of the discourse in every direction. "Never mind them," said Skinner, as the people went in search of the sheets; "a (fool) fowl shall not shut my mouth again."

Occasionally, as we have already seen, the old minister in his preaching was unintentionally

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amusing. A city divine, on the occasion of churching a new Magistracy, without any intention to insult, took for his text, "The wicked walk on every side, *when the vilest men are exalted.*" The old West country minister was as unconsciously humorous when he referred to Sir Isaac Newton as being "as well acquainted with the stars as if he had been born and brocht up among them!" and so was the Arran minister who intimated from the pulpit, "My friends, there will be no Lord's-day here next Sabbath; it's Sacrament ower at Kilmory, and I'll be there."

An eccentric North of Scotland divine on one occasion wound up his sermon with this decidedly pointed peroration—"Ma freen's, it is as impossible for a *Moderate* to enter the kingdom o' hevin, as for a coo to climb up a tree wi' her tail foremost and harry a crow's nest; or for a soo to sit on the tap o' a thistle and sing like a mavis." Such a statement must have remained in the memory of his congregation for a while, and must have been recalled, when, on another occasion he spoke of the depravity of human nature after the following manner—"The human heart is just like a rig of potawtoes, that when it's weedit at the a'e end, the ither begins to grow again."

A good example of the peculiarly homely and witty mode of illustrating a point so frequently used, is told of an old Berwickshire minister, who, while preaching in his church at Abbey Saint Bathans,

to a congregation largely composed of shepherds from the surrounding hills, and having chosen for his theme—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," etc., said, "The illustration in the text, my brethren, is Eastern, so that, to make the subject plainer, I will use another that you can more easily understand. It is just as impossible, my friends, for a rich man, whose mind is entirely set on the world's wealth, to enter the kingdom of heaven, as it is for a blackfaced Hieland yow to jump into a hazel bush and whistle like a blackbird."

A minister who was lamenting the sins of his congregation, found himself in an awkward position. Having said—"Our souls are black," he made a long pause, then extricated himself as follows:—"Black, ay, black as the pat, and sooty as the lum."

An old minister was wont to preach out of doors in summer, and used to gather an audience from the people who were airing themselves by the side of a stream, a little outside the village. On one occasion, he unhappily took his place on a bank, fixing himself right above an *ants' nest*. These industrious insects have a nasty habit of making their presence peculiarly undesirable, and being no respecters of persons, they made the minister no exception to the rule. He was very uncomfortable, and afraid that the audience might observe his discomfort, he apologised by saying—"Brethren, though I hope



I have the word of God in my mouth—I think the deil has gotten into my breeks.”

The choice of texts was not always the happiest and sometimes led to a laugh.

One Sabbath a minister of very short stature was asked by a brother preacher to fill his pulpit for the day. It happened that the pulpit was a very high one, and nearly hid the little minister from view. However, the congregation managed to keep their countenances until a nose and two eyes suddenly appeared over the top of the pulpit, and a squeaking tremulous voice proclaimed, in nasal tones, the text : —“Be of good cheer : it is I ; be not afraid.” A general roar of laughter followed.

A well-known minister of Edinburgh had been in the habit for many years of assisting his friend, Dr. Buist, minister of St. Andrews, on the occasion of the celebration of Holy Communion. This gentleman had three or four times preached the same sermon from the text, “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus.” Naturally this frequent repetition of the same discourse, though an excellent one, was unsatisfactory to the congregation, and tended to cast a shade on the whole solemnities of the day. The elders accordingly urged their minister to give his friend a hint that he might leave Nicodemus at home. Dr. Buist promised to do so, observing at the same time that the fact of the frequent repetition of the sermon had escaped his notice. On the evening of the Communion a large

congregation assembled. The decisive moment came. The preacher gave out his text—a new one—paused to adjust his spectacles, and began the familiar words, “Who this Nicodemus was, Scripture does not very clearly show.”

The late Professor Story was made responsible for the following quiet sarcasm. The Church of St. Cuthbert’s, Edinburgh, where Dr. M’Gregor preaches was recently restored and renovated. The former building was not remarkable for architectural elegance, nor has the newer erection attained that glory. There were, of course, elaborate services to celebrate the re-opening of the church, and Dr. Story is said to have suggested as a text appropriate to the sermon in such a building, “I will pull down my barns and build *greater!*”

One day, a well-known probationer officiated in St. Enoch’s Church, in Glasgow, at the morning service, and preached an eloquent sermon from the text, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?” In the afternoon he repeated the same at Tron Church, and in the evening at St. David’s. An old woman, who had been at all three services, waited for the minister’s departure from the last-named church, and, tapping him on the shoulder, said—“Ha’e ye no’ got thae sparrows selt yet, man?”

Even prayers were not always free from the touch of humour.

A minister of a little town in the north having been affronted by the Provost, who was a butcher,

resolved to have revenge. Accordingly, when Sabbath came, in the prayer before the sermon, he made use of the following expression—"And since O Lord! thou hast commanded us to pray for our enemies, herein we beseech Thee for the Provost of this town; give him the strength of Samson and courage of David, that he may knock down sin like an ox, and cut the throat of iniquity like a sucking calf, and let his horn be exalted above his brethren."

Several of the Parish Church ministers do not conceal their distaste for Dissenters; and sometimes Dissenters are equally frank in their opposition to the National Church. The minister of Symington, Lanarkshire, gives the following choice specimen from a prayer by a Seceder preacher on the Green of Symington:—"O Lord, Thou knows that the silly, snivelling body is not worthy to keep a door in Thy house. Cut him down as a cumberer of the ground; tear him up root and branch, and cast the wild rotten stump out of Thy vineyard. Thresh him, Lord, and dinna spare; oh, thresh him tightly with the flail of Thy wrath, and make a strae wisp o' him to stap the mouth o' hell."

When the late James Craig was rector of the Kirkwall Grammar School, the minister of the parish paid that institution a visit, and, after examining the children in religious knowledge, engaged in prayer, in which he put up the following petition:—"We pray Thee, O Lord, that Thy grace may stick to the hearts of Craig's boys like butter

to bere bannocks!" The prayer is a kindly one, and shows effectively the use of homely phraseology.

An Edinburgh clergyman was in the habit of praying, previous to the meeting of the General Assembly, that that august body might be so guided as "*no' to do ony harm,*" and a minister, praying once for members of Parliament that they might be endowed with wisdom from on high, added the remark—"Ay, Lord, Ye ken weel they ha'e need o't."

Among the notable prayers stands first that dictated by our Lord. Dr. Gilchrist, of Canongate Free Church, Edinburgh, once gave a Divinity Hall fledgling, in newly-cut M.B. waistcoat, a severe rebuke, in a canny remark, with reference to the use of this prayer. The waistcoat's owner was officiating for the Doctor one Sabbath, and while in the vestry, previous to beginning the service, said—"I—ah—suppose, Doctah, you—ah—repeat—ah—the Lord's Prayer in some pah't of—ah—the sahvice?" "Ay, ay, to be sure," put in the Doctor, "unless ye ha'e a better ane o' your ain."

A Perth minister, after expressing the prayers of his congregation for "the noble family who has lately come to reside amongst us," added, "lest there should be ony mistake, it is the Earl of Kin-noul I mean!" The Doric in prayer is always expressive. "O Lord," said one auld minister, "we pray Thee to send us wind, no' a rantin', tantin', tearin' wind, but a noolin', soughin',

winnin' wind," and "O Lord," said another, "'Thoo is like a moose in a dry-stane dyke—aye keekin' oot at us frae holes an' crannies, an' we canna see Thee."

A well-known West Highland minister is said to have prayed in reference to some Professors with whom he could not agree—"O Lord, have mercy on these men! But if not, then send them to hell; and O Lord, send them quickly, before they give further trouble to Thy Church."

A reverend old worthy, in praying for grace, said—"Lord, dibble Thou the kail seed of Thy grace into our hearts, and if we grow not up good kail, mak' us good sprouts at least." Another minister was wont to pray, "O Lord, we're aye gangin' an' we're aye gettin', we soud aye be comin' to Thee, but we're aye forgettin'."

Long ago the weather entered much into prayer, and many have doubtless heard of the honest farmer, who, in a time of severe drought, informed the minister that "he might pray as he liked, but they would get nae rain afore the change of the moon." People of the West are familiar with the story told of a Free Churchman, who, in the midst of "a plague of rains," and when praying for dry weather, interrupted his intercessions, as a gust of wind blew in one of the windows of the church, with the words, "Tuts, Lord, this is quite ridiculous." Then again there is the story of the churchman, who went to the Dissenting minister to ask him to pray

for rain. This gentleman on enquiring why he did not go to the parish minister, received the reply :—  
“Catch him praying for rain to my neeps when his ain hay’s no’ in yet.”

In 1745, after the victory of the Highlanders at Prestonpans, a message was sent to the ministers of Edinburgh, in the name of “Charles, Prince Regent,” desiring them to preach next day (Sabbath) as usual; but many alarmed by the defeat of Cope, sought refuge in the country, and no public worship was performed within the city, save by a minister named Hog, at the Tron. It was otherwise, however, at St. Cuthbert’s, the incumbent of which was then the Rev. Neil M’Vicar, who preached to a crowded congregation, many of whom were armed Highlanders, before whom he prayed for George II. and also for Charles Edward in a fashion of his own, recorded thus by Ray, in his history of the time, and others :—“Bless the king. Thou knowest what king I mean. May the crown sit long on his head. As for that young man who has come among us to seek an earthly crown, we beseech Thee to take him to Thyself and give him a crown of glory.” It is said that when the Prince heard of M’Vicar’s prayer he laughed heartily and expressed himself quite satisfied.

