

## XI.—THE BAIRNS.

THE novelist of child life, when at all successful in his attempt, is considered to have done good work in a field of character somewhat difficult to explore. The bairn, unaccustomed to the ways of the world, forms impressions of men and things totally different from the impressions of his elders. These impressions indicate a mind not able yet to grasp the true nature of things—indicate a groping after a larger life, even as their seniors are groping after something similar.

In any attempt to depict Scottish character, place must be given to the observations of childhood, and the following anecdotes may serve the purpose of illustrating the thoughtful and observant child, as well as the embryo wit and humourist.

A well-known Edinburgh Professor, holidaying in the Highlands, was riding along the road upon a pony, when a herd-boy accosted him with the words, "Hey, mannie, ye'll be as weel to hurry up if ye dinna want a wet skin." The Professor went unheedingly on his way. Sure enough, before he had ridden two miles down came the rain, and he was drenched to the skin as predicted. Somewhat astonished at the boy's prescience, he retraced his way, despite the heavy rain, until he came to where

the boy was standing underneath a tree. "How did you happen to know, my boy," asked the Professor, "that the rain was coming on so soon?" "What'll ye gie's to tell ye?" returned the lad, with characteristic caution. "I'll give you this," said the professor, taking out half-a-crown. "Well, gi'es't," said the boy, eagerly. When he had obtained possession of the coin, he turned to the Professor, and said, "Dae ye see yon tup beside the broom cove?" "Yes," said the Professor. "Aweel," replied the lad, "whenever ye see that tup turning its hurdies into that broom cove, ye may be sure the rain's no' far awa'."

"What's the matter with you, dearie?" asked a kindly old lady of a little fellow who was crying bitterly on the street. The boy, amid his sobs, exclaimed that he had lost "tuppence." The old lady put her hand into her purse, and took out a threepenny bit. "There you are, my little mannie, and don't cry, but tell me how you lost your money." Drying his eyes with his jacket sleeve, he replied, "I lost it wi' anither laddie at heads and tails."

A boy entered a grocer's shop for some errands. Being accustomed to get something for himself on such occasions, he was surprised that the grocer seemed this time to have forgotten him. He stood for some time in anxious expectancy, but not receiving the donation to which he considered himself entitled, he rapped on the counter, and exclaimed, "Maister Broon, if I was goin' to get onything to mysel', I wad like toffy balls."

Another juvenile entered a Glasgow "sweetie" shop, which was in the act of being closed for the day, and, rapping on the counter, exclaimed, "Hey, man, ye nicht tak' aff your shutters a wee till I see what I'll buy wi' my penny."

A gamekeeper at Duff House, Banffshire, was one night telling his wife the arrangements for the Duke of Fife's return from the Continent, and that the Duke would drive round by his lodge. Next morning his daughter, aged three years, looked up into her mother's face and asked, "Say, ma, will 'ou have to ope' the gate for the G—Guke, or will she flee owre't?"

"These swine of yours, Willie, are in capital condition just now," said the minister to a little boy on leaving the house of a Fife labourer. "Yes, minister," was the reply, "they are a' that. It wad be tellin' fowk if they were a' as fit to dee as thae swine are."

We have all heard of the foreigner who, having been treated to kippered salmon in Dr. Guthrie's house, prayed earnestly that the worthy doctor might be long *kippered* to his friends; but we heard some time ago of a new view of *kippering* from a very vigorous-minded little fellow. The family of which he was a member was spending the winter in town, but had spent the summer in the country. There was a baby to be baptised, and the boy was particularly anxious that the baptism should take place in the country church which he attended in summer. He was told that they could not wait so long, at which he was greatly perplexed. He said no more of

the matter, but it evidently occupied a place in his thoughts. At last he hit upon an explanation. He had remembered that at the beginning of the winter an ox had been killed and pickled for family use, and that the pickling was necessary to make the meat keep. So, beaming with pleasure, he came to his mother. "Oh, mamma," he exclaimed, "I know now why we can't wait. *It is to make the baby keep.*" He clearly thought that baptism was another process of *pickling*, which is perhaps not more ridiculous than some grown-up folks' views on the same subject.

A little girl, subject to fainting fits, and well versed in all the restoratives resorted to on such occasions, was once present at a christening in church. She watched the ceremony with commendable gravity; but, just as the minister was in the act of sprinkling the infant's brow with the baptismal water, Jessie suddenly disturbed the sanctity of the proceedings by crying out excitedly, to the consternation of all around, "Mither, mither, is the baby gaun to faint?"

In a country village, where co-operation has a firm hold on the inhabitants, one of the families received an addition to its number. "We've got anither bairn in oor hoose," said a little girl to a companion. "Whaur frae?" enquired the companion. "Oh, the doctor brocht it!" was the reply. "What wey did ye no' get it oot the store?" enquired her little friend, who held strongly to the principle of economy. "Ye wad ha'e got a dividend on't."



Listening to a speech of a crew of foreigners, a mother remarked to her son, "They are speaking foreign." Referring to the cries of a baby in its nurse's arms on the deck of the same vessel, the lad replied, "They dinna greet foreign though."

A man of colour, having one evening lost his way in the lonely neighbourhood of Monnoman Muir, was making what haste he could to a cottage to inquire the direction. Being observed, in his approach, by a girl about nine years of age, whose mind had been stored with many a nursery tale, she became alarmed on seeing a human face of another colour than her own, and running into the house in order to gain its "benmost bore," overturned a "buffet-stool" which was set with bread and milk for the supper table. Her father immediately flew into a rage, and, seizing her by the arm, swore by the D——l that he would beat her for such conduct. "O faither, faither," said the terrified girl, "speak laigh, for he's just at the door."

