

VIII.—THE WORTHY.

HALF-A-CENTURY ago the “natural” was an indispensable adjunct to every village, and no hamlet was complete without one. Like the parish minister the worthy was a person in himself, and if the villagers did not pay him the respect granted to his reverence they at least allowed “his idiocy” some little token of distinction. Generally of a harmless disposition, “Jamie” was befriended by all, for, although the youngsters might twit him and make merry at his expense, friendly and sympathetic relations invariably existed between him and the older residents.

Wherever there was any stir, there the “natural” was to be seen, for, following no set profession, his time was his own, and he generally spent it between the cobbler’s room and the smithy. Funerals were a great attraction to the worthy. In his own solemn step he headed the procession, seemingly feeling that all would not be right if he was not there. This custom is referred to by Sir Walter Scott in his “Guy Mannering.” He says :—“The funeral pomp set forth—saulies with their batons and gumphions of tarnished white crape. Six starved horses, themselves the very emblems of mortality, well-cloaked and plumed, lugging along the hearse with its dis-

mal emblazonry, crept in slow pace to the place of interment, preceded by Jamie Duff, an idiot, who, with weepers and cravat made of white 'paper, attended on *every* funeral, and followed by six mourning coaches filled with the company." Until a very recent date a Stirling worthy performed this service with unvarying regularity, and when owing to physical infirmity he was no longer able to trot up the steep hill which must be climbed to reach the cemetery, "Donald" contented himself by standing aside and, with cap in hand, waiting till the cortege passed. A Wigtown character, who had this fondness for attending burials, was one day trudging along a country road when he met a funeral procession, which was composed of a long line of carriages, followed by a number of farmers on horseback. "Jock," of course, took up his appointed place as leader, but was a little disconcerted to find that he was the only one on foot. Having in his possession a huge staff, he at once decided to turn this to account. Accordingly, he placed the staff between his legs, and, in solemn majesty, trudged on. When the kirkyard was reached the farmers dismounted from their steeds, whereupon Jock sprang from his wooden horse, exclaiming as he did so, "Hech, sirs, had it no' been for the fashion o' the thing I might as weel ha'e been on my ain feet."

The natural's attendance at funerals recalls the anecdote of the worthy who was set to watch the churchyard during the "resurrectionist" craze. It

was Dunbar Kirkyaird, and Pate, together with a friend, was told off to watch the place of interment on a certain night. Pate acted the part of vigil for some time, but becoming weary, addressed his fellow sentinel with the words, "Come awa' hame, Geordie, they'll no' rise the nicht noo."

The natural attended funerals and acted the part of the vigil in the kirkyaird, and existing evidence shows us that, in dreams at least, he has even been beyond the grave.

Rab Hamilton, who was well-known in Ayr, was wont to call on Dr. Auld to share in that reverend gentleman's hospitality. On one occasion the worthy divine was out of humour, and when Rab called he was met with the answer, "Get away, Rab, I have nothing for you to-day." The worthy, equal to the untoward circumstances, at once replied, "I dinna want onything the day, Mr. Auld; I wanted to tell you an awesome dream I ha'e had. I dreamt I was deid." "Weel, what then?" said Dr. Auld, settling down to listen to the story. "Ou, I was carried far, far, and up, up, up, till I cam' to heaven's yett, where I chappit, and chappit, and chappit, till at last an angel keekit out and said, 'Wha are ye?' 'I'm puir Rab Hamilton.' 'Whaur are ye frae?' 'Frae the wicked toon o' Ayr.' 'I dinna ken ony sic place,' said the angel. 'Ou, but I'm joost frae there.' Weel, the angel sends for the Apostle Peter, and Peter comes wi' his key and opens the yett, and says to me, 'Honest man, do you

come frae the toon o' Ayr?" "Deed do I,' says I. 'Weel,' says Peter, 'I ken the place, but nae-body's cam' frae the toon o' Ayr, no' since the year'" (and here the worthy referred to the particular year in which Dr. Auld had been inducted to the parish).

This anecdote of Dr. Auld and Rab Hamilton introduces us to quite a budget of stories, for the natural and the minister often crossed swords in the matter of witty retort. A north of Scotland divine, who enjoyed the reputation of being slow to discharge accounts, was one day going the rounds of his parish when he met the village worthy, and addressed him with the somewhat undignified question, "Well, how are your potatoes selling in the moon just now?" "Oh," replied the natural, "very cheap and plenty o' them." "Don't you think," continued his reverence, "that there would be some difficulty in getting them down?" "Nae fear o' that," replied the fool with a smile; "send up the siller, and they'll sune send them doon."

The parish minister of C——, and Jamie Sharp, the village natural, were passing one day through a park, when they were pursued by a bull. Jamie managed to get over the wall in time; but the minister, who was a heavy man, had a narrow escape. On recovering his breath, he exclaimed, "If I had been pierced by its horns, what would you have said?" "That ye were a stickit minister," answered Jamie, who was a bit of a wag.

Jock Scott, a half-witted lad, was employed by the minister to cart some firewood. Finding he had got the worst of the bargain, the reverend gentleman remarked, severely, "Jock, when I came here they told me you were a fool." "Ay, sir," replied Jock; and they tauld me ye was a gran' preacher; but," he added, in a lower tone, "it's never safe to believe a' that ye hear."

Attention to little things often gives the half-wit an advantage. Jamie Fleeman, the Laird of Udney's Fool, found a horse-shoe on the roadside, and, meeting Mr. Carnegie, the minister of St. Fergus, he showed it to him, and asked, in pretended ignorance, what it was. "Why Jamie," said Mr. Carnegie, good-humouredly, "anybody that was not a fool would know that it was a horse's shoe." "Ah!" said Jamie, with affected simplicity, "what it is to be wise, to ken it's no' a meer's shoe."

Like their attendance at funerals, their attendance at church was very regular, and many anecdotes are preserved of unseemly disturbances which they made during worship.

