

CHAPTER I.

BURY ST EDMUNDS—A WALKING FEAT—UNINTENTIONAL INJURY TO A BISHOP "IN POSSE"—APPOINTED INSPECTOR—REV. DR MONTAGU BUTLER—PROFESSOR JACK.

AFTER graduating at Cambridge I remained in residence for a short time coaching, when I was offered and accepted a classical mastership in the grammar-school of Bury St Edmunds, where Dr Donaldson, of 'New Cratylus' fame, was once headmaster. There I spent a most pleasant year, joining the boys like the veriest boy among them in all their games—hockey, fives, football, boxing, &c. In this connection one event stands out in strong relief. Dick Shaw, a tall fellow, one of the oldest boys, probably eighteen years of age, on returning to school after the Easter vacation, had said that during the holidays he had walked a mile in eleven minutes. This was not believed by some of his schoolfellows. Dick, to make good his statement, made a small wager that he would walk six miles in seventy minutes.

I happened to hear of this, and observed that he was the object of a good deal of chaff because, with a total disregard of training, he was taking pudding and other sweets at dinner as freely as if he had no gymnastic contest to face within the next three weeks. I liked Dick, and believed his statement about a mile in eleven minutes, but I doubted his covering six miles in seventy minutes unless he trained. I told him so, and persuaded him to come out with me every second morning before school, when I would put him through his paces. The first morning we did a mile in eleven minutes, but he could not face a second mile. He saw his pudding must go, and it did. By the end of the first week I felt satisfied that he would win his wager. The other boys, hearing that I was training Dick, asked me how he was getting on, but I refused to reveal stable secrets. The momentous day arrived. A level mile was chosen, and Dick and I started amid a crowd of witnesses. We covered the first three miles in 34 minutes, and, in sporting phrase, Dick had not turned a hair. He then said to those who had wagered against him, "You offered three to one that I could not do it. I'll lay three to one that I shall." No takers. An objection was made to my walking

side by side with him and thereby keeping him up to the pace. I gave in to the objection, and proposed that I should fall ten or twelve yards behind him, to which they agreed. We finished the six miles in $66\frac{3}{4}$ minutes, and Dick won his bet. It was rumoured that he betook himself straightway to the confectioner's, and fully indemnified himself for his three weeks' abstinence from all things saccharine.

Yet another incident recurs. I had on the gloves one day for a friendly bout with another of the older pupils, Chinnery-Haldane, then a well-grown lad of eighteen years, and now the Right Rev. Bishop of Argyle. In the course of our bout I countered him more heavily than I intended on his prominent feature, which bled freely. No angry passions rose. In proof of this, when meeting him lately I reminded him of the occurrence, he laughed genially, and asked me to visit him at Ballachulish. He is the only prelate to whom I ever did bodily injury.

I had been about a year in Bury St Edmunds when I received my appointment as Inspector of Schools, on the strength of my testimonials generally, and of an especially hearty one from the Rev. Dr Montagu Butler, afterwards Head-

master of Harrow, and now Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He was exceedingly kind to me as an undergraduate, and his valued friendship I am glad to say I still retain. Mr (now Professor) Jack of Glasgow, one of my oldest and closest friends as fellow-student in Glasgow and Cambridge, was gazetted Inspector at the same time—he as junior colleague to Mr Gordon in the west, I to Mr Middleton in the north of Scotland. Mr Jack and I entered Glasgow University together, graduated in the same year, entered Cambridge together, and there graduated in the same year, and were appointed Inspectors in the same Gazette. An old minister who knew us both remarked to me that there was a great parallelism between Mr Jack and me, and hoped that we would not both fall in love with the same sweetheart. This was a test to which we were not subjected. I had not the pleasure of meeting Mrs Jack till he had made her his own. Since these lines were penned she has passed away amid the tears of a sorrowing family and to the regret of a wide circle of sympathising friends.

It is pleasant to record that the long and intimate friendship between Professor Jack and myself remains to this day undisturbed by a single ripple.

CHAPTER II.

EDUCATIONAL AWAKENING—GOVERNMENT AIMS—FIRST EXPERIENCES—A “PHEESICAL” IMPOSSIBILITY.