Two boys in Dalry were playing together, when one remarked to the other, "My faither, whan he gangs to his bed, tak's aff his leg an' lays't by." The other rejoined, "He canna do that; how can onybody tak' aff their leg?" "But he can," was the reply, "for my faither's leg's a wooden ane, an' he tak's't aff at nicht an' puts't on in the morning." The boy, seeing the force of the assertion, added, "Ou, ay, I daresay that; but he doesna tak' aff his real leg." "No, no," was the reply, "because its aff already."

A boy in Lochwinnoch parish, questioning his mother about the origin of man, etc., was answered, "that we are all made of clay." "Are the horses made of clay too?" he asked. "Oh, yes," was the reply, "all of clay." "Then, mither, Duncan Davidson having but ae leg, has the clay been done, d'ye think, when he has to gang wi' a timmer ane?"

"Do you say your prayers regularly every night and morning?" asked a lady of a little street arab whom she met in the Gallowgate of Glasgow. "I aye say them at nicht, mem; but ony smart laddie can tak' care o' himsel' in the day time," was the reply.

For some time a strong effort was made to gather the young waifs of the Cowgate and Canongate to Sabbath School, but only with trifling success. One day, however, a bright idea occurred to a teacher, and that was that he might get at the children through a soiree or some similar gathering. The idea was adopted, the news spread, and the waifs appeared in considerable numbers. The teachers did the waiting, but from the remarks that passed between one of them and a little white-faced arab, the success of the scheme is rather uncertain. "How are you enjoying yourself, my little fellow?" "Up to dick." "Have you had plenty to eat?" "You bet." "Will you have some more bread and butter?" "No." "No, what?" "No' very likely, when there's sae muckle currant loaf floatin' about."

A boy was sent out by his mother, who was fond of a dram, to procure a supply from the nearest public-house,

receiving the caution that if his uncle was in when he came back, he was to lay down the basket and say nothing. On his return, the uncle was present, and the boy, obedient to orders, laid down the basket and did not speak. "Now, Johnny," said his mother with a meaning look, "did you get a bit suet to that?" "No," exclaimed Johnny, "ye dinna get suet to whusky."

The late Dr. John Kerr was once going from a railway station with a bag in his hand, when a boy accosted him with, "Carry your bag, sir, for tippence." Something in the boy's face struck the doctor, and he delivered the bag into the hands of the juvenile, who trotted like a dog behind him. A boy, with a pipe in his mouth, passed in the opposite direction at the time, and attracted the doctor's attention. Wishing to improve the occasion, he turned to the little fellow carrying his bag, and said, impressively, "I hope, my little boy, you are not in the habit of smoking." The little boy looked up in his face with an expression that tickled the doctor immensely, and replied, "Na, sir, I did it ance, but I gi'ed it up."

A precocious youth misbehaved one day, and, on the arrival of his father from work, ran at once out of the house. The father, being told of his son's bad behaviour, followed with a stick, and, after a long chase up a steep hill, caught hold of his naughty offspring. Both were out of breath, but all anger on the part of the parent vanished when the lad exclaimed, "By jing, faither, but you're a gemm yin! A run like that mak's us baith blaw."

“Ye’re no’ gaun to lick me, faither, are ye?” enquired a youth who had misbehaved. “Of course I am,” replied the father. “Dinna I tell you this morning that I wad settle wi’ ye for dookn’ the cat?” “Ay,” replied Tommy, “but I thocht it was juist a joke, like what ye tell the landlord whan he comes for his rent.”

When sent upon errands, children are very “conservative” as to what they have to get. Being sent to a grocer’s for a pound of treacle, a lad of five winters was asked by his mother to tell the shopman that she would bring round the money on another occasion. The grocer refused to trade upon the credit system, and told the boy to tell his mother so; but the little fellow innocently replied, “Ay, ay, I dinna ken about yer credit, but it’s treacle my mither’s needin’.”

A little fellow was sent on one occasion to a baker in Dysart, who had recently opened a shop, to get a half loaf. “Will I get a half loaf to my mither?” he enquired. “Who’s your mother?” enquired the baker. The boy replied, and the baker, seeing that no money was to be forthcoming, put one or two questions to the boy, as to where he lived, etc., etc. The boy answered these questions promptly enough, but seeing exactly what they were put for, and seeing also that the baker still hesitated to give the bread on credit, he exclaimed, “Oh, ye needna be feared to gi’e me it. My mither’s *awn far mair than you.*”

“In guid black prent” there will be found in the biography of the late Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, the



celebrated Congregationalist clergyman, the following anecdote, and, to use an old proverb, "if a' stories are true this is nae lee." At Aberdeen, James Abernethy, a most sedate elder in the Free Church, told me that the ministers are, or have been, so negligent as not to baptise the children for years. The children are great swearers, picking up the accomplishment from the sailors who frequent the district. A child, four years of age, was brought forward for baptism, and when the water was sprinkled on his face, exclaimed, "Damn it! What's this?"

A fond father was relating to his son one Sabbath afternoon how Samson of old was so strong that he carried away the gates of Gaza. "How did he do it?" asked the boy. "He carried them on his back," replied the father. The little fellow looked thoughtful for a minute, and then exclaimed, "Eh, faither, but he would ha'e made a fine man for a flittin'."

The following incident is vouched for by parties well acquainted with the boy, now a professor in one of our Universities. He was the son of a minister, and, though only five years old, bright and clever beyond his years. It was at a dinner given by his mother to a few intimate friends. Master W—— was allowed his usual place at table, but, becoming unruly, was, by way of punishment, transferred to a side table whither nurse had removed his little plate, knife and fork, by mamma's orders. No sooner was he seated in his high chair than, bowing his head and clasping his hands on his soiled bib, he

lisped with apparent reverence and great gravity, "Oh, Lord, I thank 'Thee that Thou hast prepared a table for me in the presence of mine enemies." It was with difficulty that the "grown-ups" kept their smiles from becoming audible.