Rab Hamilton was once a worshipper in a church other than the one he usually attended. By some means he managed to get his head between two rails in front of him, but, when he wished to withdraw, found it impossible. Crying out, to the amazement and amusement of the congregation, he said, "Murder! my head'll ha'e to be cuttit aff! Holy meenister! congregation! Oh, my head maun be



cuttit aff. It's a judgment on me for leaving my godlie Mr. Peebles at the Newton." After he had been freed from his position, he was asked what was his meaning for putting his head between the rails, to which he replied, "Oh, it was just to look on wi' *anither woman*." Another instance of the natural's disturbance in worship was when the minister of Lunan tried to enforce an argument by a reference to the defective intellect of Jamie Fraser, the parochial worthy. The minister was greatly annoyed by the worshippers sleeping during his discourse, and one Sabbath he addressed them on their sin, closing his speech with the words, "You see even Jamie Fraser, the idiot, does not fall asleep, as so many of you are doing." Jamie, who did not care to be thus designated, replied with words that may or may not have been complimentary to the preacher's abilities, "An' I hadna been an idiot, I micht ha'e been sleepin' too." A minister, who was much annoyed by the restlessness of a worthy, gave instructions to the beadle to warn the natural as he entered church that he was not to "mak' a whist" under pain of expulsion. Doing his best for some time, the natural at last fell through, and, rising in his pew, he addressed the minister with the question, "Can a puir body like me no' gi'e a hoast?"

An incident which comes from the north of Scotland tells of a worthy who, one Sabbath, was found in possession of the pulpit. The beadle, who attempted to dislodge Tam, found him immovable,

and so left him to be expelled by the minister. When the divine reached the pulpit stair, he called out to the natural in a peremptory manner, "Come down, sir, immediately!" Tam, however, felt that the ministry had need of him, and, beaming with all the pomposity that the pulpit could give him, he replied, "Na, na, meenister! juist ye come up wi' me. This is a perverse generation, and feth they need us baith."

To the natural, as to the rest of the congregation, the collection was of some importance. A Lauder worthy, who was an earnest supporter of State Churchism, became possessed of a counterfeit shilling. When Sabbath came he went to the Auld Licht Kirk, and, when the ladle was put up to him for his collection, he put in the bad shilling and took out elevenpence halfpenny, which he calculated was his legal change. Service over, he made his way to the then Lord Lauderdale, and conveyed to him the incident in the words, "I've cheated the Seceders the day, my lord; I've cheated the Seceders."

Next in importance, perhaps to the collection was the criticism of the sermon. Naturals, too, were critics.

The Reverend Dr. John Thomson, who officiated for some time at Markinch, was preaching one day on the moral depravity of mankind, and the many evils that go to form man's immorality. He was on his way to the manse, when he overheard two worthies discussing the sermon. They were Johnny

Spittal and Davie Thomson. "Weel, Davie, did ye hear a' yon?" "'Deed did I, Johnny, man." "An' what thocht ye o't a', Davie?" "'Deed, Johnny, man, if he hadna been an awfu' chield himsel', he wadna ha'e kent sae weel about it."

A Peebles minister came in for criticism at the hands of a worthy, though it was of a somewhat different kind. His sermon had been directed against falsehood, and on the way home, when the discourse was under review, the village natural remarked to his companion, "The meenister needna ha'e been sae hard, for there's plenty o' leears in Peebles besides me."

It was not the sermon alone that was criticised. A country minister, who for one sermon a week was paid a stipend of £500 per year, was one day strolling leisurely through the churchyard, when he came across Johnny Smart, the village half-wit, seated on a gravestone. "It's a great sin, Johnny," he remarked, somewhat sharply, "to be always idle and doing nothing." "Ay, but it's a greater sin, sir," instantly retorted the worthy, "to tak' a rowth o' siller for daein' next to naething."

A Fife natural being asked why he never went to church, replied, "I love the lark that rises from the green sod with the dew sparkling on his breast, and soars far up in the blue heavens—*that's my religion.*"

Jock Amos, another worthy, was engaged with a knife shaping something from a piece of wood one Sabbath when Mr. Boston, the minister of the parish,

approached. Seeing the worthy thus employed, he enquired, "John, can you tell me which is the Fourth Commandment?" "I daresay, Mr. Boston, it'll be the ane after the third," was the reply. "Can you repeat it?" asked the divine. "I'm no' sure about it," answered Jock. "I ken it has some wheeram by the rest." Mr. Boston repeated it, and tried thereby to show him his error, but "Ay, that's it, sir," said Jock, and kept whittling away. "Why, what is the reason you never come to church, John?" inquired the minister. "Oh, because you never preach on the text I want you to preach on." "What text would you have me to preach on, John?" "On the nine-and-twenty knives that cam' back frae Babylon." "I never heard of them before." "Ha! ha! the mair fool ye! Gang hame an' read your Bible, Mr. Boston! Sic fool; sic minister!" Mr. Boston on searching for the text found it in Ezra i. 9, and wondered at the 'cuteness of the fool, considering the subject on which he had been reprov'd. "The mair fool ye, as Jock Amos said to the minister," is now a well-known proverb.

About the year 1820, at the time of the trial of Queen Caroline, Dr. Wightman was minister of Kirkmahoe, in Dumfries, and he, like the other parish ministers, had been requested to omit the Queen's name from public prayer. Meeting daft Jock Gordon, who was well-known in the district, the Doctor, as usual, stopped to have a chat with him. "Good morning, Jock, and how are you to-

day?" said the divine. "Oh, gaily weel, gaily weel, Doctor," replied Jock, "but man, they tell me ye dinna pray for the Queen noo." "Quite true, Jock, for I am afraid that she is not a good woman," responded Dr. Wightman. "God bless me, Doctor, ye ken I'm a puir daft creature, and maybe kens nae better," replied Jock, "but I aye thocht the waur a body was they aye wanted the prayin' for the mair."

In a village near Glasgow there was a worthy, who was known by the curious cognomen of "High Peter," owing to his small stature. The minister met him one day, and resolving to joke at Peter's expense, said to him, "Why is it that people call you 'High Peter'?" "Weel," replied Peter slyly, "I dinna ken; but if ye tell me why the people ca' ye a minister, I'll try to tell ye."

Before we leave the worthy in relation to the minister and the church, there is another story which may be introduced here. It treats of the natural in church during the week.