On one occasion, in Fife, it was apparent to a minister, when he went down to the vestry after conducting service, that he had given great umbrage to the minister of the parish, who had been hearing

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him. At last the officiating minister asked his brother what it was in the sermon that had so annoyed him? "It was not your sermon, sir," was the reply, "it was your prayer. You prayed, sir, that I might be spared for many a year to come and go out and in amongst this people, and do you know I've seen seven years in this poor place already!"

A minister in a small country village, who was noted for his absent-mindedness, was once observed to stop excitedly in the midst of his sermon and heard to mutter—"I knew she would—I knew she would!" After the service was over some one asked the reason. "Dear me," said he, "did I? Well, you know, from the pulpit I can just see old Mrs Adam's garden, and this morning she was out pulling up a cabbage, and I thought to myself, 'Now, if that cabbage comes up suddenly she'll go over,' and just then up it came, and over she went."

A minister in Glasgow was annoyed by some of his hearers talking and giggling. He paused one Sabbath in his discourse, looked at the disturbers, and said, "Some years since, as I was preaching, a young man who sat before me was constantly laughing, talking, and making uncouth grimaces. I paused and administered a severe rebuke. After the close of the service, a gentleman said to me, 'Sir, you made a great mistake; that young man was an idiot.' Since then I have always been afraid to reprove those who misbehave themselves in church, lest I should repeat that mistake and reprove an-

other idiot." During the rest of the service there was good order.

He was a canny, every-day Scot who corrected the minister in a little mistake which happened one Sabbath in Oban. "For, are not two swallows sold for a farthing," said the minister, sharpening a sentence of his sermon with the quotation in question. The congregation would have been quite content to accept swallows; but unfortunately for himself, the speaker saw his mistake and repeated hastily, "For, are not two doves sold for a farthing." "Sparras," audibly prompted Dugald from the pews, to the silent mirth of the audience, and probably to the relief of the minister.

The Rev. William Porteous of Kilbuho was a pawky character. Like many other ministers he was troubled by his parishoners' want of punctuality in attending his ministrations. On one occasion he held a diet of examination, and among those who attended was Tammas Core, a customer weaver of Southside, who had a short time before been entrusted with the weaving of a plaid for the minister. Core did not arrive till the devotional part of the service was over, and on his appearance was greeted with the words—"Come awa', Tammas; ha'e ye no' gotten my plaid woven yet?—man, ye're lang about it."

The Rev. Dr. Young of Perth used to be annoyed by a couple coming to church, sitting in a corner in the gallery, and, as they talked in lovers' language

all through the service, making a "ssh-ssh" noise. At last he could stand it no longer, and one Sabbath he stopped in the middle of his sermon, looked up to the gallery, and said, "If that couple in the right-hand gallery there will come to me on Monday, I will marry them for nothing if they will stop that 'ssh-ssh!'"

Fortunately everybody does not look upon the church as a place for courtship, but many seem to imagine that if it is good for anything it is good as a place to sleep in, and many a time has a preacher's temper been tried by a drowsy member.

The minister of L——, in the north, who was one of those quietly-humorous characters of long ago, had a lot to contend with in this way. In his church, until a comparatively recent period, it was quite common for the beadle to rouse up, either by means of a ladle or his hand, and waken sleepers. On one occasion he had used his utmost art on an old woman who had long been innkeeper in the parish. Failing to rouse her, the minister said, "John, let her a'be; I'll wauken her masel"; then, striking the side of the pulpit firmly with his clenched fist, he called out, "Anither gill, here, Janet," whereupon she immediately replied, "Comin', sir, comin'."

Another preacher in the north once found his congregation going to sleep before he had fairly begun. On seeing this, he stopped and exclaimed, "Brethren, it's no' fair. Wait till I get a start, and then, if I'm no' worth listening to, gang to

sleep; but dinna nod your pows before I get commenced. Gi'e a buddy a chance."

Sleepers in Dr. K——'s church, Aberdeen, were often awakened with a start. One man had succumbed and was dozing quietly when he was hailed with—"You, sir, No. 3 in the second seat from the front in the top left? What are you asleep for? Put your thumb into him—his next neighbour." On one occasion his eye caught a man asleep whom he knew, and whose wife was seated beside him. The minister called to the latter, "Go home, Betty, and bring John's nightcap."

A farmer, who was a member of the Rev. Peter Glas's congregation, could not, on account of his arduous labours during the week, keep awake in church. He expressed a hope on one occasion that the minister would extend to him a little indulgence, adding that he would drive two cart-loads of coal to the manse. Mr Glas listened to the explanation, and promised to allow him to slumber undisturbed. The next Sabbath, however, not only did the worthy farmer slumber, but gave audible demonstration of the fact, whereupon Mr. Glas had him wakened. On having his nap disturbed, he promptly reminded the minister of their little arrangement, but this was met by Mr. Glas with the remark, "I micht ha'e winked at the sleepin', but I canna permit you to snore."

A minister had observed one of his flock asleep during sermon. He paused and called him to order.

"Jeems Robson, ye are sleepin' ; I insist on you being wauken when God's Word is preached to ye." "Weel, sir, you may look at your ain seat, an' you'll see a sleeper forbye me," answered Jeems, pointing to the minister's lady in the manse pew. "Then, Jeems," said the minister, "when you see my wife asleep again haud up your hand." By-and-bye the arm was stretched out, and sure enough the fair slumberer was caught in the act. Her husband, solemnly calling upon her to stand up and receive the censure due to her offence, thus addressed her—"Mrs. B——, a'body kens that when I got ye for my wife I got nae beauty, your freen's ken that I got nae siller ; and if I dinna get God's grace I shall ha'e a puir bargain indeed."

In another church a member was equally prone to snatch the proverbial "forty winks." One Sabbath dreams came in his sleep, and he somewhat astonished the worshippers by exclaiming, "No, no ; nae cheatin' noo. We've had three chapins o' ale, and three gless o' whusky, an' there's no' a farden o't peyed yet."

Although, as remarked at the outset, the minister was to some extent unapproachable, he was not free from criticism. Perhaps no man in the parish was watched with closer eyes than the spiritual adviser, and his sermon and everything else connected with himself, the church, and the manse came in for a searching scrutiny. "How did the minister get on the day?" an auld wife was asked, on her way home,

by one who had not been able to be at church that morning. "How did he get on? He just stood an' threw stanes at us, an' never missed wi' ane o' them. My certie, but yon was preaching."

Dr. Lawson, shortly after his settlement at Selkirk, was told by one of his hearers that the congregation were pleased with his sermons, but not with his texts. "Ah," replied the minister, "I could understand what you say had you told me that the congregation were dissatisfied with my sermons. But the texts! What is wrong with them?" "Oh, I don't know," was the reply, "but that's what they say, and I like to speak my mind." "Just so," said the divine; "then hear what Solomon says of you, and the like of you; he says that a fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it till afterwards"—a text which probably did that man more good than any of the sermons to which he afterwards had the privilege of listening.

Two men were talking about sermons. "Hoo did your minister get on last Sawbath?" asked the one. "Get on!" said the other; "he got on—juist like a taed among tar." What criticism could be more expressive of many a discourse than that?

The following conversation is related as having taken place between two severe old Covenanters after hearing a sermon of the old-fashioned kind. "What do you think o' that sermon, Jamie?" said Willie as they wended their way down the street. "Think o't," said Jamie, "Man, it was juist a

gran' sermon. I havena heard ane I likit better for mony a day. What do you think o't yersel'?" "Ae, man," said Willie, "it was an awfu' sermon, a fearfu' sermon. It fair gar'd my flesh a' grue. I'm shiverin' yet, an' I'm sure I canna tak' my denner." "What?" said Jamie, with a snort of indignation; "what do ye want? What wad ye ha'e, man? Do ye want the man to slide ye down to hell on a buttered plate?"

A country youth went to visit his friends in Glasgow, and, like the hospitable people Glaswegians are, they spared no pains to make him happy. On Sabbath they took him to hear one of St. Mungo's cleverest preachers, who happened to deliver an exceptionally pathetic discourse. Returning from church, he informed his friends that "It was a rare discourse! A' the fowk were greetin', and I was gey near't mysel', but I didna like to gi'e way, seein' he wasna my ain meenister."

A recently-inducted minister was attracting large audiences from other congregations by his eloquence, and Willie, the beadle, looked with dismay at the empty pews in his own church. When next he met his minister, he said, "Ye maun improve your sermons, sir, if ye want to retain your hearers." "Oh, new scissors always cut clean," answered the minister. "Ay, ay," was the unexpected retort, "that's a' richt, but auld anes are a' the better to get a bit shairp up!"

An old shepherd who was discussing the parable of

the ninety-and-nine sheep with his minister, said, with an eye to the practical side of things, "I've often thocht that the man that gaed efter the ae lost sheep maun ha'e ha'en a fine dowg. An' then the wilderness, I tak' it, that juist meant the hillside?" "Oh, no doubt," said the minister. "Humph!" replied the old shepherd with some suspicion, "an' a bonnie scatter he wad fin' when he came back for the ninety-and-nine."

An aged divine had occasionally to avail himself of the assistance of probationers. One Sabbath a young man very vain of his accomplishments as a preacher officiated, and on descending from the pulpit was met by the old gentleman with extended hands. Expecting high praise, he said—"No compliments, I pray." "Na, na, my young friend," said the auld minister, "nowadays I am glad o' anybody." That young man did not venture on questionable ground again in a hurry.