A stylishly-dressed young skater, who had fallen through the ice several times, approaching a boy, said, "I'm afraid, my boy, you will not be able to keep out of my way." "Oh!" exclaimed the boy, "I winna be lang in your road onywy'e, for ye'll likely sune be grapplin' i' the bottom again!"

A family was seated around the fire one evening, when little Jessie suddenly asked at what time she was born. "You were born at two o'clock in the morning, my child; but why do you ask?" said the mother, "Because Johnnie was saying he was born earlier than I was," replied Jessie. "Oh, no; he was not," said her mother, "he was not born until eight o'clock in the morning." "Well," said Jessie, joyously, "my birthday's longer than yours yet, Johnnie." Johnnie, however, was not to be beaten, for he contemptuously responded, "Hoch, what's the use of being born before it's time to get up?"

"You must not swear, James, or Satan will take you to his burning fire," said a fond mother. "He's takin' a long time to come for my faither," replied James, thinking probably of some of the paternal adjectives.

"Sandy," said Mrs. Simpson to her eldest olive-branch when he returned from school, "I forbid ye to

play or rin aboot wi' that Bobby Wilson ony mair. Mind that, na, an' if I ever hear o' you playin' wi' him again I'll gi'e ye a guid lickin'." "What way have I no' to play wi' Bobby?" queried the youngster, with some surprise. "Because he's a bad, wicked laddie," replied his mother. "Weel," returned Sandy, after a moment's thought, "I dinna think I'm that awfu' gude mysel' that ye need to be sae fear't."

A carter was leading along the Trongate an attenuated specimen of the horse tribe, when a ragged little urchin, bearing a few papers under his arm, came up to him, and, with great gravity, enquired, "Are ye gaun to wander that beastie?" "Na," replied the carter. "D'ye want a ride?" "Na, I wad be ower muckle for't," was the answer; "but I'll help ye when it fa's."

A new resident observed a boy in the act of peeling the bark from a tree at his gate with a toy hatchet. Going out, he approached the little fellow cautiously from behind, with the object of catching him; but the latter noticed the advance, and was soon beyond his reach. Changing his tactics the gentleman called out in the most unctuous tones he could command, "Come here a minute, my little man; I want to tell you something." "Catch me comin' near ye," returned the youngster coolly. "Wee shavers like me dinna need to ken everything."

One day two little fellows were engaged in cutting down "shinties" from a roadside hedge, but were rendered somewhat uneasy by the movements of a



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horse which was grazing close by. At length a friend came along. "Sandy," shouted one of the boys on seeing him. Sandy halted. "Ye might throw a stane at that horse, for I'm a member o' the Band o' Mercy, and I daurna."

Two youngsters met in the street one day, and had a "friendly fight" with their tongues, which soon led to the employment of something of more weight to decide their opinions. Willie's father, seeing the combat, went and asked what they were fighting about. "He said his faither was drunk mair times than you," replied Willie, thinking he was making a score in favour of his father. The same two boys were playing together one foggy day when one asked the other, "Johnnie, whaur's a' the fog comin' frae?" "Div ye no' hear the foghorn blawin' it ower here?" replied his friend contemptuously.

At a review in Edinburgh, two street arabs were observed staring with wonder at the soldiers. At the head of one of the regiments walked a stout sergeant of pioneers, with his axe over his shoulder. "Hey, Jock!" exclaimed the first urchin, giving his mate an energetic nudge in the ribs with his elbow, "what does that muckle chiel' wi' the hatchet o'er his shouther dae?" "Him? ach!" replied Jock, with an air of conscious superiority, "that's the ane that cuts sticks to the regiment to keep them in firewood."

A minister visiting his parishioners came across a little boy amusing himself with a pack of cards. Laying

his hand on the boy's head, he asked him if he would not prefer a nice book to read. Looking up, the boy said, "Na, na, nae books for me. There's only ae book in oor hoose, and when ma faither an' ma mither read it, they aye fecht." "Dear me," said the minister, "and what book's that? Surely not the Bible?" "No," said the boy, "it's the 'tammie' book."

A boy was asked if he would like to be born again. He showed great repugnance at the idea, and was expostulated with that good boys all liked to be born again; but to no purpose, and on being asked his reason, replied, "Maybe I'd be a lassie."

Some ministers examining a parish school were catechising the pupils in religious knowledge. One dour-looking boy never answered a question. "Come now," said one of the examiners, "that boy there has never opened his mouth. Let me see if he knows anything at all. Who made you?" The boy sulkily answered, "God." "So far well," said the minister. "But, tell me now, how do you know that God made you?" Boy was nonplussed for a time: then, darting an indignant glance at his catechiser, he said, "It's the clash o' the hail country-side."

A Hawick minister caught a little boy fishing one Sabbath, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, said, "I believe the devil has got a hold of you," "I believe he has too," was the significant reply of the urchin.

Another minister, when visiting one of his parishioners, had his attention called to a bright little boy by some

childish remark the youngster made. Patting him on the head, the minister asked the child if he was at school, and, upon being shyly answered in the affirmative, he said, kindly, "Now, Willie, I'll give you a penny if you answer this question correctly. Can you divide five shillings equally among three boys? Tell me." "Yes," answered Willie, "I can, sir." "How would you do it?" blandly inquired the clergyman. "Weel," said Willie, after due consideration, "I'd gi'e ilka ane a shillin' and keep the lave."