Jock, the worthy in the parish of Rescobie, was dependent for existence on the funds of the parish. Being in need of some clothing, Jock made application to the Kirk Session. By-and-bye he heard that his case was to be considered on a particular day by that body. The meeting was to be held in church, and Jock, who by some means got within the building, concealed himself under a pew and awaited events. Jock's case was duly discussed, and one of the elders, the farmer at Middleton, proposed that

the worthy should be provided with shoes and hose. The Session at once agreed to the shoes, but an angry altercation took place over the provision of hose. Middleton was particularly strong that they should be provided, and was encouraged in his defence when he heard the natural shout from his place of concealment, "Stick weel to the hose, Middleton, stick weel to the hose."

Men higher up the divinity ladder than the common wearer of the cloth have been outwitted by the apparently witless fool. An Edinburgh Professor was taking his usual walk in the suburbs one morning, when a natural chanced to cross his path. Irritated at this intrusion on his soliloquizing, the Professor asked the imbecile, "How long, Tom, may one live without brains?" The answer was short and sharp, "I dinna ken, sir; hoo lang ha'e ye leaved yersel'?"

"Lang Willie" was a well-known feature on the St. Andrews links during the second quarter of this century. On the occasion of Kossuth's visit to St. Andrews, Willie expressed a strong desire to be present at the public dinner, and applied for a ticket to the Bailie in charge of the arrangements. The worthy man, full of the importance of his office, curtly refused the application, saying to Willie that it was "no' for the likes o' him to be at the dinner." "No' for the likes of me!" was Willie's indignant rejoinder. "I've been in the company of gentlemen from eleven to four o'clock maist days

for the last thirty year, and that's mair than you can say!"

A simple-minded character, Jamie by name, was sent by his master with several horses to the fair. A neighbouring farmer passing along saw Jamie standing in the road with his horses, and asked him what was the matter. "I've lost a horse," was the reply. "I had five when I started, an' now I've only four, an' I daurna face the maister wantin' it." "You've got five," said the farmer. "Can ye no' count?" "What's the guid o' countin' when I ken I've lost yin? There's the twa broon anes, and the black and the grey; that's four," said Jamie. "Div ye no' see the ane you're sittin' on, ye fule?" Jamie looked at the farmer, and, with a bright look coming into his face, said, "Man, I'm awfu' glad I saw ye."

In matters of business, the worthy was seldom overreached.

Some thirty years ago there was a Stirling character who made a living by hawking sheep's heads and trotters. Providence had frowned upon him, and Geordie was a hunchback. He was locally known as "Humphy Geordie." There were certain days on which he went his rounds with his fragmentary butcher's shop in his basket. These days were anxiously watched for by the frugal matron. "Weel, Geordie, what's a' your sheep's heids the day?" Geordie, who spoke with a lisp, replied, "Oh, they're *all* a thickspence." Given this under-

standing, the matron proceeded to inspect the basket, and, after having received something to her taste, said, "Weel, then, Geordie, I'll tak' this ane." "Oh," replied the vendor, "that one's thevenpence." He held the purchaser responsible for an extra penny if she made her choice of his wares.

"Speccie" Davie, a Dumfriesshire character, outwitted many a customer in his time. He sold spectacles in the market-place. One day a gentleman approached "Speccie's" stall, and made some enquiries about a pair of glasses, remarking that his sight was failing fast. "Want specs, sir?" enquired Davie; "I've as fine a variety here as there's in the haill country; to suit a' sights. 'Try on thae,'" and the eye-glass seller thrust a pair into the old gentleman's hands, and then held up a paper for him to read. "They're nae use," was the comment after some little trial had been made. "Ah, I thocht sae," returned the worthy, "you're gettin' short-sighted." Nor could a suitable pair be found on the stall. At length Davie whipped out a pair from his pocket, and handed them to the customer with the remark, "Here's a pair, sir, that's sure to fit ye." The trial of this pair was sufficient to induce the man into a sale. "Thae's the very thing. Hoo much are thae?" "They're juist five shillings," said Davie, hastily returning them to the case. The money was instantly paid, but before the weak-eyed gentleman was far away the worthy

amused the bystanders with the remark, as he jingled the shillings, "There's nae gless in them."

Many of the worthies managed to eke out existence without engaging in any kind of work, and some seemed to have no inclination for toil.

Daft Jock Gray, the supposed original of David Galletly, once proved himself equal to the occasion when he was asked if he could not work. Even the consequential dignity that lurks behind the "gown and bands" could not give Jock the engaging kind of work, and some seemed to have no usual mission—that of loitering—when he was met by the minister, who, in haughty tones, delivered himself in these words, "John, you're an idle fellow; you might surely herd a few cows." "Me herd!" exclaimed the worthy, "I dinna ken corn frae girse."

On a farm in Fife, as the men were busy building stacks, the farmer entered the stackyard and found one of the men on the top of a finished stack trying to put the head straighter, and bawled out to him, "Come doon oot o' that, Jock. That's twice I've seen you on the top of that stack, and it is nae better. Can you no' put up a guid stack, and be dune wi't?" "Well, maybe I cud," replied Jock; "but it wadna matter muckle although I did, for if I put up a guid ane it takes me a' day looking at it, and if I put up an ill ane it takes me a' the rest o' the day sorting it."

One day a "ne'er-do-weel" accosted a farmer for whom he was accustomed to work, and asked for a

shilling, adding that he would give him "a hand" to lift his potatoes. The farmer's answer was as sharp as it was suggestive. "I'll gi'e ye a shilling if ye *lift* nae mair o' them."

An old farmer, passionately fond of fox-hunting, was one day following the chase, when he inadvertently got out of the track of his comrades and became entangled in a thick wood. While anathematising his misfortune in language more forcible than polite, a half-witted worthy appeared on the scene. On being questioned by the farmer as to whether he had seen the fox, the worthy replied, "Ay, he went by hauf-an-hoor syne." "Did ye speak till him?" asked the farmer, thinking to compensate his misfortune by a laugh at the expense of the simpleton. "'Deed did I!" came the answer. "An' what said he, Tam?" asked the farmer. "He just said, 'Guid morning!' and asked wha's houn's were oot; and, when I tell't him it was yours, he juist gi'ed his tail a bit shake, and said, lauchin', 'Weel, I needna hurry!'"

