

“POST REID,”

BLAIRGOWRIE.



“OLD POSTY.”

OLD TOWN OFFICER.

XV.

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BLAIRGOWRIE.



One man in his day plays many parts.—SHAKESPEARE.

“Posty” was one of the old “characters” of Blair who flourished at the time when individuality was as much the rule as it is now the exception. He came by his familiar cognomen “Post” or “Posty” as carrier of the mails at one time between Kirkmichael and Blairgowrie, but is best remembered as the fiery yet kind-hearted old Highlander who managed to preserve “the peace of Blair” with wonderful tact, when that would do, and prompt, energetic action when it wouldn’t, and thorough conscientiousness in either case, for

MANY A LONG YEAR.

His proper name was Alexander Reid, and his native place Strathardle. For the first half of his life he was engaged at farm work, and he is next heard of as tenant of Aldchlappie Inn, near Kirkmichael, in which connection he ran the mail gig to Blair. Then a very unusual experience fell to his lot. His wife and family made up their minds to emigrate to America, but “Post” did not take to the notion, and they went off without him. About this time the berth of town officer of Blairgowrie being vacant, he accepted the situation, and filled it with credit and character till his death—the town

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

getting first-class service for their money, his contemporaries the benefit of his personal acquaintance, and a succeeding generation the entertaining reminiscences associated with his name—altogether a good, profitable investment. Old “Post” was a favourite with every one, notwithstanding his stern duties at times, and no one enjoyed a joke better than the gorgeously arrayed Town Officer—blue surtout, scarlet collar, glittering metal buttons, “tile” hat, and all. It was even hinted that he had been a pranky youth in his own time, and the sly twinkle in his little eyes did not belie the insinuation. One of the earliest stories in this connection deals with his farm life, when he had for companion a priggish young fellow, who was

NEVER DONE BRAGGING

of his influence over the fair sex. Sandy—he wasn’t “Post” just then—discovering that he was in the habit of meeting the farmer’s daughter at night when the family had retired to rest, resolved to provide the orthodox interruption to the course of true love which is so pleasing to everybody, except the parties most concerned. The room in which the happy lovers met was reached by a steep, narrow stair, with a wooden door at the foot. One night the heartless wretch, in stocking soles, followed up the unsuspecting youth, placed a large heavy roller, used for “straiking” the bushel measure, on the second step from the top, crept down the stair again, “snecked” the door, and retired to await developments. Some time about midnight—

Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!

It sounded as if the roof had suddenly tumbled in, and the alarmed household rushed to the spot to

“Post Reid,” Blairgowrie.

find poor Romeo groaning at the bottom of the stair, with the roller below him, and the door wrenched from its hinges above him. Sandy Reid, being a sound sleeper, never heard a “mudge” of it all, and was quite astonished when he got the whole story in the morning. When he had Aldchlappie two sportsmen who were staying in the inn sat down to dinner one day, and, with magnificent appetites, first tackled the joint, and proceeded to deal with a brace of grouse, which they had ordered Posty to have done in his best style. When they lifted the lid of the dish out flew the birds, and, after a whir-r-r round the room, disappeared through the open window, mine host apparently having forgot to cook them. A sharp tug at the bell for explanations brought in Posty, prompt, smiling, and anticipatory of all unpleasantness, with a cover containing another brace done in the most appetising style that could be desired.

SMUGGLING,

it is hardly necessary to state, was a great institution in country districts then, and, although it was never positively certain that the Aldchlappie innkeeper had a still of his own, the general opinion might be expressed in the words of another worthy—“Maybe ay, an’ maybe ooch ay!” Anyhow, as local carrier, many a keg of the forbidden liquor he managed to smuggle down the glen, till the gangers pounced upon three at the bottom of his cart one journey, and from that date on he was the special object of the officers’ regards, never managing to get down the road without having to submit to a search. Posty wasn’t the man to stand this sort of thing for nothing, and prepared his revenge. Filling two kegs with a certain vile liquid which used to be in

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies:

great demand for dyeing purposes, but taking care to have a rich odour of the right sort about the bung-holes, he purposely got down to Blair later than usual, and was, of course, accosted by the gaugers, who soon found the two kegs at the bottom of the cart, which the carrier declared emphatically did not contain whisky. What, had they no sense? Could they not smell it for themselves? Out came one of the bungs, into the keg was dipped the metal suction-pipe, and one of the gaugers—*horresco referens*—took a draw,

DISCOVERING TOO LATE

that Posty was quite right. He was nearly choked with the stuff, and as he spluttered all over the place, Posty, honest man, suggested that he should "try the ither ane" to see whether it was any better. But he didn't. As town officer the old fellow had always his work cut out for him by the boys, who were a great torment. At that time there was a number of old-fashioned houses and shops at the Cross, amongst which was a shop occupied by another old Highlander, called Duncan Robertson, watchmaker—known as "Watchie" for short—whose window, where he was to be seen working away day after day, was always a great centre of attraction for the young folks. Watchie didn't appreciate their attentions, however, and would rush out occasionally with a whip and lash about him with dire effect. Posty resented "Tuncan's" taking the law into his own hands, so when the boys put a wheelbarrow across Watchie's door one night, roused him to madness by their antics at the window, and he made a sortie in the usual way, the result may be guessed. When the doctor had patched him up, Posty got in his thrust as well as the boys by remarking,

“Post Reid,” Blairgowrie.

“An’ you, Tuncan, you’ll took to be your ain offisher, but noo you’re beat, whup an’ a’!” which was poor consolation to Tuncan, what ffer. The greatest day in all the year for the Town Officer was the Fair o’ Blair, which was in its prime then—the whole Wellmeadow, Gasbrae, Boatbrae, Allan Street, and well along High Street being a

SCENE OF STIR AND ANIMATION

beyond present opportunities for description. Special constables were always sworn in for the occasion, and the Town Officer was head of the “force” for one day of the year at any rate. One busy Fair Day, while endeavouring to separate two quarrelsome fellows, he got a savage kick in the abdomen which set him howling dreadfully in several languages—Gaelic predominating. A little girl ran home and told her mother that “a wild man” had “kickit Posty,” and he was “greetin’ in Gaelic!” Seeing to the good behaviour of the town was, however, only one of the old Highlander’s functions. When people became quite good and his occupation was gone in the moral line, he would start scraping the streets if it were dirty weather—never scrupling to put the horse-droppings in his pockets if the barrow wasn’t handy—and never forgetting to leave the “post heaps,” as they were called, at the most likely places for stepping into on dark nights. The result was much profanity, and the ruination of many a Christian character. Another function which he shone in was as doorkeeper at the Town Hall, which was the only place in those days where public meetings could be held. A

MEMORABLE ENTERTAINMENT

took place in it on one occasion. This was a concert given by a Polish exile called

Blairgowrie and Strathmore Worthies.

Jacobovitch, together with his wife. It was a great success both from the performing and financial points of view; so much so that the couple arranged to give another concert. Tickets sold well for it also, but a "sooch" went round that Madam Jacobovitch—"which she is a' that!" Posty declared—was not likely to appear, for reasons alleg-d. Curiosity was raised, and produced a good turnout. Then Monsieur the exile ascended the platform, and, after a profound bow, thus addressed his audience—"Ladies and shentlemaus,—My vife she not come here dis night. She got de golig (colic), and she got de w'i-ky; de more ov de w'isky de more ov de golig, and de more ov de golig de more ov de w'i-ky!" He entertained the audience himself, however, for an hour in capital style. Old Posty departed life on the 15th August 1849, the last of his race.