"My dear little boy," said a minister in Glasgow to an urchin who was standing looking in at one of the Sabbath school windows, "would you like to join our Sabbath school, and grow up a good man?" "What sort o' Sunday schule is't—'Stablished?" "Yes," said the clergyman, "it is connected with the Established Church. Are you not coming in?" "Na," replied the boy; "I tried the 'Stablished Kirk Sunday schule last year, an' I got only twa oranges an' a poke o' sweeties at the Christmas tree; sae I'm gaun to gi'e the Free Kirk a trial this year."

"So you were strapped at school to-day, Willie? Why was that?" asked a fond parent. "For telling the truth, father." "For telling the truth! You would not be punished for telling the truth." "But I was. It was like this: Teacher was telling us about Easter eggs. She drew some eggs on the blackboard, and when she had left the room I wrote beneath them: 'The hen that laid these eggs was no spring chicken.'"

“Fathier,” said little Archie to his parent one evening, “I heard you speakin’ about colour-blindness the other day. What does it mean?” “It means, my laddie,” replied the father, “when folk canna tell yin colour frae anither.” “Oh, is that it?” said Archie. “Then the man that drew the maps in my schule atlas maun ha’e been colour-blin’.” “Hoo dae ye mak’ that oot?” asked his father. “Oh,” replied Archie, “because in the map o’ Europe he has got baith the Black Sea and the White Sea pented blue.”

A little boy was sent to a dairy for twopence worth of skimmed milk, and a pennyworth of cream. Having been supplied with the cream, and being told that there was no skimmed milk, he asked, “An’ whaur is the milk ye took this cream aff?”

A pathetic incident occurred at Central Police Office, Glasgow. One day the officer in charge was startled to hear a small voice piping from behind the counter, “Please, polisman, will ye let my mammy oot?” and, looking over, saw a small and sobbing girl anxiously regarding him. He asked her name, and, upon reference to the books, found that her mother had been sentenced to ten days for drunkenness, or 7s. 6d. of a fine, and she was “doing” the ten days. When the situation was stated, the child’s tears flowed afresh, but she presently made the staggering announcement that she would pay the money “If ye’ll let my mammy oot,” explaining that she ran with milk in the mornings, for which she got a shilling and a scone on Saturdays. “And,” she



added, "I'll bring ye the shillin' and the scone till it's peyed, if ye'll let her oot." The policeman, being a humane man, found ways and means of releasing her mammy to the loyal little girl, without depriving her of either shilling or scone.

A little girl was relating to her mother all about what she had heard at Sabbath school—how the Christians had been badly treated, and burned at a leg of mutton—when her mother interrupted her by saying, "But, Addie, are you sure it was not a stake they were tied to?" "Oh, yes, it was a stake," was the reply. Then, after thinking for a minute, "I kenned it was meat o' some kind."

A witty reply is recorded of a boy who was standing among six tall men, when one of them, turning round, said he had not seen him (the boy) before, as he was so small. "Just so," replied the boy, "I'm just like a sixpence among six pennies."

A woman having gone for water to the well, left her eldest child, a boy of six years, to attend the twins, who were in the cradle. When returning she was met by the boy, who exclaimed, "Oh, mither, dinna lick me, for I've skelt the bairns."

When a little boy saw a Highlander in kilts for the first time, he exclaimed, "Eh, my, but ye're surely big eneuch for breeks gin noo; ye're bigger nor me, and I'm oot o' the kilts mair nor sax weeks syne." When this boy grew bigger he was sent to school, and upon his return in the afternoon, he was asked by his mother

if he had got any palmies. "Na, na," he replied, "I didna get onything ava'." "Are you quite sure?" asked his mother. "Yes, mother; an' if ye dinna believe me ye can feel my pockets."

Sandy Tamson, the village blacksmith, had for long been pestered by the school bairns making too free with his orchard. At length, Sandy was fortunate enough to catch a lad on his best peach tree, and at once set about giving him a warm reception on his return to *terra firma*. "Dinna touch me sair," wailed the culprit; "folks say I'm no' a' come." "Maybe no'," replied Sandy, "but we'll just lay the harder on what we ha'e."

A father had bought a cheese full of holes, and, having partaken heartily of it, was complaining to his wife of being unwell, and having an awful feeling of emptiness, "Nae wonder, faither," said little Bob, "after eatin' a' yon holes!"

A little boy of four years of age was in bed with a sore leg. An elder brother was amusing him by playing on a whistle. The father, upon entering, asked the whistle, saying that he had been good at it when young. His attempt to play may be imagined when the little fellow in bed remarked, "Gin I was a daddy, I could play better than that."

Having watched a lady busy at her toilet until she took out her artificial teeth from her mouth and cleaned them, a little girl exclaimed, "Hoo div ye no' tak' oot your tongue and wash it, too?"

Johnnie's father was unwell, and the doctor having

called, he sat for some time feeling the paternal pulse and watching the clock. After the physician had departed, Johnnie remarked, "Faither, the doctor's daft." "How do you think that, Johnnie?" asked the father. "Why he looked at that clock, and it's ten minutes fast."

A minister was busy erecting a fence round his small garden. He was hammering in the nails when a boy going to school stopped and watched the performance of the minister. "Well, my little man," said the minister, seeing the boy's fixed attention, "would you like to be a joiner?" "No," replied the boy. "Then, what are you waiting for?" "I was just waiting," returned the urchin, "to hear what a minister says when he bashes his thumb with a hammer."

A minister was visiting the house of one of his parishioners, where one of the older members of the family had died. Taking advantage of the circumstances to try and impress the young people, he said to one little chap, "Do you know what comes after death, my lad?" The boy, after a moment's thought, answered, "Naething bit fechtin' an' tearin' ane anither about the siller."