Davie Drinnan was a "ne'er-do-weel." He had been converted on three or four occasions. Impressionable and "a wee saft," every stirring of the spiritual atmosphere readily affected him. While labouring under these fits of mental disturbance, prayer was his constant engine of offence and defence—he was in fact a man of great faith and many words, but of little works. His companions used to watch his every movement. While taking a short

cut home from church one Sabbath, he came to a rather high dry-stone dyke. Down on his knees went Davie, and prayed to the effect that he might get over this dyke safely, but would trust in Providence; ay, even though the dyke should fall on him would not his faith fail. A few of his mischievous companions, who had seen his move, and were hiding and listening on the other side, at this point tumbled over some of the looser stones on him. "Ah, Lord," exclaimed Davie, "a body canna say a word in fun but ye tak' it in earnest."

There had been a fire at a steading some miles out of Hawick, and owing to there being no fire brigade at hand the whole stock of corn was destroyed. Willie Anstruther, a half-wit, belonging to Goldielands, visited the scene of the conflagration on the following day, and after inspecting the ruins he turned to a bystander, and in tones of intense disgust exclaimed, "Tuts, tuts! sic stupid folk about Hawick onyway. They micht ha'e had the engine up the nicht afore at onyrate!"

We have said that the worthy was at times unwilling to toil, and when he did engage in work he liked to be well attended to.

Will Speir, the Eglinton natural, was working one day on the minister's glebe, and when dinner time came was called into the kitchen. Just as he had finished his meal the minister entered, and, seeing Will, enquired whether he had had a good dinner.

"Oh, vera guid," said Will, "but gin onybody asks if I got a dram after it what'll I say?"

An odd character used to live in the Aberdeenshire hamlet of Garmond. He was popularly known as "Tailor Roy," and by Jeems Roy, or "Swift." He was a very peculiar being, and had many strange sayings and doings accredited to him. Like Davie Drinnan, he trusted greatly to Providence, and the following is said to be the terms of his "prayer for proveeshuns"—"O Lord, min', send me an ounce o' tea an' a poun' o' sugar an' a loaf gin Sunday, min'; and gin't can be possible, twa three red herrin'! Gin ye dae that, min', I'll gang to yer kirk an' sing yer psalms; but gin ye dinna dae that, min', I'll profane yer Sunday, an' hack sticks on yer day, min'; I'll dance an' dele (delve) an' plant kail, an' gang to Jonny Watt's for my milk, min'!"

The worthy is frequently economical. William Sprunt, a character well-known in Logiealmond, was dying in Edinburgh, and as he was afraid he would not be buried in his native glen, he expressed himself in the words, "I'm far through this time, sir, and I'm feared I'm no' to get owr't; but I wad like to get better enough to get back to Logiealmond afore I dee; for ye see, sir, it's a lot cheaper travelin' leevin' than deed!"

To a ready answer the worthy frequently added keen observation. An old worthy who did odd jobs about a village in Forfarshire, was one day engaged in cleaning out the minister's ashpit. The minister,

who happened to be up early, sought to improve the occasion by reminding old William, as he was called, that he should throw off the coat of intemperance which he wore so persistently. William listened without saying anything to the advice, then turning, replied, "Ay, ay, minister, what ye ha'e said may be a' true eneuch; but I'm dootin' ye dinna act up to the advice ye are sae glib in gi' ein', if I may judge frae the number o' corks I ha'e thrown up in the midden."

Another who was employed about a farm received a penny, which he hid in a crevice in the barn wall. The farmer, observing what had been done, extracted the penny, putting a two-shilling piece in its place. "Strange," said Jock, when he went to look at his treasure; "turned white in the face—maun ha'e catched the cauld," and with this remark he rolled the florin in a rag and put it back. Next day the farmer changed the coin to a shilling. "Getting to be a case o' consumption, I doot," remarked Jock, when he paid a second visit. Next day the rag contained a sixpenny piece. "Gallop in' consumption!" exclaimed the natural, and replaced the coin with a dowie shake of his head. The farmer next substituted a half-sovereign. "Noo ye've ta'en the jaundice," exclaimed Jock on a subsequent visit. "Ye'll need to be keepit warm," and so saying, he placed the coin in his pocket and *kept it there*.

Jock Amos was in conversation with a female acquaintance, who, following a common idiom of

speech, enquired, "Jock, how auld will you be?" "Humph! It wad tak' a wiser head than mine to tell ye that," was Jock's reply. "What!" exclaimed his friend, "it's unco queer that ye dinna ken how auld ye are." "I ken weel enough how auld *I am*," replied Jock, "but I dinna ken how auld *I'll be*."

A worthy near Coupar, famous for his eccentricities, was one day treating himself to something special to dinner. A crony happening to look in upon him at the time, gazed at the feast with envious eyes. The worthy did not wish to lose even a part of his dinner, nor had he any inclination to offend his friend, and he therefore took the following way of intimating that his room was preferable to his company. "I'm sayin', Henry, dae ye ken the way I dinna keep a dog?" "No." "Because it aye sits an' looks at me when I'm eatin', an' I canna thole that."

Jamie Campbell, an innocent half-wit, was engaged as a farm servant in the neighbourhood of Montrose. He was sent off one day with a cart and a barrel to fetch some sea-water, in which it was then the custom to dip the sheep. When Jamie got to the shore it was ebb-tide, and returning home he informed the farmer he "couldna get a drap water the day; the sea was clean dry." On another occasion he was sent with a horse to the mill for a sackful of meal. On his way home he was observed mounted on the horse's back, with the load slung across his own shoulders. Being asked how he bur-

dened his own back with it, he answered, "Oh, just to mak' it lighter for the beastie."