A VERY rapid sketch of what immediately preceded, and led up through innumerable modifications and improvements, to the present attitude of Government towards education is perhaps not inappropriate to the purpose of these reminiscences.

About the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century there was a great educational awakening to the imperative necessity of supplementing existing provision by Government assistance. Lord Brougham's Committee of Inquiry in 1818 revealed great deficiencies and destitution in the Highlands and Islands. This led to the establishment in 1824 of the Education Committee of the Church, which made vigorous efforts to supply the defects, but with only partial success. It was found that there was clamant

need for other and more powerful help than private benevolence could furnish.

Meanwhile the friends of education—Brougham in the House of Lords, and a committee of the House of Commons—were not inactive, with the result that in 1833 Government made its first grant in aid of Scottish education in the form of a subsidy to Training Schools, and that in 1839, at the instance of the Marquess of Lansdowne and Lord John Russell, a Committee of Council on Education was established, with Sir James Kay Shuttleworth for its first secretary. This was the beginning of parliamentary grants in aid of elementary education, and the appointment of inspectors. Successive minutes regulated the proceedings of the Council till 1846, when new minutes were issued. This was followed by the Act of 1861, which increased the salaries of parochial teachers, transferred their appointment from the presbyteries to the university, and opened the office to any member of a Presbyterian Church. Close upon this came the Revised Code in 1862, of which more will be said in the sequel, and which continued formally in operation in Scotland till the passing of the Act of 1872. This Act was rendered necessary by the parochial schools being found

inadequate to meet the demands of increased population, and with important supplements and improvements continues to the present time.

It is right to indicate here the aims the Government had in view when the seeds of the present system were sown. Inspectors were told that inspection was intended to be a means of co-operation between the Government and the ministers or other managers of schools for the improvement and extension of education; that it was not intended as a means of exercising control, but of affording assistance; not for the restraint but encouragement of local efforts. The general duties of the inspector were arranged under three distinct heads: (1) furnishing information to enable the Committee of Council to determine the propriety of granting funds in aid of erecting new schools; (2) reporting on the matter and method of instruction in schools aided by public grants; and (3) furnishing information respecting the state of education in particular districts. I think it may be said that these instructions, with such additions as the fuller development of the system required, continue to describe generally the relation between the Department, inspectors, boards or other managers, and teachers.

When I joined the late Dr Middleton in 1860 there were only seven inspectors in Scotland for all classes of schools except those in connection with the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches, which were under the charge of two inspectors, who overtook all they had to do in the course of two or three months. As a concession to ecclesiastical feeling inspection was, till the passing of the Act of 1872, strictly denominational. Schools connected with the Established and Free Churches were inspected by officers who were appointed subject to the approval of the Education Committees of the respective Churches. There were few schools connected with the United Presbyterian Church, and these, as a rule, were placed on the list of the Established Church inspector. There are now thirty inspectors and thirty sub-inspectors, and the whole sixty are kept as busy as the seven were forty years ago. The number of inspectors was not then, and is not now, a measure of the number of existing schools but of the schools taught by certificated teachers. Besides the parish and many other schools connected with the two Churches, there were smaller ones supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, the most of which were taught by

uncertificated teachers. The change in this respect is very striking. Schools with a Church connection have very largely disappeared; board schools have taken their place; in almost every ordinary school the teachers are certificated, and every class of school is visited by the same inspector irrespective of denomination.

Forty years ago the attainments of the teachers of schools supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge were slender, as their emoluments were small. A very worthy man whom I knew was being examined by the Society's committee for an appointment, and had his reading tested on the New Testament. The passage happened to be about the man sick of the palsy who was borne of four. One of the examiners, wishing to ascertain whether the candidate fully understood the scope of what he had read, asked how he would explain to a class what was meant by the sick of the palsy being borne of four, and got for a reply, that he could not explain it, for it had always seemed to him to be a "pheelical impossibility."

CHAPTER III.

WIDE RANGE OF TRAVELLING—THE DEVIL LIKE A ROARING
LION—HORSEBACK AND SADDLE-BAGS—AN INVOLUNTARY
SWIM ON HORSEBACK—UNSATISFACTORY BUILDINGS—
PRIMITIVE RAILWAY MANAGEMENT.