A little fellow, aged seven, was feeling very pleased—he had just got his ticket for the Sabbath school trip. His grandmother, a hearty, very stout, old lady, said she would like very much to go too, and asked Sandy if he thought he could get her a ticket. Sandy thought a little, and then solemnly replied, "Oh my, grandmother, it would need an awful big ticket for you."

A boy of six years who attended a private school where prizes were given on every sort of provocation, but who had never earned a prize, came home at length and exhibited proudly one of these rewards of merit. "Good!" said his mother, "but how did you gain it?" "I was first in natural history." "Natural history at your age? How did that happen!" "Oh, they asked me how many legs a horse had." "And what did you say?" "I said five." "But a horse hasn't five legs, child." "I know; but all the other boys said six."

One morning a minister on meeting a little boy asked him if he had got his porridge. "Ay," promptly replied the urchin. "And did you ask a blessing before you took them?" "No' me." "What, not ask a blessing! Were you not afraid they would choke you?" "'Deed no; man, they were that thin that they cudna choke me."

A story is told of the late Duke of Hamilton, how he was one day standing in the avenue near his palace, watching two cocks, which had met, fighting with each other. One of the cottar's boys, on his way to Hamilton with a message for his mother—to pay the tailor two-and-sixpence for making a pair of new trousers—saw the Duke standing watching the cocks, and, not knowing who he was, came running up, and in an instant cried, to the delight of the Duke, "Half-a-crown on the wee cock, breeks or no breeks!"

In the East Bank Sabbath School, Hawick, one of the teachers was warning her children about wrong-doing,

and telling them of the awful place that burned with fire and brimstone, when a little chap cried, "Please, whaur does a' the reek gang?"

A minister, while on a visit to a public school in the town of D——, was shown into the infant room. His attention being attracted by the picture of a coal mine, with a dust-begrimed miner in the forefront, he put the question, "Whom does this represent?" A little boy, thinking it to be a picture of the infernal regions, exultingly held up his hand. "Well, my little man," said the minister, "whom do you think?" "The Devil," was the innocent youth's reply.

Two boys were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight outside the playground of their school. While the combat was in progress some bigger boys were urging them on with encouraging exclamations, such as, "Stick in noo," "Noo, wee ane," "Weel dune, Willie," "That's the style," when Willie, who seemed to be coming off second best in the contest, turned round and exclaimed, "Oo, ay, ye'll a' cry 'Weel dune, Willie,' but nane o' ye'll come an' separate us."

Little Johnnie was sent to buy a pennyworth of cloves for his grandmother. On the way, Johnnie could not resist joining some companions in a game of marbles. By the time the game was finished Johnnie had forgotten the word "cloves." He proceeded, however, to the chemist's and thus addressed him, "Gi'e me a pennyworth o' yon things like tackets to knock the wind oot o' my grannie."

“What is an average?” asked the teacher. A little girl held out her hand eagerly, “Please, it’s what a hen lays her eggs on.” Bewilderment followed; but the child said it was in the lesson-book, in which it was written, “The hens lay two hundred eggs a year *on an average.*”

During Easter week an amateur conjurer was performing the old trick of producing eggs from a hat, when he remarked to a little boy, “Your mother can’t get eggs without hens, can she, Tommy?” “Yes, she can,” replied the boy. “Why, how is that?” “She keeps ducks!”

A philanthropic friend had been teaching a class of boys all winter, and he was holding a closing meeting. Anxious to test if his teaching had borne fruit an hundredfold, he said, “Now, I have a book here, and shall present it to the boy who has shown the greatest kindness to a dumb animal.” There was silence and blankness for a space, till at last one little chap put out a hesitating hand. “Well, George, what have you done?” And the youthful humanitarian answered “I ance clappit a doug.”

One Sabbath in a church near D—— a boy was taken to church for the first time in his life. Before going his mother gave instructions how to conduct himself while he was there, such as to keep his head down while the minister was praying. While doing so he forgot himself, and shouted out, “Hey, mither, fan

is the mannie gaunna tell's fan ta hed up ma heid, for ma neck's like ta brak' ! ”

At a school on the south side of Glasgow, one of the teachers, instructing a class in religious knowledge, put the question, “What did Adam have to do when he was put out of the Garden of Eden ? ” “ He had to work hard and till the ground,” came the prompt answer. “ Very good. And what did Eve have to do ? ”—expecting the answer, “ Work hard also.” After a moment's thought the reply came, “ She had to dae what Adam telt her.”

A fair maid in “ rational ” costume was cycling round North Inch, Perth, when an urchin threw his cap at her machine. “ You nasty, little wretch,” she exclaimed, “ what did you do that for ? You deserve a good whipping.” “ G'way wi' ye,” said the urchin, “ it's you that's needin' a guid whippin'. I ken fine wha ye are, and I'll tell your man ye was wearin' 's breeks.”

In a school in Perth the teacher was giving her boys a lecture on wild animals. She told them of certain ones that were noted for their ferocity, and then asked if any of them could name a beast with a particularly fierce nature. Little five-year-old Davie cracked his fingers. “ Well, Davie, name them.” “ Cats tied across a claesline, mem.”

An English tourist, passing through the small village of Monzie, in Perthshire, where, in olden times, witches were said to have been burned, asked a small boy if there were any witches in the place now. “ There's nane the

noo, bit I think ma grannie 'ull sune be yin," was the reply.

Two railwaymen were speaking about their work the other day, when the conversation turned on how John M'Neill, the preacher, had risen from a porter at Greenock station to be a minister. The boys in the house were listening all the time, and one of them said to the other, "Davie, whit wey dis my faither no' rise to be a minister?" "You talk about your faither rising to be a minister! It tak's him a' his time to rise to his wark," was the prompt reply.