A half-wit in the parish of F—— had such lazy and indolent habits that a few of his friends decided to give him a ducking in a horse pond to freshen him up a little. They were about to carry this idea into effect when an old farmer in the neighbourhood came up and asked them what they were going to do. One of them jocularly replied that there was going to be a funeral. "Tut, tut," said the old fellow, "let the young chap come to my house, and I'll gi'e him as much tatties an' soor milk as he can tak', an' he'll be asked to dae but little." "An' wull the tatties be pared for me?" asked the lazy one, turning on his side. "No, certainly not," replied the farmer, rather indignantly. "Then go on with the funeral, lads, for I'll no' gang!"

Jock Haw was a worthy in farm-service near Dumfries. When the annual fair approached, Jock got permission to attend, and on the eventful morning he set off in high spirits. Being home long before he was expected, the farmer asked, "Hullo, Jock, you're unco soon hame; did ye no' enjoy the fair?" "Fair!" replied Jock with a grunt; "Queer fair! I couldna see a buddy for fowk."

There are always to be found those who endeavour to make merry at the half-wit's expense. A miller near Elgin, hoping to take a "rise" out of a village natural who was loitering about the mill yard, said to him, "Dauvie, folk say that you're a fule!" "I

dinna ken that I am," replied David, "but there's some things I ken, though there's ithers that I dinna ken." "Weel, then, Dauvie, what d'ye ken?" "I ken that millers ha'e aye fat pigs." "An' what d'ye no' ken?" "I dinna ken *wha's corn* they eat."

There was always about the half-wit—from fear or otherwise—a certain honesty and truthfulness. The laird of Bansterie lost his purse, and Daft Jamie, a well-known district worthy, who had been fortunate enough to discover it, called at the mansion-house very early in the morning to hand over his find. The laird, who had to be aroused out of bed to receive Jamie, was somewhat ill-natured, and asked him what the mischief sent him at such an early hour in the morning? "Weel," replied Jamie, "I cam 'awa' just as lang as I had the upper hand, for I can assure you the deevil an' me ha'e had a ge y nicht o't."

A gentleman was taking a walk one day in the vicinity of a lunatic asylum near Edinburgh, when he was accosted by a man of respectable appearance, and the asylum referred to formed the topic of conversation. "It is a wonderful place that," said the man. "Everything is in such excellent order—so agreeable, too. They have concerts and balls; and, more than that—what do you think?—they have a debating society." "Indeed," said the gentleman, "a debating society!" "Yes; they are debating just now, and if you like," suggested the man, "I will

show you how they proceed. But when they see you, take no particular notice. Should they address you, merely say, 'Let me not disturb you, gentlemen; I am daft.'" The lunatic—for such he really was—conducted the gentleman into a room of the asylum and left him, not in the presence of lunatics, but with *the Board of Directors*, who were just then sitting.

James Anderson, commonly called Lang Jamie, a hanger-on about inns at Beith, was employed in doing trifling jobs. His chief occupation, however, was holding horses during fairs and market days for farmers and horse-coupers. He was asked, "What is your charge?" He replied, "I ha'e nae rule; sometimes a *tumph* gives me twa bawbees, but a clever fallow like you aye gi'es me a white sixpence." Jamie was passing along a road when he saw some jelly cans cooling on the ledge of a window. The temptation being very strong, Jamie marched off with two of the cans. Next day, the worthy happened to pass along the same road, and the owner of the jelly seeing him, enquired, "Jamie, dae ye ken onything about twa cans o' my jeely that was stolen yesterday?" "No, ma'am," said Jamie, looking round and seeing no way of escape, "as sure's ocht I ken naething about your jeely, but I'll bring back your cans if ye like."

Rab Livingstone, who lived in a village in Ayrshire, was one day passing the manse eating a slice of bread, when the minister's wife came out with a

plate and sent him to the fish-cart, owned by James Moran, who was shouting, "Loupin' and leevin' her-rin'" at the pitch of his voice. While Jamie was filling the plate, Rab slipped the bread he was eating into his pocket, also two herring which he had cleverly managed to lift from the cart when Jamie's back was turned. Jamie, however, noticed the tails sticking out of Rab's pocket, and asked him how they got there. "Man," said Rab, "is that no' wunnerfu'? When I heard you saying they were leevin' I thocht you were an awfu' leear; but fegs! it's true. They saw me pit the breed in my pouch, and were sae mighty hungry they louped in efter it."

Sandy F— was an eccentric character, well-known in the village of E—, and many a queer caper he tried. One day he was assisting his master to make some joists for a shed. "Tak' a thochtie aff that joist, Sandy," said his master. Sandy seized a saw, and immediately cut off three feet. "Ye stoopit gowk," exclaimed his master on observing what had been done, "ye've spiled my stick. What gart ye tak' aff sae muckle?" "Weel," retorted Sandy, "ye telt me to tak' aff a thochtie, an' I juist thocht three feet."

The worthy could make a good bargain when he chose. Daft Jamie, a well-known natural who lived in the neighbourhood of Denholm, was occasionally employed by the Laird of Cavers and his brother, Captain Douglas, who resided at Mid-

shields, to transport them on his back across the water which flowed between their places of abode. One day Captain Douglas bribed Jamie to drop the Laird in the middle of the river. The worthy agreed, and having taken Cavers on his back, he proceeded to the middle of the stream, when he exclaimed, "Oh! Laird, my kuit's yeukie!" "Well, well; never mind that," exclaimed Cavers. "Ay, but I maun mind it," replied Jamie, and, notwithstanding orders, entreaties, and threats, he plumped the Laird down into the water and began scratching his ankle. After conveying the Laird across he returned for the Captain, who speedily mounted, and was carried to the middle of the river. At the spot where he had dropped the Laird, Jamie again stood still. "Noo, Captain," said he, "if ye dinna gi'e me twa shillin's mair I'll lat you doon as weel."

In addition to liking plenty, the worthy cared to have something substantial in the way of food. John B——, a village worthy, who did a little as a joiner, was working at a farm town for a couple of days, and on the first day the farmer's wife supplied him with some soup at dinner time, which John did not greatly relish, as it was somewhat thin. On the second day the farmer's wife, meaning to repeat her kindness, asked John if he would take any soup. "No, thank ye, mem," was the reply, "I'm no' dry the day."