Another old divine, who did not quite regard himself as a paragon of pulpit perfection, addressing his assistant, remarked that it was singular how he felt more fatigue hearing him than in preaching himself. To this the assistant replied that he experienced a similar feeling when his reverend senior was in the pulpit. "Then," rejoined the minister, "I peety the folk that have to hear us baith!"

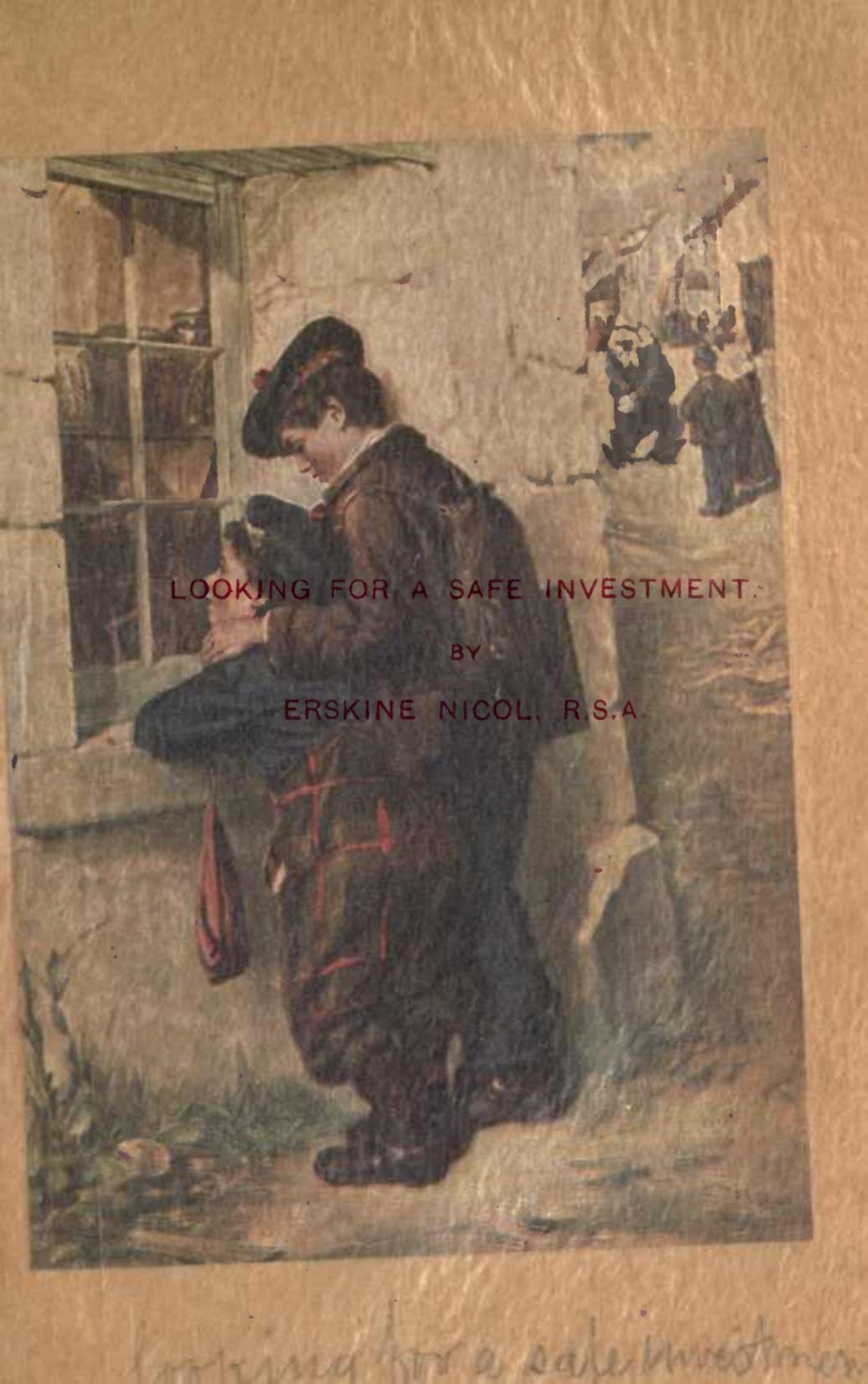
During a vacancy in a rural parish a "candidate" preached, whose stature was diminutive and whose person was very thin. Perhaps much "leet-preach-

ing" had emaciated him! As the church "skailed," a burly farmer was heard observing, "Yon man'll no' dae ava, no' dae ava! He doesna weigh six stane!"

A newly-placed minister was at dinner with one of his parishioners who had none of the polish of society about him, and spoke his mind bluntly. The minister came from the city, and was telling some of his experiences, when he observed—"But if I were to tell you some of my most remarkable adventures, I'm afraid you would doubt my words." "Nae fear o' that, sir," replied the farmer heartily; "we dinna ken ye weel eneuch for that yet."

In a village near Perth the minister, elders, and a local builder were talking over ways and means for repairing the church. "They tell me," said the minister, "that portions of the floor are greatly affected by dry rot, and that it will not only get worse and worse, but extend to other parts of the church." "Why, bless your heart, sir" said the builder, "the dry rot in the floor is nothing to the dry rot in the pulpit, and it's been getting worse ever since you came!"

Shortly after the Secession of 1843, an old woman was walking to church along with her family. The Auld Kirk minister rode past at a rapid rate, and the old lady said to her children—"Siccan a wey to be ridin', and this Sawbath day. Aweel, aweel, a gude man is mercifu' to his beast." Shortly afterwards her own minister rode past just as furiously, and the



LOOKING FOR A SAFE INVESTMENT.

BY

ERSKINE NICOL, R.S.A.

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worthy old wife cried—"Ah, there he goes. The Lord bless him. Puir man, his heart was in his wark, an' he eager to be at it."

A boy who had been indiscreet enough to put a sixpence in his mouth accidentally swallowed it. His mother, concerned both for her boy and the sixpence, tried every means for its recovery, consulted her neighbours, and finally in despair called in the doctor, but without result. As a last resort a woman present suggested that they should send for the Free Kirk "meenister." "The meenister?" chorused mother and neighbours. "Ay, the meenister," rejoined the dame. "Od's, if there's ony money in him he'll sune draw it oot o'm."

A minister in the upper part of Annandale complained that the influenza attacked him worst in the head, and an old farmer, who had been reading in an article that the disease attacked the weakest part, replied—"Juist exac'ly what was to be expectit; we a' ken brawly that's your weakest pairt."

An old divinity professor never ventured to alter a single word of the prayer with which he opened his class every morning. This circumstance was once pointed out to him by a student—"Would it not be better, sir, to occasionally alter your prayer, according to the wants of the times and the periods of the session?" "Na! na!" sharply answered the professor, "I've said that prayer every College day for forty years without ony change, an' it wad be nae-

thing sort o' sacrilege to alter't noo, to please your whims."

Of criticism passed on the minister and his work, perhaps the following was the kindest, most appropriate and most pointed that ever was passed upon one minister by another in circumstances akin to those which belong to the incident therein contained. It is told in Mr. Alison's "Anecdote of Glasgow," and refers to the Rev. James Lapslie, at one time minister of Campsie. "Over thirty years ago I was in the company of a gentleman who was then an old man—he was born, I think, towards the close of the seventies of the last century. We were at the time walking through the town of Rutherglen. He was full of anecdote and reminiscence, and I now regret that all he told me has vanished from my memory, excepting this one. As we were passing the old Parish Church, in the centre of the town, my old friend paused for a few minutes. 'I forget,' said he, 'the name of a minister who at one time filled the pulpit of that church. He was a man of somewhat dissipated habits, as most of the clergy of that day were. How it came about I do not now recollect; but he was found dead on the public road under circumstances that could only lead to one conclusion. A Mr. Lapslie, from Campsie, came to preach his funeral sermon. The church was crowded in expectation of what he would say in regard to the dead minister and the painful manner of his death. Mr. Lapslie gave out his text and exhausted it without

making the slightest reference to the deceased. Then he paused for a few minutes, and turning to the congregation, said—'As for our deceased brother, he had his faults, and so have you.' So saying, he closed the Bible and concluded the service."

Many of the old parishioners judged a minister by the amount of noise he made, and as partly illustrative of this method of judging the respective merits of preachers, we may cite the reply made by "the guidman" at a northern farm upon his wife's asking as to how the sermon had been delivered. It was a strange minister who had occupied the pulpit : —"Weel," answered Jeems, "I can tell ye ye lost a treat. There was never the marrow o' him i' the pulpit afore. Losh, hoo he hammer't on the Beuk an' yarkit till as feck's death we couldna see him for stour."

A minister was both annoyed and piqued at several of his congregation "lifting their lines" and crossing over to a church almost opposite. He thought for a while, but was unable to guess what might be the reason, and at last he called his beadle, an old and faithful servant. "Thomas," said he, "I wish you would stand near the church door next Sabbath when the service is over and listen if you can hear the people making remarks about the sermon." "Tammas" did as directed, and in due course appeared in the minister's presence. "Well, Thomas, did you hear any remarks about the sermon?" "No' a word sir. Ilka band as they gaed past were aye

makin' remarks about the denner—aye sayin', 'Cauld kail het again'; but the feint a word did I hear o' your sermon."

Rev. Peter Anton, of Kilsyth, tells an incident of which he was the central figure. He had been preaching in a provincial town in the West, and, after service, he was waited upon by two young men, who appeared to have something on their minds. With an effort one of the young fellows tentatively remarked that they had heard the sermon. "Oh," said Mr. Anton, anticipating an opportunity of clearing away some theological cobwebs, "what part of the sermon were you interested in?" "It wasna the sermon sir," said the youth, "it was your wecht! We had a difference aboot it, and we thocht we wad juist ask ye yoursel'."