An English clergyman, recently settled in a small town in Perthshire, met a farmer's boy while visiting the members of his congregation. In the course of conversation the boy said his parents had an aunt staying with them. The minister, not having much acquaintance with the Scottish language, and not quite comprehending what the boy said, asked, "Then, do I understand that your aunt is on your father's side or on your mother's?" to which the young agriculturist replied, "Weel, whiles the ane an' whiles the ither, excep' when feyther leathers them baith."

Tommy had been late three mornings in succession, so his master gave him a reprimanding, finishing his lecture with, "Now, Tommy, my boy, keep this in your mind if you want to get on in the world, that 'the early bird catches the early worm.'" "Yes, sir," answered Tommy, "but doesn't the late bird catch the worm that sleeps in?"



Probably the most amusing anecdotes pertaining to reading lessons at school are those from misinterpretation of words and phrases. Sir Walter Scott has often puzzled the minds of school children. The reading lesson one day chanced to be "Young Lochinvar." The teacher proceeded to test the pupils as to their intelligent understanding of the piece, and reached the line—

"The bride kissed the goblet ; the knight took it up."

"What is meant by the bride kissing the goblet?" he asked. Without a moment's hesitation, a boy answered, "She kissed the broth pot." Quoting again—

"One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,"

he asked what the word was that "Young Lochinvar" said. In an instant a hand went up and an urchin exclaimed, "Bolt!"

At an examination in a village school a class was being questioned on natural history. After several questions, the Inspector asked, "What bird that comes from Africa has wings, but can't fly?" The class was dumfounded. Thinking to encourage them, the Inspector offered a sixpence to the boy or girl who could tell him. After a few seconds a little girl put out her hand. "Well, my little dear," said the Inspector, "what is it?" "Please, sir, a dead yin."

Wishing to make clear the construction of the word "watery," the teacher asked, "What is added to *water* to make it *watery*?" With startling promptness a boy in the body of the class replied, "Mair water!"

A few years ago an infant mistress explained with considerable pains to a class of young children the Fall, how it had been brought about, and what befell the serpent. After she told the story, she began to question them, and all went well until she asked, "What did God say to the serpent?" There was a pause, a hand was held up, and, with an eager face, a little fellow answered, "Weel, noo, you'll get your feet cuttit aff, an' ye can crawl aboot on your belly a' the days o' your life." What would an evolutionist say to that theory?

"Now, boys, there are twenty of you in this class; how many fingers and toes are there?" enquired a new teacher. "Four hundred, sir!" replied a youth. "Correct, my boy," said the teacher. "He's wrong, sir," said another juvenile arithmetician, "it's only three hundred and ninety-five." "How do you make that out, Willie?" enquired the teacher. "Because," answered Willie, "here's wee Johnnie M'Intyre with a wooden leg."

Aberdonians and Fifers are considered by west country people to be very 'cute in the way of dealing. One day a school teacher was explaining that people who came from Aberdeen were called Aberdonians, those from Fife, Fifers. After dilating for some time she promised a penny to anyone in the class who would spell Fifer. One little boy held up his hand. "Well, Tommy, let me hear you spell Fifer," "F-1-y!" The teacher at once saw the joke, and promised him another penny if he would spell Aberdonian. "F-1-y-e-r,"

promptly answered Tommy, and the Jews think Tommy is right.

“What does ‘transparent’ mean?” asked a teacher of his class in the third standard. After a long pause an urchin with a rough head and dirty face cracked his fingers excitedly. “Well?” said the teacher, encouragingly. “My mither, sir.” “Your mother! Dear me, how so?” “Because,” explained the neglected boy, “when my faither cam’ hame the ither night, he said to my mither, ‘Ha, my leddy, I see through ye noo.’”

A little girl at a “cheap” school in the north, who had brought with her only one penny to pay the weekly fee of twopence, was sent home by the mistress for the other penny. In a short time the schoolroom door was jerked open by a red-headed Highland woman, leading the little girl by the hand, who, advancing towards the desk, bawled out at the pitch of her voice, “Hoo daur you chairge tuppence for the lassie when she’s only gotten a’e e’e?”

It was Johnnie Miller’s first day in school, and while he was patiently waiting for some of the teachers to take notice of him, to pass the time he began to whistle softly, an accomplishment for which he was highly applauded at home. “Who’s that whistling?” thundered the headmaster, whereupon the little man rose to his full height, and, with a proud, self-satisfied smile, exultingly exclaimed, “It’s me, sir. Did ye no’ ken I could whustle?”

At a Leith Sabbath school pic-nic sports were being engaged in. After a race for boys had been run, one of the

teachers asked the winner if he would prefer a book or a three-peuny piece as a prize. "I'll tak' the book," promptly replied the winner, for I don't want to be a "professional."

"Now, my little man," said an Inspector, "tell me what five and one make." No answer. "Suppose I gave you five rabbits, and then another rabbit, how many rabbits would you have?" queried the Inspector. "Seven," came the reply. "Seven! How do you make that out?" asked the Inspector. "I've a rabbit o' my ain at hame," was the answer.

An Inspector, examining a class in an Aberdeen school, asked the pupils to name any of the wild animals to be found in this country. Various satisfactory responses had been given, when, to his surprise, one little boy sang out, "Lions and tigers, sir." "Oh, indeed," said the Inspector; "and in what part of the country will you find them?" "In the menagerie, sir," was the reply.

At a school examination, when all the children were neatly dressed, while the minister was offering up prayer, a little boy came into school late who never had a name for being tidy. A little girl forgot herself, and called out in the middle of the prayer, "Eh, mighty me, do ye see Jock Tamson wi' his face washed?"

A philosopher of about five years sat at his father's door sunning himself, when his father from within called, "Are ye there, Willie?" "No, I'm no' *there*, I'm *here*," was the immediate reply, given all in good faith.