Donald, who was engaged in farm service, was, like the hero of the foregoing incident, a little par-

ticular as to his food and drink, and more than once the rather cheeseparing goodwife of the farm felt the sting of his sharp tongue. She hastened to explain matters to Donald when anything went amiss with the victuals, knowing that if she could satisfy him little would be said by any of the others. One day she placed a bottle of sma' ale on the table near Donald, and remarked, apologetically, "Oh, Donald, the ale's nae vera strong the day, it hasna wrocht yet." "'Deed, mistress," said Donald, drily, "we would ha'e seen that for oorsel's. For my pairt, I think it's nae able to work, an' I think it wad be a sin to bid it."

Sometimes an attempt is made to impose on the worthy in the way of working, as well as in the way of feeding.

Stewart Jack, the Meikleour slater, was quaint, but shrewd and witty. A wag met him one day returning from Clunie, and wishing to take a "rise" out of him, said, "Go home, Stewart, as fast as possible, for the chairman and two directors of the Newtyle Railway Company are waiting your return in order to arrange for the slating of the line." "Weel, I cudna tak' that job in hand i' the noo," answered the slater quietly, for I've ha'en a meetin' wi' Maister M'Nicol, the factor frae Airlie, an' I've ta'en on the slatin' o' the loch o' Clunie; so, as ye've little to dae, ye can get the ither job to keep ye frae stervin'."

If the worthy did not get work when he tried it,

he could be cutting enough to those who refused him.

A noted ne'er-do-weel in the north applied one day at the house of a builder for a job. The builder being out, his wife, an exceptionally plain-looking woman, came to the door, and, in answer to the petition of the man, said, "No, the guidman has nae work for you, at onyrate," and was about to shut the door, when Jock placed his foot at the bottom of it, and, eyeing the grim matron before him, remarked, with caustic humour, "Weel, he may be unco particular aboot the men he tak's on, but he's no' sae mighty particular wi' his women folk."

The worthy was invariably 'cute. A half-wit in Fife being about to suffer condign punishment from the nobleman whose dependant he was, climbed a tree for refuge. The nobleman, however, shewed every intention of waiting till the worthy should descend, and as the half-wit grew tired of so uncomfortable a seat, he hit upon the following strategy to raise the siege. Looking along the approach to the house, visible from his post, he said, "My lord!" "Well," was the response. "There's a gran' carriage-and-fower comin' up to the hoose," replied the worthy, and while his lordship hurried off to receive his imaginary guests, Charles made his escape.

While it was seldom that the worthy worked he did not like to work and go unrewarded.

A natural who used to lounge about the door of a Stirling inn, was wont to earn coppers from the

visitors by playing on the flute. A lady, who used to give him something occasionally, was just starting from the inn, and said to Jamie that she had only a fourpenny piece, and that he must be content with that, for she could not stay to get more. Jamie was not satisfied, and, as the lady drove out, expressed his feelings by playing with all his might, "O weerie o' the *toom pouch*."

When a worthy did set himself to work he often manifested intense interest in his duties.

Will Speir had charge of the coal-stores on the Earl of Eglinton's estate, and, as on one occasion he had been soundly rated for allowing the fuel to run out, he ever afterwards made it his one great ambition to keep the requisite supply in readiness. In the course of time, his lease of life gave evidence that it was drawing to a close, and, as is usual when such happens, the parish minister was called in to try and prepare the dying man for the journey on which he was about to enter. After a solemn conversation, by which the natural seemed to have been calmed into a good frame of mind, and was likely to receive seriously any further communication, the man of God asked him whether there was not *one great thought* which was consoling to him in the hour of trouble. "Ou, ay," said the poor fellow, "faithful over a few things;" "Lord be thankit a' the bunkers are fou."

Although Will Speir's affections were set more on

things on earth than in heaven above, there were worthies who knew of such a place as Paradise.

A natural in the north-east of Scotland, who was seized with a violent attack of inflammation, was so ill that bleeding was resorted to as a cure. Force, however, was necessary, for the natural would not submit. When the worthy saw blood he cried out excitedly, "O doctor! doctor! you'll kill me! and depend upon it, the first thing I'll do when I get to the other world will be to *report ye to the Board o' Supervision there, and get you dismissed.*"

Rab Ha', the Glasgow glutton, seems to have been the king of eaters. When Rab arrived one day at the mansion of a hospitable entertainer, the latter said to him, "Rab, we're gaun to see if ye can eat a whole calf." Rab at once agreed. "All right," said the entertainer after Rab had agreed, "but I suppose you won't object to take a pie before the calf is brought in?" Rab, confident in his stowage capacity, expressed himself quite willing to partake of the dish. When he had finished the pie, his lordship pressed him to take another, which he dispatched with equal alacrity. A third and a fourth followed, but by this time Rab, beginning to fear that he was going beyond the bounds of prudence, considering what was still expected of him, ventured a slight remonstrance. "Mind, your lordship, I ha'e to eat the calf yet!" "O Rab, Rab, man," answered his host laughing, "do ye no' ken ye've eaten the calf already?"

The road from Campsie to the village of Fintry winds round a steep spur of the Campsie hills, and in winter is often rendered impassable by the inclemency of the weather; and on an afternoon in the back end of the year the crier in that district, who was named Sammul, and was a well-known worthy in Campsie district, used to deliver himself to the farming folks on the main street thus:—"John Drummond gi'es notice that he wull stope gauu ower the hill to Fintry every Mononday and Fairsday at the Martinmas term, an' up to Caunulemas wull gang but yince a week on a Tyesday, gif the road's clear o' snaw an' Gode wullin'; but at onyrate on a Setterday, richt raison or nane."

Among the many characters that Montrose possessed was Joseph Carr, and many of his quick reproofs and quaint sayings are well-known to the inhabitants. Joseph was taking his usual walk along the sea-shore one day when he met the minister, who was accompanied by a large Newfoundland dog. "You remind me of Lord Byron and his dog," was Joseph's compliment to the minister. "What care I for Byron?" queried the divine somewhat imperiously. "Dinna carry your heid sae high, Mr. D——," replied the worthy, "for if it wasna for Byron, and such as Byron, ye wad ha'e verra little to say to your congregation when ye mount the poopit stair on Sawbath."