A congregation in the south of Galloway were in the throes of a ministerial election. After each service, the candidate was subjected to a deal of criticism. "He was a fine preacher," said an auld woman, referring to a young Edinburgh student. "I dinda care for him," said her companion. "No, he was nae great preacher. The way he wrocht Lazarus oot and in among the cauld stanes was juist fair heartless." On the following Sabbath two old men of the parish fell to the work of comparison. "That was a guid man the day," said John, who was famed for his doctrinal learning. "Ay," said his friend who judged sermons by their length, "but the ane last Sabbath was better." "I wadna say that he



was," added John. "Ou, there's nae doot about it," persisted the other, "an' forbye, he gi'ed ye *mair o't!*"

A kirk had been rather unfortuate in its ministers, two of them having gone off in decline within twelve months of their appointment, and once again, after hearing a number of candidates for the vacancy, the members were looking forward with keen interest to the meeting at which the election was to take place. "Weel, Marget," asked one female parishioner of another, as they foregathered on the road one day, "wha are ye gaun to vote for?" "I'm juist thinkin' I'll vote for nane o' them. I'm no' muckle o' a judge, an' it'll be the safest plan," was Marget's sagacious reply. "Toots, woman," said the other, "if that's the wey o't vote wi' me." "An' hoo are ye gaun to vote?" enquired Marget. "I'm gaun to vote for the man I think has the soondest lungs," replied her friend, "an'll no' bother us deein' again in a hurry."

A probationer was fourth on a leet of candidates for a church. His trial sermon was delivered in a loud voice, and with rather animated action. At the close he waited in the vestry to interview the beadle as to his pulpit appearance. "I understand, James, that I am fourth on the leet." "Ou, ay, sir, ye are so." "Can you give me an idea of how the other three candidates did when they were here?" "Weel, sir," replied James, critically, and settling down to the work with apparent relish, "the first ane



cam' frae aboot Fife, he wasna worth muckle ava; the neist ane was frae Aiberdeen; he was a hantle better, he was a gey soun' preacher. Then the last ane, I dinna ken far he cam' frae, but he was very soun'." "And, James," enquired the preacher when he saw the beadle was not to criticise further, "what do you think of my attempt to-day; am I sound, do you think?" "Weel, sir," said James, with a twinkle in his eye, "I wad say ye was *soun'*; in fac', sir, I wad say' ye was a' *soun'* thegither."

A rich snuff story is told of the late Rev. John Murker, who for many years was Congregational minister of Banff, and who was an inveterate snuffer. He regaled himself with copious pinches during his discourse, had a most distinct aversion to smoking, and used frequently to allude in scathing terms to the habit, from the pulpit. To his great astonishment he discovered that a devout old woman of his congregation was addicted to the pipe, and accordingly he preached specially at her one Sabbath, and denounced the habit with the greatest severity. The old lady calmly heard all the tirade, and at the close of the service proceeded to the vestry to have it out with Mr. Murker. "Weel, Mary," said he, in his homely way, "what can I dae for ye?" "I wad juist like to put a few questions till ye, Maister Murker," was the uncompromising reply. Somewhat at a loss, the good man asked her what she wanted to know. "Can ye tell me," asked the old body in her Banffshire doric, "fit pairt o' the human

face the Awlmichty pits maist vaill'e on?" "I dinna ken," was Mr. Murker's cautious reply. "Weel, then," Mary proceeded, "seein' that the Awlmichty breathed the breath o' life intil oor nostrils, div ye nae think it wad be the nose?" "Weel, I daresay it might," said the minister, rather nonplussed by her line of argument. "An' div ye think He ga' ye your nose to mak' as aise-backet o'?" crushingly retorted Mary, who at once departed, leaving Mr. Murker to his own reflections.

A probationer who enquired of an old lady of the congregation what she thought of his sermon, received the not-too-satisfactory reply—"Ae, sir, I did enjoy't, ye had beautiful psaulms," and this recalls the remark of the old lady, who, in speaking of a worthy minister on Deeside, solemnly declared he was "nae great preacher, bit he had aye fine texts." In Aberdeenshire a canny Scot once enquired—"Fat kind o' a minister can he be fa needs a bookie fin' he's prayin'? Fat ees is he?"

"Well, Angus," remarked a worthy farmer to his Highland friend, "just getting ho...e from church? Who had you preaching to-day?" "Ha, man," answered Angus, "we had Norman MacLeod. Faith, she's a clever lad that Norman. She was preach aboot the strongest man that ever was. Noo, the strongest man that ever I saw was a man doon at Oban; she would carry a coo oot the boat on her back; but this man, Tamson (Samson), that Norman was tell us aboot, took the gates o' Gaza fur her

shield, an' slew a thousan' Philistian giants wi' the jaw-bone o' a common cuddie!"

Tammas, who was a typical worshipper of the old school—enquiring and sarcastic—walked home with the minister after service one Sabbath, when the latter began complaining of exhaustion. "Tired out, eh?" said Tammas. "Yes," replied the reverend gentleman; "completely done up, mentally and physically. I actually strained my back in getting up this morning's sermon." "Oh!" said Tammas, in a tone tinged with sarcasm, "you must be gey near the bottom of the barrel."

A well-known angler, who was something like Tammas, was fishing at a trouting stream one Monday morning, when he was accosted by the minister, who asked him as to his success. The angler, after replying, enquired—"Dae ye no' try the rod yersel'?" "Oh, no," replied the minister, with pious awe and eyes upturned, "I'm a fisher of men." "Oh, indeed," replied Sandy, adding quietly, "I doot ye're nae great hand at it, for I lookit into your creel yesterday, and it was unco empty."

A young minister was once preaching in an Edinburgh church to a very sparse congregation, and during sermon a heavy shower of rain fell. A well-known doctor who chanced to be near, stepped in to the church to escape the shower, and sat down beside a very grave-looking individual. The preacher waxed emphatic, then pathetic, and lastly, as a final oratorical effort, burst into tears. "What's he crying

for?" asked the doctor of his grave companion. "Well," said the worshipper who had listened to the sermon, "you would perhaps cry yourself if you were up there and had as little to say."

A similar story is told of a lady who, while sojourning in Upper Deeside, entered the quaint old church of Crathie one Sabbath forenoon, and sat down in a roomy pew beside a burly farmer and his wife. No sooner had the minister commenced his sermon than the farmer handed along an enormous snuff-mull, which the lady politely declined. "Tak' the sneeshin', mem, tak' the sneeshin'," said the mull-holder in a hoarse whisper, "ye dinna ken oor minister; ye'll need it afore he's dune."

While it's true that there are always some discerning critics in the congregation, the minister was not infrequently "above" his hearers.

A servant girl, clever at her work, but of limited ideas, was in church one day, and when the minister said—"Think not, my hearers, to find enduring joys on earth; for, *alas!* there's no such thing as happiness unalloyed," her womanhood rebelled. "How did you like the sermon, Maggie?" her mistress asked. "Unco middlin', mem," she replied. "He may be a good man, the minister, but I canna say I think much o' his doctrine." "How?" "Weel, he said there was nae such thing as uncloyed happiness for a lass in this worl'; an' if it's true, it's no fair."

In a country village in the north a domestic

servant was returning from church when a friend accosted her with the words : "Hey, Peggy, ha'e ye been at the kirk? What div ye think o' the new meenister?" "Oh, I like him fine," said Peggy, "but I took the wrang book." "Did ye forget your Bible, Peggy?" "Na, I had my Bible, but I should ha' ha'en the dictionary."

Mr. Murker, the Banffshire divine, of whom we have already spoken, had a famous sermon which he loved to deliver occasionally—a sermon on the "White Horse"—and he had preached it in several places. An old body who had heard the sermon three times was rather annoyed one Sabbath to hear the familiar subject announced once more, and losing all control of herself, she exclaimed, "Mr. Murker, if ye dinna corn that horse weel, ye'll ride him to death."

A learned minister, famous for his skill in agriculture in addition to his vast learning, was visited by an English divine. The stranger, on his way to the manse, met a man-servant, and not being very sure that he was on the right road, he asked the rustic—"Is this the way to Dr. G——'s house?" "Ay, sir," replied the rustic. "Stop, my good fellow," said the English minister. "I want to know if he is the man I am seeking for. Is he a man who knows a great many foreign languages?" "Ay, that he does," returned the simple countryman. "He kens mair aboot Swedish turnips and French beans nor ony man in the kintra-side."

It is sometimes said that ministers are impecunious. "A half-crown for sweeping a chimney!" said a minister to a chimney-sweep. "Sir, your charge is exorbitant." "That may be," returned the sweep pawkily, "but, ye ken, us chaps wi' the black coats dinna care about doin' ower muckle for oor siller."

A country minister, while preaching, waxed Shakespearean, and in a burst of eloquence informed his hearers that every blade of grass was a sermon. The next day he was amusing himself by mowing his lawn, when a parishoner passing by remarked, "That's right, doctor; cut your sermons short."

The use of the paper was, as we have said, a grievous sin with many douce worshippers, and sometimes reference was made to the subject in parochial visitation.

A newly-appointed minister was calling upon one of his parishioners, and not having been long in the parish he was not absolutely certain where some of his hearers sat in the church. "John," he enquired, "where do you sit? I never see you in church." John had been seldom in church, but he parried the home-thrust very adroitly. "Nae wunner ye dinna see me," he replied. "You keep your een sae close on the paper that ye canna see me."