"Weel, Maggie," asked a teacher of a little girl, "how is it you are so late this morning in coming to school?" "Please, sir," was the reply, "there was a wee bairn cam' to oor hoose this mornin'." "Ah," said the teacher with a smile, "and wasn't your father very pleased with the new baby!" "No, sir; my faither's awa' in Edinburgh, an' disna ken about it yet; but it was a guid thing my mither was at hame, for gin she had been awa', I wadna ha'e kent what to dae wi't."

Testing a class in vulgar fractions, the teacher asked whether they would have one-half or eight-sixteenths of an orange. With one exception the class declared that both were equal. The exception was obviously a far-seeing little fellow, for, on being questioned, he replied, earnestly, "I would rather tak' the hauf, 'cause gin ye cut it into eight-sixteenths ye would lose a' the juice."

A minister, visiting a school, asked the schoolmaster how his scholars were progressing in their Bible studies. The master replied, "Remarkably well, sir. In fact, there is one boy, I may say, as well acquainted with Scriptures as I am myself, for when I ask him a question he answers it, and in the same breath asks another at me, and sometimes one that puzzles me for a time. I would give anything to be able to ask a question at him that he could not answer, but I will never manage it, I am afraid." The minister stood lost in thought for a few minutes, then he exclaimed, "I'll give him a poser. Point him out." The master did so. Going up to him the minister said,

“ Can you tell me, my lad, how long Adam lived in innocence ? ” “ Yes, sir,” replied the boy ; “ till he got a wife. But hoo long after ? ” Just then the minister found it convenient to speak to some one else.

“ Now, boys, if I were to give you a sum in subtraction, and give you a large number to subtract from a smaller one, what would you do ? ” “ Turn my slate upside down and proceed,” answered one bright, resourceful fellow.

On another occasion the teacher asked her class the following question in mental arithmetic, “ How old would a person be who was born in 1868 ? ” “ Please, teacher,” asked Tommy, slyly, “ was it a man or a woman ? ”

At a recent examination in Bible history in one of our schools, a teacher asked the question, “ To what height was it proposed to carry the Tower of Babel ? ” No answer being forthcoming, he cried, “ Dear me, can none of you give an idea ? ” At this moment a little girl stood up and said, “ Please, sir, I’m no’ exactly sure, but, to judge frae the way it was stopped, it couldna ha’e been less than the hicht o’ nonsense ! ”

Such blunders as “ The Happy Corps Act,” where “ The Habeas Corpus Act ” occurs in the text, or the mispronouncing of unfamiliar words, are little matters of every-day occurrence. Sometimes, however, the pupil comes across a word which he is unable to pronounce. “ Why, Tommy,” said the teacher, “ don’t you know the next word ? ” “ Yes, sir,” replied Tommy,

scratching his head, " I ken't by sicht, but I canna name it ! "

The teacher of a school of city arabs in Glasgow, after expounding to his class the parable of the Good Samaritan, put the following question :—" What would you do if you saw a man or a woman lying in a street or road, wounded and bleeding, like the traveller described in the parable ? " The question seemed a puzzle, and no answer was given. At last the teacher, addressing a bright-eyed urchin, said, " What would you do, Archie ? " Archie, thus directly addressed, promptly replied, " I would rin for the bobby."

In an Edinburgh school an Inspector, wishing to test the knowledge of a class in fractions, asked a boy whether he would rather take one-sixth or one-seventh of an orange if he got his choice. The boy promptly replied that he would take one-seventh. At this the Inspector explained at length to the class that the boy who would choose the smaller part, as this boy had done, because it looked the biggest fraction, was very foolish ; but the laugh was on the other side when the chirping voice of another little urchin broke in, " Please, sir, but that chap disna like oranges."

At an examination in a northern school recently, a school-boy was asked to explain how dew is formed. The Inspector was much amused when he read the boy's answer—" The earth revolves on an axle every twenty-four hours, and in consequence of the tremendous

pace at which it travels, it perspires freely. This perspiration is called dew."

At an examination in a Fifeshire school, the Inspector asked a little boy, a bit of a dunce, "Who was Napoleon Bonaparte?" "Please, sir," was the reply, "he was juist a mannie like yersel'."

There is no chance of getting ahead of the school-boy. One was asked the other day by his teacher why ships and engines are called "she." "Please, mum," was the reply, "it's because they need men to keep them in order."

One day a teacher asked a class to name some important things existing to-day which were unknown a hundred years ago. "Us" was the unexpected answer of a little boy.

Scholars, especially boys, are never at a loss for a definition. For example, question a boy as to what "faith" is, and he will tell you that it is "believing what you know is not true." One day a teacher asked a class of boys the meaning of the word "faith." No answer. "Well, boys, suppose I looked out of that window, and saw something very unusual, say a leg of ham and a boat, and I tell you of it. If you believe it, that's faith. Now, Tommy, you were not attending. What's faith?" Tommy thought for a moment, and then said, "Please, sir, it's a leg o' ham and a boat."

Children are very original in their definitions. One day a school-mistress asked a little girl, "What is 'memory?'"



She was a little amused at the answer she received, "Please ma'am, memory is the thing you forget with."

A boy is always great on natural history. "What is a ruminating animal?" asked a teacher, one day. "A beast that chews her cubs," was the answer. A little girl in the same class said that the milk was sour because the milkman had a sour cow.

Tommy for the first time accompanied his father on a sail on one of the Forth pleasure steamers. When the vessel moved away from the pier Tommy made a rush towards the bow. "Where are you going?" cried his father. "I want to see the horse that draws the boat," replied Tommy.