In olden times the country was traversed by a class of beggars of the Edie Ochiltree type, and,

besides being the principal news-carriers, some of these itinerants were half-crazed and half-droll, and much quaint humour and curious fun was got from them. Daft Willie Dawson from Brechin was one of these, and some of our readers may remember him with his hardware box, selling trumps. Willie was tormented with a restless spirit, which would not allow him either to sit or stand still, or even go ten paces straight forward. He jerked and cut all the gesticulations conceivable. The opening of his box was a comical operation. Placing it on a table, Willie retired some steps backward, all the time pointing with the key in one hand and pitching up the tails of his coat behind with the other, and stamping with his feet like a "puttin'" sheep. Then forward he went with a bounce, but ten to one he scored a miss. When Willie was to get married the minister he asked to officiate got into a rage, saying, "Who would marry you sir, to fill the country full of beggars?" "In troth, Mr. Whitson," said Willie, "you have not filled it full o' gentry either." The minister had no family.

But the king of all the jolly beggars was John Goodfallow. So cool a joker was John that those who risked to crack a joke with him were only likely to come off second best, and many a good story of his was fresh years after his decease in the places where he had been accustomed to travel. One day he met the Rev. David Mitchell of Aberlemno, who wanted a joke out of him. Mitchell was a man that



indulged in his cups to a fault, and in the end to his sore grief. John, surveying him, said, "I see by your coat you're a minister. If it's no' ill manners to speer, whaur is your kirk?" "Just guess you that," said Mitchell. John sought to come at his man from the negative side, and prove whom he was by whom he was not, so he gave out a long chain of no noes which ran something as follows:—"I am sure you're no' Pistolfoot o' Tannadice, nor are you Pecken John Sma' o' Oathlaw; you're no' Cauld Kail o' Careston, nor are you the Harrow o' Fern; you're no' the Rattling Cannon o' Kirriemuir, nor are you the Roaring Lion o' Glamis; you are no' the Black Ram o' Cortachy, nor are you the Glasgow Gun o' Forfar; you're no' the godly Rodger o' Rescobie; nor Horse Couper Jock o' Inverarity; so you maun be drunken Mitchell o' Aberlemno, or I canna guess wha you are."

Jock was a well-known character in the districts of Edzell and Glenesk, and, like Rab Ha', he was a voracious eater. When soliciting anything, however, his request was made more as a demand than asked as a favour. Entering a farm house on one occasion, and seeing that the only inmate was a female, Jock demanded a dish of "fried collops." The young woman was bewildered. There seemed no way of obeying the behest. Suddenly, however, she recollected that in a corner in the garret lay the remains of a pair of buckskin breeches. Procuring these, she cut them into pieces, placed them in a

stewpan, and in a short time laid the dose before the hungry worthy. He supped it with apparent relish, remarking as he finished, "Ay, lass, your collops are teuch but tastie."

If Jock had the appreciation for a good dinner, he also had a sense of humour. One day, while on his usual peregrinations, he called at a farmhouse and entreated the guidwife for "ane o' the guidman's sarks." The farmer's wife remarked that she had no shirts she could give away, to which remark Jock replied, "Ye ken, guidwife, an auld sark's nae compliment to naebody; gi'e me a guid ane." The farm housewife went away to search, and duly appeared, and, as she handed the beggar the shirt, she said (fully aware that all in the district considered her charity greater than her beauty), "Although that's ane o' the guidman's best sarks, ye'll juist gae to the next toon and misca' me." Jock, who saw that a compliment was being fished for, replied "I couldna' dae that, guidwife, if I didna ca' ye bonnie; an' if I ca'd ye that, ye ken yersel' I wad be speakin' against my conscience."

We have spoken of the natural attending church; he had also some sense of right and wrong.

Jock M'Lymont one day met his minister and accosted him with the remark, "Sir, I would like to speir a question at ye on a subject that's bothering me." "Weel, Johnnie," asked the divine, "what is the question?" "Sir, is it lawful at any time for to tell a lee?" The minister, desirous not to com-

mit himself, asked Johnnie what was his own opinion in the matter. "Weel, sir," said the worthy, "I'll no' say but in every case it's wrang to tell a lee, but I think there are waur lees than ithers." "How, Johnnie?" said the minister. "To keep doon a din, for instance," said the natural, and then he explained himself somewhat. "I'll no' say but a man does wrang in telling a lee to keep doon a din, but I'm sure he does not do half sae muckle wrang as a man that tells a lee to kick up a divilment o' a din."

A worthy who worked about a farmyard was in great terror of a turkey cock. On one occasion, when some friends were visiting him, one of them remarked on his apparent comfort. The natural expressed himself satisfied with his surroundings, the only grievance being the fowl. Unbosoming himself to a friend he said, "Ay, ay, but oh I'm sair hadden doon wi' that bubbly-jock."

A half-witted youth named Sandy Gow, who ran messages to earn a living, was sent on an errand to a house in the Perth Road where a large dog was kept on the chain. Hearing the dog barking furiously, the gentleman looked out of the window, and seeing Sandy standing in a state of terror, called out, "What's wrong, Sandy? Are you frightened for the dog?" "No," yelled Sandy, "I'm no' nane feared for the dog, nor for you either, but I'm feared for mysel'."

Although the worthy in one of the foregoing inci-

dents was terrorised, love for animal life among naturals was not unknown. A worthy who managed to get an existence by means of a cuddy and cart was arraigned for some offence and sentenced to imprisonment. When being led from the dock, he turned to the Sheriff and asked, "Wha'll guide the cuddy?" His lordship moved by the question, replied, "Send it to me." At his expense it was kept till the release of the prisoner.

Will Speir, the natural of Eglinton, to whom we have already referred, was allowed the privilege of wandering through the grounds of Eglinton Estate. One day Will was within the policies, and, bent upon some errand, was taking a near cut in order that he might the sooner fulfil his mission. He was in the act of crossing a fence when he was viewed by the Earl, who called to him, "Come back, sir, that's not the road." Will at once turned round and enquired, "Do ye ken whaur I'm gaun?" "No," said his Lordship. "Then," returned the worthy, "hoo the deil dae ye ken whether this be the road or no'?"