DR MIDDLETON'S district included the whole of the north of Scotland between Dundee and Shetland, with the exception of Perthshire and the Western Islands. The schools of which he had charge were those connected with the Established Church and such as were undenominational. Free Church schools in the same district were under the charge of Mr Scougal, father of the present Chief Inspector in the Western district. So thinly scattered were certificated teachers in those days that we three overtook with greater ease, but with much more travelling, the inspection of that huge district, than the seventeen officers who have it now in charge. But we were regular vagabonds, months on end away from home. Had we been asked, as was a certain personage

who shall be nameless, "Whence comest thou?" we could have replied as he did, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." I must ask my readers in their charity to believe that the analogy ends there, and that we were not like that other personage going about like roaring lions seeking whom we might devour.

The definite function of this personage was brought puzzlingly before me one Sunday evening in a Banffshire manse. All the family were sitting quietly reading in the drawing-room, when the youngest boy, with a laudable thirst for knowledge, went up to his mother and asked a question, for the answer to which she referred him to me. Coming to me, he said—

"Mr Kerr, is it true that the devil goes about like a roaring lion?"

"It must," I replied, "be true, for it is in the Bible."

This was followed by another question which I did not attempt to answer, "Then wha keeps his fire in when he's gaun about?"

The analogy between us early inspectors and the personage already referred to does not hold in respect of walking. None of us did much of that. After I had been over the ground once

or twice by the usual conveyance of railway, coach, hiring, &c., I got the consent of the Department to make trial of horseback as a means of locomotion, and several times rode from Dundee to John-o'-Groat's and back, including numberless cross-roads and paths to right and left, according to the locality of the schools to be visited. I was perhaps one of the last men in Scotland who did his travelling with the now almost disused pair of saddle-bags. The bulk of my luggage went before me by rail or coach, and I met it at various points, where I made the necessary exchanges between portmanteau and saddle-bags. The latter were small, about a foot square, and sufficed for all I required for three or four days' absence from the rest of my impedimenta.

I had a very complete equipment of water-proofs, and suffered neither in health nor comfort from this (as some thought) risky mode of travelling over the north of Scotland. I remember one noteworthy incident in connection with it. I had intimated the inspection of the school of Tongue in Sutherland, and had to cross the Kyle in a ferry-boat. My mare had a great objection to ferry-boats, and could only be induced to enter them by the most gentle per-

suation, and literally inch by inch. On this occasion she was unusually obstinate, and completely exhausted the patience of myself and the boatman. At last Rorie, finding that too great a demand was being made on his time, asked—

“Wull the peast have any objection to go into the water?”

“No,” I replied; “she wades in quite readily.”

“Oh, that is goot.” Then pointing to a tree about a hundred yards up the Kyle he said, “You will be seeing that tree?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“And that other tree on the other side of the Kyle?”

“Yes.”

“Well, if you make her go in at the one tree and walk across to the other, she will not be wet above the knees, for the tide is out whatefer.”

I got into the saddle at once, and followed Rorie’s instructions to the letter. All went well for a few yards, but the depth increasing, she lost her footing in mid-channel and had to swim for about a dozen yards, when she again reached *terra firma*. My legs of course got wet, but no worse consequences followed my first and prob-

ably my last involuntary experience of a swim on horseback. I am inclined to think Rorie had a more accurate knowledge of the depth of the channel than he led me to believe, but I could not blame him. His patience had been sorely tried. For a very accurate sketch of the locality and the lines which accompany it I am indebted to a north-country friend who knows the locality:—

A Horseman, on a Highland shore, cries, "Boatman!
launch your wherry!

And I'll give you full fare, and more, to take us o'er the
ferry."

"Noo, who was you wud boat the Kyle jist efter dead
low tide?

The banks is bad. It's better far round the loch-head
to ride.

I'm feared a fiery beast like that micht broke my boat
to smash."

Just then Old Rorie thought he heard the sound of
clinking cash.

The spell was potent—Rorie fidgeted—the problem made
him frown,

A lick of paint might meet his loss, and then—that
silver crown.