On a steamer in the Firth of Forth a habitual toper found himself face to face with his minister:—"You are a disgrace to the congregation," said the minister. "But this is the first time I have ever had too much," was the reply. "Then allow me," said the preacher

pompously, "to congratulate you on a marvellous success for a first attempt." "Yes, sir," added the toper; "if your first sermon had been as successful you would have been a professor by this time."

From what has been said it will be seen that the critic of the minister was to be found among all classes of men, and that it would be a mistake to imagine him as having been conspicuously a city-bred product with an intellect characterised, say, by some acquaintance with German theology, a smattering of Biblical criticism, and a hawk-like avidity for a plagiarism: "the Critic" sat in country pews, and had his own share of intellect, which he usually kept in good working order, and his own manner of expression also, which might lack polish, but rarely lacked pith. "Ay, ay," said a fine racy old inhabitant to a young minister, who was following out a course of sermons with some sequence in one of the Gospels, "I was lookin' forret wi' great interest last Sawbath to hearin' what ye wad have to say on the swine rinnin' doon a steep place into the sea an' gettin' droon'd, but ye just gaed by, an' ye never said 'pig.'"

The minister at home was as interesting a character as the minister in church. The parish minister of Ellon, a confirmed old bachelor, had been much annoyed with the midnight flirtations of his female domestics. Naturally he had little sympathy with the exigencies of love-making, and what rendered it all the more exasperating was the fact that the ser-

vants' window was just under his own, and on courting night his slumbers were much disturbed by the confabulations that went on below. One night, taking his seat at his own window, which he had raised to a convenient height, and having provided himself with a ewer of water, he waited further developments. Nor was his patience unduly tried. An amorous swain soon made his appearance, and the usual scene, interesting to all but the harassed master, was proceeding with its accustomed verve, when a liberal douche from the upper window changed the current of affairs and led to a hasty retreat. Next morning the worthy minister, doubtless chuckling over the success of his scheme, and wondering who among his young parishioners he had baptized anew, was walking past a cottage some distance from the manse, at the door of which stood the good woman of the house. "A fine morning, Jenny," he remarked. "It is that, sir," replied Jenny; "but it maun ha'e been an unco pour last nicht, for oor Jock cam' hame about eleven o'clock juist fair droukit."

One of his parishioners, John by name, called on the minister one day, telling him that he was going to be married to one of the servants on Lord——'s estate, and requesting his services on the occasion. The minister congratulated him, and added—"I hope you are getting a nice thrifty housewife, who will make you comfortable." John was quite sure he was getting that. "But," said the minister

“that’s not everything, John; I hope she is also a good woman.” “Oh, ay,” replied John, “she’s a great favourite with the Lord.” “That’s well,” said the minister, “but remember, John, the Lord puts up with a lot of people that you and I could not put up with.”

A worthy woman known as “Auld Janet,” finding herself quite penniless, called upon the minister. “Weel, sir,” she said, “I’ve just ca’d in to speir if ye wad say ower the Lord’s Prayer to me.” “Certainly, Janet. ‘Our Father——.’” “Bide a wee sir. Does that mean that He’s my Father as weel as your’s?” “Assuredly.” “Then you maun be my brither!” “We are all brothers and sisters to one another,” said the minister. “Then, if you’re my brother, hoo comes it that me, your sister, doesna ken whaur her next bite’s to come frae, while you ha’e plenty and to spare?” She went home a happier and a richer woman.

A story is told of an old minister who used to commit his confessions to a private diary. He had arranged for a brother minister to fill his pulpit on the approaching Fast-Day, and expecting a day of complete relief from pulpit work he went to church to welcome his friend and hear his discourse. But to his consternation his friend never turned up, having, as it transpired, met with an accident on the way. In a state of complete unpreparedness, he had therefore to ascend his own pulpit and do the best he could in the circumstances. He afterwards com-

mitted this entry to the diary :—"June 16th, Fast-Day in oor pairish. Expectit auld Andra Mucklewraith to preach for me. Didna come. Had to dae't masel'. Haivert awa'—sair forfouchen—wauchled throwe." That diary may never have been meant to reach the eyes of the world, how many preachers, given as much honesty as that old minister, could render a more creditable account?

After the minister at church and at home we come to the minister in his parish going out and in among his people, and giving wise counsel to those he chanced to meet.

A country minister was one day making a parochial visitation. On turning a corner of one of the roads he espied an object lying in a ditch by the wayside. He walked up to the object, and, to his great horror, discovered it was one of his own parishioners far gone in drunkenness, to whom he thus addressed himself :—"I am more than surprised, Thomas; I am deeply grieved to find you in such a state." Thomas, hearing himself thus addressed, half-opened his dazed eyes and hiccuped out—"Were ye ever fou', sir?" "No, Thomas, no," was the indignant reply, "never in all my life." "Eh, man," rejoined Thomas, "ye mun ha'e had a dowie life o't."

Here, however, is the other side. A minister of sporting proclivities, and not much esteemed by his congregation, was one day following the fox-hounds, when he was thrown from his horse into a ditch. One of his parishioners passing that way from his work

heard his cries for help, and perceiving who it was in the ditch, calmly said—"Ay, ye can lie there, my lad, for me, ye're no' needed till Sabbath." He may thank his stars that his parishoner was so kindly disposed as to allow him to lie. The usual way is to act the good Samaritan by taking the man home, and then act something else by spreading the story, and instituting a Presbyterial investigation.

But here, again, the minister is on the right side. He met one of his congregation the worse of drink one day, and expostulated with him. After some conversation he asked him to promise to take none the whole of next day. The man considered for a minute on his last attendance at church, and said—"I thought last Sabbath your text was, 'take no thought for the morrow.'"

An infidel jestingly said to the minister of the parish in which he lived—"I always spend my Sundays settling my accounts." The minister turned round and said, in an accent of deep solemnity and with no small degree of truth—"You may find, sir, that the day of judgment is to be spent in exactly the same manner."

The minister missed one of his congregation one Sabbath, and when he met him, this was the conversation—"Why weren't you at the kirk on Sabbath?" "I was at Mr. Dunlop's kirk." "I don't like you running away to strange kirks in that way. Not that I object to you hearing Mr. Dunlop, but I'm sure ye wadna like your ain sheep straying

away into strange pastures." "Weel, I wadna care a button, sir, if it was better grass."

There is a story told of certain members of the congregation of Cupar who, on their minister remarking that he would have to leave the ice to prepare a new sermon—he had been speaking on the sins of Judas for several Sabbaths—cried out, "Na na, Doctor, ye maunna gang awa' and leave us this way for the sake o' the sermon. Just gi'e Judas anither wallop wi' the tow."

The minister of a parish in Perthshire, whose eyes were always riveted on his MS. during sermon, went one day in a great hurry to the station, and asked the waggish porter when the first train for Edinburgh started. Jamie slowly produced a dirty and torn time-table from his pocket, and made-believe to scrutinise it. "Dear me, Jamie, can't you tell me without referring to the paper?" "'Deed, no, sir! The fac' o' the maitter is, there's no' mony o' us can dae onything withoot the paper noo-a-days." And if it came to dispensing with the paper the railway official would probably have the best of it.

Another auld minister, who was a member of the Broad Church party, met one of his congregation—and his match—one afternoon. The parishioner was making his devious way home, when the minister accosted him with the words—"John, I heard you had taken the pledge." "Sae I did, sir," answered John, "but it's ae thing to tak' the pledge an' anither thing

to keep it, as ye ken yersel', sir, wi' respect to the Confession o' Faith."

Visiting one day in his parish, Robertson of Irvine called at a farm house, and, on being shown into the parlour was delighted to see a copy of Milton's "Paradise Lost" on the table. In the course of the conversation with the farmer he remarked, "I see you have Milton here. Are you a great admirer of his poetry?" "Ou aye," answered the every day Scot, to whom Milton was no better than any other men, "but there's ane John Tamson o' Kilmarnock that has written some rale fine things too." On another occasion this same divine enquired of a parishioner how he could reconcile St. Matthew's version of our Lord's words, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" with Luke's version, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" and received the reply, "Because ye get them cheap if ye tak' a when." Another day Robertson called on an old woman who was much perplexed with a certain point, and who asked the divine—"What for had God nae beginnin'?" "What wad ye bother the minister wi' sic a question as that for?" said her brother, who was present, "it wad be mair like ye if ye wad gang to the kirk than tak' up your mind wi' sic nonsense as that." "It's nae nonsense," said the woman, "it's a question I'm sair troubled wi'. What for had God nae beginnin'? I can understand His havin' nae end, for I can think on, and on, and on, and no' stop. But that He had nae beginnin'—I canna get at that

ava'” “An awfu'-like question that!” exclaimed the brother, losing patience. “What for had God nae beginnin'? For a very guid reason. He had nae need o' ane. *He was there already.*”

Robertson introduced many changes in the order of worship during his ministry at Irvine, and one of these was the repetition of the ten commandments at communion. This innovation was resented in some quarters, and one day a lady ventured to remonstrate with the divine. “I hear,” she said, “you are introducing some dreadful innovations into your church service.” “Indeed,” he replied, “what innovations have we introduced?” “Oh,” she said, “I hear you repeat the commandments at communion.” “Is that all you have heard?” was the reply. “We have introduced a much greater innovation than that.” “Indeed,” exclaimed the lady in surprise, “and what is that?” “Oh,” said the divine, “we try to keep them.”