It was a Glasgow car that the lynx-eyed inspector entered one afternoon. Two mites of some five or six summers were seated cheek by jowl in the corner, and he demanded to see their tickets. One of them pulled out a bawbee card-board and showed it. "Where is yours?" queried the inspector, addressing the other. "I don't need a ticket," returned the boy, looking up with the utmost confidence depicted in his countenance; "he an' me's ane—we're twins."

Asking the meaning of "stern," and seeing they were in evident uncertainty as to the correct answer, the teacher said—by way of helping them out, "Come, now, James, how do I look when you don't know your lesson?" "Glowering," was the unexpected reply.

"What is the meaning of 'apparent?'" was asked

on another occasion. "Am I apparent to you, John?" "No, sir." "What a blockhead!" exclaimed the teacher. "Don't you know you are apparent to me?" "No, sir; I didna know I was any relation to you."

In a school in the north, an inspector was examining a class in history, and, among other questions, put the following:—"When did James II. cease to be King of England?" The date was correctly given, and immediately the inspector asked, "Why did James leave the throne at this time?" After some hesitation, a boy at the foot of the class replied, "Please sir, he was tired o' the job."

Sometimes answers are given that show the pupil to be "nae that blate." "Can any of you give me a definition, in your own words, of the word 'exaggeration?'" asked a lady teacher. A hand went up. "Well, Willie, how do you define it?" "If onybody was to say that you were guid-looking, mem, that would be an exaggeration."

"Class in geography, stand up. For what is Hawick noted?" "Woollen and hosiery manufactures," came the loud reply. "What are the articles of hosiery?" No response. "Can none of you tell me what hose are?" A solitary hand was held up. "Well, Johnny, what are hose?" "Things for scootin' water wi'," was the ready answer.

In a school in Kirriemuir a lesson in grammar was in progress. "How many numbers are there?" asked the teacher. "Two," was the unanimous shout.

“What are they, Mary?” “Singular and plural,” Mary replied. “Quite correct; and now, Tommy Wilson, how many persons are there?” “Three,” was the confident answer. “Name them, please.” “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

“What is the meaning of ‘Mr.’?” “Please, ma’am, a title of address used for ‘master.’” “Very good. Now, can any of you tell me what is the meaning of ‘Miss’?” A few seconds of silence, then a boy held up his hand and said, “Please, ma’am, you’re one.” “Yes; but can’t you give me a more definite answer than that, Robert?” “A woman that canna get a man!”

It was a country boy who replied to the teacher’s question, “Can any of you tell me the meaning of ‘champion’?” “A kind of potato, please.” But we do not think it was a fisherboy who, when asked what makes the sea salt, replied, “Please, ma’am, the herrings!” Possibly it was the same boy who informed his teacher that “red herrings came from the Red Sea.”

After reading an elementary lesson on physiology, this question was put to a little girl, “Now, Mary, tell me some of the things you have inside of you?” “Please, sir,” said Mary, hesitatingly, “saut herrin’ an’ tatties!”

“Who was Hugh Miller?” asked the teacher, when the reading lesson mentioned that eminent geologist. “Please sir, he was the first mason who invented stones.”

The word “epidemic” occurring in a reading lesson, the class was asked to give a simple definition of it.

All seemed puzzled, and hoping to help them a little, the teacher asked, "What is it that goes from house to house, and that people dread?" Instantly, a boy, who evidently knew a little about the notices his father had been receiving, shouted out, "Please, sir, the tax-gatherer!"

A landed proprietor in the north, who was weak in his limbs, and walked with difficulty on crutches, took great personal interest in a school on his estate. Finding one day at the school door a boy who was crying and wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, the gentleman very sympathetically wanted to know the reason of his grief. "The maister hittit me." "What were you doing that he punished you?" "I wasna daein' onything." "Nonsense, you must have been misbehaving, or the master would not punish you." "No, I wasna." "Come, now, here's a shilling for you if you tell me what you were doing." Promptly came the reply, "I only looked oot the window, and saw you comin' doon the brae, and I said, 'There's *spurkle legs*.'"

It is customary in a very dry season for ministers throughout the country to pray for rain. One very dry season the schoolmaster of a country parish decided one particular day to march with the whole of his pupils to church and pray for rain, explaining to some friends that he doubted not but God would answer the prayers of innocent children. "Gin that were the case," said an old farmer, grimly, "I'm dootin' there wadna be a leevin' schulemaister left!"

The story of Daniel in the lions' den was being related on one occasion, and the children listened eagerly. "Yes, my dears," said the grandmother, "God delivered Daniel. He shut the mouths of the lions." Maggie looked up in astonishment, and enquired, "Granny, dear, what did they do when they wanted to *yawn*?"

In a Sabbath school attached to a Glasgow Free Church, a teacher was explaining to her class the directions given by St. Paul for the conduct of men and women during Divine service. "Now, can any of you tell me why women do not take off their bonnets in church?" she asked. Up went a little hand, and a nod gave the owner thereof permission to reply, "'Cos they hinna got no looking-glasses to put 'em on again by."

On another occasion the lesson was from the Prodigal Son, and the teacher was dwelling on the character of the elder brother. "But amidst all the rejoicing," he said, "there was one to whom the preparation of the feast brought no joy; to whom the Prodigal's return gave no pleasure, but only bitterness; one who did not approve of the feast being held, and who had no wish to attend it. Now, can any of you tell me who this was?" There was a breathless silence, followed by a vigorous cracking of thumbs, and then from a dozen sympathetic little geniuses came the chorus, "Please, sir, it was the fatted cauf!"

While superintending an infant school the teacher is said to have asked a little girl, "Who was Moses?" Without any hesitation the student replied, "The son of

Pharaoh's daughter." "Oh, no," corrected the examiner, "Pharaoh's daughter it was who discovered Moses in the bulrushes," "Yes, mum," answered the child with a significant smile, "so she said."