An anecdote similar to the foregoing is related regarding the late Lord Dundrennan. His Lordship was walking down the avenue at Compstone when he met a half-witted woman carrying a basket. "My good woman," said Dundrennan, "there's no road this way." "Na, sir, was the answer, "I think you're wrang there: I think it's a most beautifu' road."

When Jamie Fleeman, the reputed fool of Udny,

was on one occasion at Perth races he managed to procure a leg of mutton. Taking a seat on the parapet of a bridge near the town, he was busily at work on his mutton when the Laird of Udney came along. "Ah, Fleeman," said the laird, "are ye here already!" "Ou ay," returned the worthy as he looked lovingly at his trophy, "ye ken a body when he *has onything*."

Jock and Tam were having a "crack," when the village postman handed Jock a letter. "What's the meanin' o' 'j-u-n-i-o-r' at the end of your name, Jock?" asked Tam. "Oh," Jock replied, "that's to let the fowk ken I'm no' sae auld as my faither!"

There is an amusing story told of an idiot who lived near the residence of a late Lord Fife. Some parts of his lordship's estate were barren and in a very unproductive condition. Under the improved system of agriculture and of drainage great preparations had been made for securing a good crop in a certain field, where Lord Fife, his factor, and others interested in the subject, were collected. There was much discussion and some difference of opinion as to the crop with which the field had best be sown. The idiot retainer, who had been listening unnoticed to all that was said, at last cried out, "Saw't wi' factors, my lord; they're sure to thrive everywhere."

Will Speir was passing the minister's glebe one day when hay-making was in progress. The minister stopped Will and asked him whether the weather would keep fair. Will's was a cautious re-

ply, "Weel, I canna be sure, but I'll be passin' this way the nicht, an' I'll ca' in and tell ye."

An Englishman who made free with Donald Fraser, a character well-known in a fashionable watering-place in the west of Scotland, met the worthy one day driving a boar. "One of your great relations, I suppose, you have got, Donald," said the Englishman. "Na, na," quietly returned Donald, "nae freend ava; juist an acquaintance like yoursel'."

Some time ago, M'Kinnon, the provision merchant of a village in the south, was talking in his shop to a few customers when a blind man entered, and solicited alms. The grocer, who was disposed to show his superior knowledge of human nature, remarked, "D'ye no' ken, ma freens, hoo vera delicate is the touch of a blin' man. I aye think Providence has made up the loss o' ae sense by makin' ane o' the ithers mair 'cute. Noo, juist see hoo this puir man can tell a thing by the touch," and putting some fine sugar in a scoop he held it out to the mendicant, remarking, "What's that, ma man?" The blind man extended his hand, took up a pinch with his thumb and finger, and, without hesitation, said, "That's sand!"

A gang of workmen were digging a trial pit previous to some excavations being done. While they were at work throwing up the earth a half-wit named Jock Howe, belonging to the district, appeared on the scene, and, addressing the foreman, said, "What

are ye howkin' doon there for?" The foreman taking in at a glance the character of his questioner, answered, "Oh, we're diggin' down to Australia. Would you like to come?" Jock, after thinking for a minute, answered, "Ay man! Howkin' doon to Australia, are ye! Lod, ye maun be far dafter than me yet. Can ye no' sail to Australia an *howk up*, when ye wad be saved a' the bother o' liftin' the earth oot, for a' your stuff wad then fa' awa' frae ye?"

Willie, a Tillicoultry worthy, was rather a queer character, and is credited with some droll sayings. He stopped a man on the road once and said, "If a' the folk in Tillicoultry were stanin' across this road, hoo would the rest get past?" He was a most inveterate beggar of tobacco, and, no matter how much he got, he had always a corner of his box vacant for the next donation. Meeting a commercial traveller at the outskirts of the village one day, he, as was his usual, accosted the stranger for a "chow." After getting a piece of that quality known as golden bar, Willie looked up into the traveller's face and said quietly, "Man, dae ye pey for your tobacco?" "Most certainly I do," replied the gentleman. "Aweel," replied Willie, "you're a big fule. I'm no' sae daft."

Jamie —, one of the worthies of Perth, was discovered one night lying at the foot of an outside stair. "Is that you, Jamie?" asked an acquaintance, in a voice of the greatest astonishment. "Ay, it's me," said Jamie, in a tone of complete resignation.

“Ha’e you fa’en doon the stair?” continued his friend. “Ay!” said the worthy, “I fell doon; but I was comin’ doon whether or no’.”

Despite their little weaknesses, the naturals considered themselves worthy of that respect which is due to common humanity.

Jock Hogg, one of the Dunbar worthies, was greatly surprised on one occasion to see a portrait of himself exposed to view in a shop window. A travelling artist had produced the work, and it was in the old daguerreotype style. Jock, on seeing it, immediately entered the shop, and in a towering rage ordered the shopkeeper “to tak’ him oot o’ the window.” The shopkeeper told the worthy that it was Mr. Burleigh, the artist, who put it in. But Jock was still indignant. “Burleigh here or Burleigh there,” he shouted, “if ye dinna tak’ it oot I’ll sune tak’ oot the peen.” Whether or not Jock was successful in his demand history bears no witness, but a similar case occurred in Stirling with a well-known worthy, and he made the shopkeeper remove the photo. under threat of legal proceedings.

We have told you a little of the worthy, and we shall leave you at his grave. The following inscription marks the resting-place of a worthy of West Kilbride. His name was Thomas Tyre—

“Here lie the banes of Thomas Tyre,
Wha lang had drudged through dub and mire
In carrying bundles and sik lyke,
His task performing with small fyke.

To deal his snuff Tam aye was ree,
And served his friend for little ee,
His life obscure was nothing new,
Yet we must own his faults were few,
Although at Yule he supp'd a drap,
And in the kirk whiles took a nap.
True to his work in every case,
Sam scorn'd to cheat for lucre base.
Now he has gone to taste the are
Which none but honest men will share