Robertson, in his visitation, once called on an old man who had something on his mind which he could not tell to any other than the minister. When they were alone the trouble was revealed. Some months before, being very weary, he had said his evening prayer without taking off his nightcap. The irreverent omission had weighed heavily on his conscience, and he had failed to find comfort. It would have been easy, of course, to make light of the scrupulousness which magnified so slight a fault. But Dr. Robertson was wise enough to see that this

expedient would not meet the case before him, and so he replied, "There are two ways of showing reverence. We in the west uncover our heads, but eastern nations uncover their feet, as Moses, you remember, was bidden take off his shoes, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Now, if your feet were bare there was no need that you should uncover your head, and I presume you had not on your shoes?" "No," said the old man rising up in bed, "*nor my stockings naither.*" "Ah, then," said the minister, "it is all right. "O, sir," was the reply, "I'm sae glad, but I was sure ye wad be able to put it richt ae wey or anither.

One of the servants on the farm of Robertson of Irvine's father had difficulty in connection with the enumeration of David's mighty men, where it is recorded of Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, "who slew the two lion-like men of Moab," that "he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow." "I'm no' clear aboot that story ava, Maister Weelum," said the servant as he was driving Robertson of Irvine from Stirling. "It's ma opeenion that, as the grun' was a' covered wi' snaw, the puir brute wad be snook-snookin' about seekin' for a drink o' water, and wad gang doon into the pit thinkin' he wad maybe get some there, and the man wad juist gang doon ahint him, ye see, when he wasna lookin', and get the better o' him. I wus' that beast had fair play, Maister Weelum!"

Mr. Steedman, who was for many years minister of

a Dissenting congregation in Stirling, was on one occasion discussing the merits of John Robertson, the father of Robertson of Irvine, with Dr. Brown, the biographer of the latter Robertson, and wound up by saying in the Doric, which he could use so effectively, "D'ye no' think, Mr. Brown, that John Robertson is just as good a man as there's ony use for?"

A divine visited a poor woman who supposed herself to be at the point of death. He told her that she was not so ill as she imagined, and he strongly advised her to take a glass of toddy at night. Next day he found that she had followed his advice, and was much better. A few days afterwards, however, when he called upon her, she had relapsed into her old state, and was very low indeed. "Did you take your toddy last night?" he asked. "No, no," she replied; "I felt that I was deein', and I didna like to gang before my Maker wi' the smell o' drink upon me."

It was a different state of matters with the old farmer who lay dying. The minister frequently visited him; and the farm-house being a long distance from the manse, it was usual, especially in bad weather, for the minister to get a little refreshment in the shape of whisky and water. On account of his ailment, the farmer was not allowed any spirits, and this sorely grieved him, as he was wont to be second to none on market day. The minister was telling the farmer about the place for which he should be preparing. Inquisitive, the farmer asked about

what would be found there. These questions the minister answered as well as his knowledge allowed him. "An' will there be ony whisky there?" asked the old man, eagerly. "Oh! no, John, there will be no thought of whisky there. It won't be required. Men there can live without it altogether." "Ay, maybe," stuttered John; "need it or no need it, but I wud aye juist like to see'd on the table."

An old, bedridden fisherman at a fashionable watering-place was perplexed at things of this earth rather than of the earth beyond. He was frequently visited during his last illness by a kind-hearted minister who wore one of those close-fitting clerical vests, which button behind. The minister saw the near approach of death one day in the old man's face, and asked him if his mind was perfectly at ease. "Oo, ay, I'm a' richt," was the feeble reply. "You are sure there is nothing troubling you? Do not be afraid to tell me." The old man seemed to hesitate, and at length, with a faint return of animation, said—"Weel, there's just ae thing that troubles me, but I dinna like to speak o't." "Believe me, I am most anxious to comfort you," replied the clergyman; "tell me what it is that troubles and perplexes you." "Weel, sir, it's just this," said the old man, eagerly—"I canna for the life o' me mak' oot hoo ye manage to get into that waistcoat."

A newly-appointed minister paid a visit to an elderly female member of his flock. The guidwife was in the midst of spring cleaning, and the minister

met with a somewhat brusque reception. Finding her in no way gossipy, the reverend gentleman, before taking his leave, mildly offered to pray, when, to his consternation, he was sharply told, "very weel, minister; but ye maun cut it kin' o' short, as I ha'e ma whitenin' brush oot by the 'oor."

A minister who called to sympathise with a member of his flock on hearing the news of her husband's suicide, was somewhat surprised to hear her complaint—"Bless my heart! the first ane ran awa', the next ane drooned himsel', and noo Geordie's gaen and hanged himsel'! Guid only kens what the next ane'll get to dae!"

Nor is this apparent want of feeling confined to the gentler sex, for it was in quite a complacent tone that a northern farmer, after burying his third wife, and being called upon by a newly-arrived minister, who asked how the wife was, replied coolly—"Dod, minister! I'm oot o' wives the noo!"

Punning is not a Scottish characteristic, but the minister who perpetrated the following got as good as he gave. He was passing one of his flock on the road, who kindly bade him "Good morning!" remarking that it was very "cauld." "Ay, ay, Sandy," replied the minister, delighted with the opportunity of making a pun, "'Many are called, but few are chosen.'" "Aweel, minister," was the dry response, "if ye're no' chosen, I'm thinkin' ye'll no' be lang cauld."

A minister, while going through a village, was re-

quested to officiate at a marriage in the absence of the parish minister. Just as he had told the bridegroom to love and honour his wife, the man interjected the words "and obey." The clergyman, surprised, did not heed the proposed amendment. He was going on with the service when the groom interposed with emphasis—"Ay, and obey, sir; love, honour and obey, ye ken!" A few years afterwards the clergyman met the hero of the wedding incident. "D'ye mind, sir, yon day when ye married me, and when I wad insist upon vowing to obey my wife? Weel, you may noo see that I was in the richt. Whether ye wad or no, I have obeyed her; and, behold I am the only man that has a twa-storey house in the hale toon!" The Scot went even further than Franklin, who said, "The man who would thrive must ask his wife."

A minister and one of his elderly parishioners were walking home from church one frosty day, when the old gentleman slipped and fell on his back. The minister looked at him for a moment, and being assured that he was not much hurt, said to him humorously, "Friend, sinners stand on slippery places." The old gentleman looked up as if to assure himself of the fact, and said, "I see they do; but I canna."

While a country minister was visiting his parishioners he came to one named Sandy. After remarking on the healthy appearance of his children, he asked Sandy how many diets they got in the day.

"Just one, sir," replied Sandy. "When do they get it" asked the minister in surprise. "Weel, ye see, they begin whenever their een are open, an' never stop till they're in their beds again," was Sandy's answer.

The minister had to mix to some extent in the social customs he saw around him, and country ministers (especially Parish Church ministers) were generally curlers. A minister, an enthusiastic but poor curler, once chanced to be on the side skipped by the village mason. At a critical period of the game the reverend player put in a very bad shot, whereat the mason cried; "Anither awkward shot, sir!" "Well, Thomas, I'm only learning," exclaimed the minister, in an injured tone. "Learnin'! Ye tauld me that years syne! Logie, man, wi' a' your learnin' ye'll never be a curler in this world, an' I doot there'll be nae ice i' the next!"

One day a minister called on an old woman who never went to church. Unfortunately, the reverend visitor had forgot his Bible and asked the old lady if she had one. "Ou ay," said Nelly; "it wad be a funny hoose without a Bible, but really I'm nae just sure whaur it is." "When had you it last?" asked the minister. "O weel," replied she, hesitatingly, "I had it at the last flitting, for I put the receipt o' the last hoose rent in't." After a diligent search, she got the Bible and handed it to her visitor, who looked at the receipt, and then remarked—"It's a

good time since you flitted, for this receipt is dated twenty years back."

When the first United Presbyterian Church was in the course of erection in South Ronaldshay, and before the roof was on, a terrific storm arose, which blew down one of the gables of the building. When this news was communicated to Mr. Gerard, the minister whose memory is enshrined in many humorous incidents, he remarked—"Well, I used to think that the deil and me were pulling at opposite ends of the rope, but it seems that we were hauling together last night!"

A belief in supernatural influence lingered long ago, and perhaps to some extent even yet lingers in the public mind. Besides witchcraft, there was also an undefined form of spiritual manifestation which was generally called "ill." What was meant by "ill" may be illustrated by the following story. A devout Seceder, whose night's rest had been interrupted by a noise of some kind overhead, took counsel with his minister, who in his official capacity was supposed to be qualified to deal with the "Evil One," the undoubted cause of the disturbance. On being requested to try the effect which prayer would have as a means of dislodging the Satanic visitor, the minister, whose ideas were rather more advanced, remarked with some dignity—"Sir, do you suppose that the Prince of the Power of the Air has nothing else to do than to come and reeshle among a wheen auld sticks in your garret?"

A Kirkintilloch minister used to tell of a unique incident in the way of visiting. He went to visit a woman who had had some experiences of trial, and joined in prayer with her. When he concluded, he was surprised to find that the woman had gone, and there was no one in the room but himself. After a little time the woman re-entered the apartment on tiptoe. Seeing the minister had concluded "the exercise," she said in astonishment—"Deary me, are you done already? After I had gotten you set agaun, I thocht I would just gang out ower the door and hear the Kirkintilloch Brass Band for a moment; and I was sure I would be back before you were endit." Some sailors think that time is saved by asking a blessing over each barrel of beef as it is broken, and this woman was clearly of opinion that, after her minister had been "set agaun," her presence could readily be dispensed with. The distant sound of the band was too much for her, even in the solemn circumstances in which she was placed. But we must not be too hard on her, for we all know how worldly thoughts intrude on occasions when we would imagine it impossible for them to come. Such was the case with the dying toll-keeper. When his minister was praying by his bedside, he laid a lean hand on his arm and said, "Just bide a wee, sir. Christy 'oman—I think I hear a cairt!"

Some people are greatly "fashed" when the minister calls—they are washing or scrubbing. A minister entered a house one day and found the

woman busy scrubbing the floor. "Sorry I've disturbed you, Mrs. M'Callum; I'll come back some other day." "Nae! nae!—come awa' in," said the good woman frankly, at the same time setting a chair for her visitor. After a few words of conversation he suggested, like his Kirkintilloch brother, that he should pray and depart. When the minister rose from his knees Mrs. M'Callum was nowhere to be seen. He waited a few minutes, when, lo! *in she came with her Sunday gown on*, and explained that she "could now receive him decently."

A minister in Banffshire, more celebrated for his eloquence than discretion, officiated one Sabbath for a brother minister, who was indisposed. After the exercises of the day were ended, he indulged in a hearty repast, in order to recuperate his exhausted energies. Returning home at night in a condition that made it evident even to the casual observer that he had dined only too well, he met a gentleman of his acquaintance, who enquired how he was, and where he had been, to which he answered that he had "been spinning out a text." "Yes," said his friend, "and now you are reeling it home."

The minister has to sympathise with all his parishioners, and enter into their affairs as a friend. A widow called upon the minister, and seeming desirous to relieve her mind of something which oppressed her, the reverend gentleman, wishing to hurry matters, exclaimed, after he had listened to some rambling remarks—"My good woman, you see

I can be of no service to you till you tell me what it is that troubles you." "Weel, sir," said the widow, summoning courage, "I'm thinking of getting married again." "Oh, that is it? Let me see; that is pretty frequent too, surely. How many husbands have you had?" "Weel, sir," she replied, in a tone less of sorrow than of bitterness, "this is the fourth. I'm sure there never was a woman sae completely tormented wi' sic a set of deeing men as I've been, sir."

An Inverness farmer, who was dying, was visited by the parish minister, and conversed with as to the great change which was about to take place. After some serious discussion the reverend adviser remarked, "Well, Mr. MacDonald, I hope you have made it all right with your Saviour." "Oh," replied the farmer with apparent concern, "it's no' Him I'm feared for, it's *the other birkie*."

A member of the cloth going his rounds one day found a group of noisy young men by the roadside. In the centre of the group was a little dog. The language used was not the most refined, which caused the minister to stop and enquire, "What's this you are about?" "Oh! we're juist seein' wha'll tell the biggest lee, and the winner gets the dug." "Ah! men," said the divine earnestly, "that's a great evil; and a thing I never did' was to tell a lie." "Jock," said one of the crowd with a sarcastic smile, "haun' ower the dug."

Some parishioners had a higher opinion of their minister. Mr. Hutcheon, of Fetteresso, used to

have fowls sent to him every week for his Sabbath dinner. Once a country wife brought a cock to him—it was in the days of cock-fighting—but requested him not to kill it, because he was a “terrible divertin’ breet.” “Ye see, sir,” she said, “if ye were to set him down i’ the fleer, he would fecht wi’ the leg o’ the table till he had scarcely a breath in’s body.”

“So, Sandy, you’re going to be married. What is the reason of this?” asked the minister. “Weel, ye see,” said Sandy, “the cauld months are coming in, and Kirsty had only ae blanket, and I had only ane, so we thocht we wad jine them, and it wad be warmer.”

When minister met minister there was occasionally a crossing of swords. Dr. Ritchie, of Edinburgh, was speaking on one occasion in the U.P. Synod, and was annoyed by the Rev. Mr. B——, a man with a conspicuously turned-up nose, who, sitting in full view of the gallery, was constantly interrupting the speaker with cries of “No, no!” “Moderator,” said Dr. Ritchie, pausing and turning his own eyes, and, of course, the eyes of the Synod, round on the offender, “am I to be put up down before Mr. B——’s noes?” There was a roar of laughter, and the nose disappeared.

In the heat of the old Voluntary controversy, the Rev. William M’Dougal, of Paisley, and a friend—both keen Voluntaries—were driving into Annan when their horse stumbled and fell on its knees

opposite the Parish Church. A waggish bookseller who had noticed the occurrence remarked to them as they entered his shop, "I see you were doing obeisance to the Auld Kirk!" "Oh," said M'Dougal, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "what could you expect of a brute?" And of course they preached peace on earth, goodwill to men.

The ministers of two adjoining parishes in Forfarshire (about the end of the last century) were both alike remarkable for an infinite fund of anecdote, as well as for a prodigious willingness or rather eagerness, to disclose it. When one of them happened to be present in any company, he generally monopolised, or rather prevented, all conversation; when both were present, there was a constant and keenly contested struggle for the first place. It fell out, on a certain morning, that they breakfasted together, without any other company; when the host having a kind of right of precedence in virtue of his place, commenced an excellent but very long-winded story, which his guest was compelled to listen to, though disposed, at the end of every sentence, to strike in with his parallel, and far more interesting tale. As the host proceeded with his story, he poured hot water into the tea-pot; and, so completely was he absorbed in the interest of what he was relating, or rather perhaps so intent was he to engage the attention of his listener that he took no note of what he was doing, but permitted the water first to overflow the vessel into which he was pouring it, then the

table, and finally the floor. The guest observed what was going on; but, being resolved for once to give his rival ample scope, never indicated by word, or look, or gesture, that he perceived it, till at last, as the speaker brought his voice to a cadence, for the purpose of finishing the tale, he quietly remarked, "Ay, ye may stop noo—it's running out at the door!"

There is a quaint story told of two ministers who were taking dinner together one summer day in a manse in the Highlands. It was a Sabbath day, the weather was beautiful, and the bubbling streams were full of trout, and the woods full of summer birds. One turned to the other and said, "Man, don't ye often feel tempted on these beautiful Sabbaths to go out fishing?" "Na, na," said the other, "I never feel tempted—I just gang."

A Border minister was comforting a woman who had a large family by saying that heaven sent bread when it sent the bairns. "Yes," replied the woman; "but whiles you wad think the bairns are sent to ae hoose and the bread to anither."

A country parish minister visiting Edinburgh met a servant girl who had left his congregation to go to a situation in the city. "Well, Maggie," said he kindly, "how do you like your new situation?" "Fine, sir; but I'm gey lonely among sae mony strange folk." "I was thinking so, Maggie," replied her minister. "But I'll call and see you before I leave town." "Oh, no, sir, ye mauna dae that," was Maggie's reply, "for our mistress allows nae



followers; but," she said, brightening up, "if ye come to the back gate when it's dark, I'll try to let ye in at the wundy."

"Well, James, how are you feeling to-day," said the minister to one of his parishioners, an old man suffering from chronic rheumatism. "You are not looking so brisk as usual?" "Na, sir," replied the old fellow, sadly, "I've been gey unfortunate the day." "How, James?" "Weel, sir, I got a letter frae a Glasgow lawyer body this mornin' tellin' me that ma cousin Jack was deid, an' that he had left me twa hunner poun'." "Two hundred pounds!" repeated the minister. "And you call that hard luck? Why, it is quite a fortune for you, James." "Ay," said the old man, sorrowfully; "but the stupid lawyer body didna pit eneuch stamps on his letter, an' I had a hale saxpence to pey for extra postage."

It is told of George Lawson, D.D., Selkirk, that he went on one occasion to Stichel to meet Dr. Waugh, who had come down from London to pass a few weeks amid the beautiful and healthful scenery of his native county. By this time young Waugh had been long enough in the south to have his manners so far conformed to London fashions: As Dr. Lawson and he were walking up the village street, they met the minister of Stichel and his young wife. Dr. Lawson, in his plain way, kindly shook them by the hand; but his London brother at once resorted to the primitive mode of courtesy, and kissed the lady, on observing which, Dr. Lawson

smiled and said, "Oh, Mr. Waugh, Mr. Waugh, you remind me of the scribes of old, of whom it is written that they loved salutations in the market-place." In the laugh which this drew forth the blushing lady recovered her self-possession.

The Rev. Peter Brotherston, a former minister of Alloa, and author of a treatise on "Faith," once crossed the Forth in a ferry-boat, which was caught by a sudden squall. On his anxiously asking the skipper whether there was any danger, the latter quietly replied—"Maister Brotherston, keep your mind quite easy; ye'll be in heeven in half-an-oor." "God forbid!" was the minister's immediate reply.

With the days of the School Boards came the necessary elections, and sometimes to secure a vote the minister had to be more than usually affable. "Good morning, Sandy," said the Rev. Mr. B——, beaming most genially, and, gripping Sandy's brawny hand and shaking it significantly; "I hope you are well?" "Ou ay; thank ye, sir; I'm a' richt 'enoo!" "This is the election-day, ye ken," continued the minister, deferentially. "Ay, I ken that weel," said Sandy. "Are you going to plump for me again this time?" "Na, sir, I'll plump for naebody again; the last man I plumpit for went clean blin'." "How, Sandy?" asked the divine. "Hoo, I dinna ken," was the reply, "but he met me the next day efter the election and didna see me."

On one occasion a lady was staying at a manse, and, as she was hospitably entertained, she was in no

hurry to leave. One morning when at breakfast the minister asked her if she read her Bible, to which she replied that she did. "Did you ever read the 17th verse of the 25th chapter of Proverbs?" he further enquired. She answered that it was very likely she had, though she could not at that moment remember the words. He then told her to read it again, which she apparently did, for she took the hint.

Mr. Mackison, the multurer, was among the first in the parish of Kilmadock to grow turnips for feeding cattle on during winter to be sold fat in spring.

One year he made the sale of his stock on the same day as the Kilmadock fast. He would have been pretty severely dealt with had he not taken the wind out of the sails of his vengeful persecutors. He made a point to call on Dr. Murray on the day after the sale, exclaiming, "O Dr., I've made a great mistake. I'm ashamed an' reel sorry for what I've done. Do ye ken, Dr., I made my roup on the Kilmadock fast day, and me living in the parish." Dr. Murray was a farmer as well as a minister; and, completely taken aback with the frank confession, he said, "Weel, weel, laird, an' had ye a good sale?" "I had," replied the multurer, "a rael good sale." "Man, I'm glad to hear it. Come in to the manse and tak' a bite o' dinner wi's."

Mr. Gerard, our friend of other anecdotes, was of a most generous disposition. No beggar was ever turned away from his door, and it is told of him that

he was so ready in assisting his more needy neighbours that he often crippled himself. One day he met two strangers near his manse, and on ascertaining that they came from a neighbouring island, he said he was sure they were sadly in need of refreshment. He therefore invited them to his house to enjoy his hospitality. When the food was put on the table, Mr. Gerard thus addressed his guests :—  
 “Now, my men, I know that you must be hungry after such a long journey, so you can be spreading the butter on your bread whilst I am asking the blessing, and that will save time !”

Long ago there were some people who considered that their attendance at *any* church conferred a favour on the parish, and that they lived for the church, and not the church for them. To this class belonged the beggar who, when soliciting alms at a Kilmarnock minister’s house, received from the divine an old topcoat. After it had been rolled up and handed to the vagrant, that worthy looked at the minister, and then—perhaps in the voice of gratitude—remarked, “I’ll ha’e to gi’e ye a day’s hearin’ for this na.” It is to be hoped that when Sabbath came the beggar, attired in the minister’s coat, occupied a seat in the Auld Kirk.

A good story is told of a sister of the late Dr. C—. She kept house for a bachelor brother, a man of good position. He was marked by punctuality of the most rigorous and unbending kind. She, on the other hand, claimed and delighted in an easy

freedom, despising all regulations of the hours of rising, breakfasting, dining, and so forth. She was, however, rather in awe of her imperious brother. One morning she had indulged to an inordinate length in sleep. She rose hurriedly, dressed, and got down, to find her brother pacing the dining-room, and fuming at her delay. She seized the first word, saying to him, "Eh, man, John, what a dream I had last night." "Weel, wuman, you had time enough for it anyway; and what was't?" "Weel," said she, "John, I dreamt that ye were deid, and it was the day o' the funeral, and a' the mourners were gathered in the room, and the hour appointed was twal' o'clock. Tammas had na' come, so juist on the chap o' twal' I heard a knock frae the coffin. Says I then, 'That's Jock.' I gaed forrit and speired, 'Is that you, Jock?' 'Aye,' says you; 'dae ye no' ken it's high twal' and ye're no' lifted yet?'"

"How are you to-day?" asked a minister of one of his parishioners, on meeting him on the road. "Gey weel, sir; gey weel," replied John, cautiously, "gin it wasna for the rheumatism in my right leg." "Ah, weel, John, be thankfu'," said the minister, "for there is no mistake you are getting old like the rest of us, and old age doesn't come alone." "Auld age, sir!" returned John, "I won'er to hear ye! Auld age has naething to do wi't. Here's my ither leg juist as auld an' it's quite sound an' soople yet."

Dr. Wightman, of Kirkmahoe, Dumfriesshire, courted a girl and obtained her promise to marry

him on condition that her mother approved. "Weel, Doctor," said the gratified mother, ye're far ower guid for oor Janet." "Weel, weel," was the rejoinder, "ye ken best, say nae mair about it." He never did, and he lived unmarried, as also did the young woman.

"It's a grand game," said a minister, referring to golf. "Do you play well?" asked his friend. "Yes," said the divine. "Why do you ask?" "Because I asked your caddie the other day if he thought you would ever make a good golfer, but he said no." "Why, how could he think that?" "Well, he said—'Na, na, na, there's nae chance o' him ever being a guid golfer, for when he gets in a bunker or misses the ba' a' he can say is, 'Tut, tut!'"

The late Dr. Norman Macleod was enjoying a trip among the Western Isles with some friends, clerical and lay, among whom was a certain minister of the name of Honey. One morning this gentleman had been late in rising, and rushed into the saloon with indications of a hasty toilet upon him some time after the breakfast bell had rung. Dr. Macleod, looking up with a merry twinkle in his eyes, greeted his friend with the words—"Hillo, here comes Honey fresh from the comb."

Just before the Secession in 1843, an old college companion wrote asking Mr. Gerard, the minister of Orkney, who had some difficulty in getting a "call," if he intended leaving the National Church. "Do

you think," replied Mr. Gerard, "that I am such a stupid as to come out after all the trouble I had to get in?"

Two sons of a Free Church minister paid a visit to Mr. Gerard shortly after the Secession. Their father had been an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Gerard prior to 1843 so that they were very heartily entertained while they were residing at the South Ronaldshay Manse. When they were about to leave, they were very effusive in their thanks, but their host thought they were overdoing it. Getting them out of the door he said—"Gang awa' hame, ye perjured villains. Ye cam' here to get some fun oot o' old Gerard, but I'm thinkin' he has got ye ootside noo an' he'll keep ye there!"

"I hope you have made due preparation, and are in a fit state to have the sacrament of baptism administered to your child, John," said a minister to one of his parishioners, a ploughman, who had called at the manse in connection with a recent event in his domestic circle. "Weel," said the ploughman, "I hinna been ower extravagant in the way of preparation meybe. I'm a man o' sma' means, ye see, but I've gotten in a bottle o' whisky and the best hauf o' a kebbuck o' cheese. "Tuts! tuts!" interrupted the minister, "I do not mean preparation of the things that perish. Are your mind and heart in proper condition?" "Do ye mean that I'm no' soond in the head?" queried the ploughman. "No, I do not mean that at all," said the divine. "You

do not appear to have an intelligent idea of the matter which has brought you here;" then, after a minute's reflection, he continued—"How many Commandments are there, John?" "I culdna tell ye juist exactly on the spur o' the meenit," said John, scratching his head, "but there's an auld beuk lying i' the hoose yonder; gin I had it here I could sune answer your question."

Hawkie, the Glasgow worthy, was wont to tell the following story in one of his speeches. The wife of Joseph Edward, head miller at Partick Mills, had once three children at a birth. When the first was born, the nurse came and told Joseph "he had got a child." In a short time after, she came and told him of another, and, in a little while after, of a third. Joseph was perplexed. He began to be afraid he had not heard the end of it, so he got himself dressed in his Sabbath attire, and went to the minister, the Rev. Lawrence Hill of the Barony Church, Glasgow, to see about getting them baptised. Having knocked at the minister's door, and got admission, the rev. gentleman kindly asked for his welfare, when Joseph answering and scratching his head, said, "I have come, sir, to see if you would baptise a when weans to me." "A when what?" said the minister. "A when weans," replied Joseph. "How many have ye?" asked the minister. "Sir, said Joseph, "there were three when I cam' awa', but I dinna ken hoo mony mair there may be by this time."

Ludicrous incidents have occurred in the supreme

moment occupied by the ceremony of baptism, and when no one was very seriously to blame. In Paisley, on one occasion, the father of a child was from home at the time of its birth, and was not expected for two or three months. The mother, desiring that the baptism of the child should not be delayed so long, was consequently obliged to present the infant herself, the ordinance being administered in private. The officiating minister was an old man, who, when in the act of dispensing the sacrament, asked the name by which the child was to be called. The mother, who had a thickness in her speech, politely said, "Lucy, sir." "Lucifer!" exclaimed the old irritable divine, in exasperated horror; "I shall baptise no child by the name of the Prince of Darkness, madam. The child's name is John."

A country man from the Braes of Angus came to tell his minister that he wished him to christen his child. The minister enquired in a dignified tone whether the child was a male or a female. The humble son of the soil did not seem to apprehend the true import of his spiritual adviser's question, and replied, "It's neither, sir." "Neither!" exclaimed the minister, "what then is it?" "Ou, sir," said the parishioner, "it's just a bit queanie."

In wide and sparsely populated Highland districts it not infrequently happens that a parent is obliged to walk a distance of five or six miles with an infant for baptism. It is related of a minister of the north

that he agreed to accommodate a parishioner thus situated by meeting him at a stream mid-way between the parents' house and the manse, and there baptising the child at the running water. It so happened that by the time the parties came to opposite sides of the burn, heavy rains had swollen it into a rapid torrent, so that neither party could approach the other. Unwilling to turn back with the bairn unbaptised, the farmer proposed that the minister should splash the water across. Accordingly, the minister stepped down the stream, and endeavoured to throw handfuls of water on the farmer's baby. "Ha'e he got ony o' that?" he cried at each successive splash. "Deil a spairge," was the reply. At last a few of the splashes were communicated to the infant's visage, and the ceremony was then concluded in the usual form. Before retiring to their respective homes, the farmer took from his pocket a bottle of whisky, and crying across, "As I canna offer ye a gless owre the heid o' this, here's the bottle—kepp!" and he threw it across the stream. The bottle was caught, it is related, with a precision that betokened on the part of his reverence, if not considerable practice, at least commendable dexterity.

A minister on being asked by a fisherman to baptise his child, replied—"Well, John, I'll be most happy to do so, but I would require a sight of your lines first." "Weel-a-weel," replied the fisherman, misunderstanding the request, ye'll get that, though