"Maybe she'll came quite quate," he said.

"Well, friend, we can but try.
I'll take her head, you twist her tail; we'll manage, you
and I."

“The opserfation’s fery richt ; if she’s pleased, goot an’ well ;

But I will drag her by the head, you’ll try the tail yoursel’.”

But ne’er a footstep would she budge,—except, indeed, to back,

And rear and plunge and kick amain, as wheedle turned to whack.

“Losh me !” cried Rorie, in despair, “I never seen the like :

She’s jist as slipry as a hare, and soople as a tyke.

If Tonal Mòr was here to grip my hands below her wyme,

We’d lift her like a big wool-bag, and boat her in no time.”

“Then run for Donald ! off !! be quick !!! I’ll pay him for his aid.”

“Och ! Tonal cannot came at all, I’m fery much afraid. They hed a merrage yisterday (Jeems Pincher’s only daachter).

The drink was fery bad, they’ll say, she speilt it wi’ the waahter.

And Tonal Mòr he’s fery seek and canna lift a head.

We’ll hev to try another plan. The decent man’s in bed.”

“Around to ride, without a guide, would take me half the day.

You hinted at another plan ; now what may *it* be, pray ?”

“Ye see this tree, ahint o’ me, and yon on other side ;

Jist keep that line, ye’ll manage fine, but ye will hev to ride.

For, faix! the time is slipping by, the tide is rising fast.
Look at the floating froth oot there the way it's driving
past."

Poor Rorie felt he'd lost his fare, the trial vexed him sore.
"He did his best," the Horseman thought, "and what
can man do more?"

But Rorie rallied, stroked the mare, "She'll do, so help
me nefer!

Ach! not at all! you're jist too kind. Well,—thank
you, sir, whatefer!"

The saddle-bags were covered up beneath a rain-proof
cape,

The head-gear, bridle, crupper, girth, were found to be
ship-shape :

The mare into the briny stepped, footing it gingerly,
And soon the sward gave place to sand. The depth
was to the knee.

"Step out! my lass, don't be an ass! we've crossed a
stream before.

A bigger business this, no doubt,—but we've to reach
yon shore."

With oar in hand old Rorie stands, shading his eyes to see,
While varying thought such voice demands as this
soliloquy.

"She's going fair, he's sitting square, my word! they're
doing fine.

The tide has worked them something west. They're
raither off the line.

But what for are they waiting noo? what's stopping
them at all?

They're off again,—that swirl-pot's near,—no use for me
to call,



*“The hole is dangerously deep, but no jist awful broad ;
And efter that there’s nothing more between them and the road.”*

He wud na hear a word I'd say, it's no but wasting
breath.

I canna see but jist their heads,—they're in ! as sure as
death !

She's sweeming fery goot, poor beast, and making splen-
dit way.

Before he left 't was on my mind but I forgot to say
Take noo yer pokat-hankercher, 'or ye go oot o' that ;
Tie up yer watch and matches ticht, and stow them in
yer hat.

The hole is dangerfully deep, but no jist awful broad ;
And efter that there's nothing more between them and
the road

But five score yairds o' leval sand, and no yet three feet
deep.

They'll soon be on the solid land, withooten spur nor
wheep.

The mare's not ould, her Maister's bould (I seen it in
his eye),

And stieve as steel. I wush him weel, and bids them
both goot-bye."

I found journeying on horseback both exceed-
ingly pleasant and convenient. In the northern
counties there were often schools in outlying
districts where there was either no driving road
or a very bad one, and more accessible by saddle
than by wheeled conveyance. In the early years
of my service I had very varied experience of
schools of all kinds,—some fairly satisfactory in

respect of buildings and equipment, some poor in all respects, low roofs, no ventilation, sometimes a stone, sometimes an earthen floor, bad light, no apparatus, maps, or blackboards. I recall to mind a very worthy but snuffy old man who, in his loyalty to her Majesty's officer, reduced the much too limited number of cubic feet of air in the schoolroom still further by busking the walls and roof with branches of fir-trees and other greenery to such an extent that, on entering, one could imagine oneself in a pine-forest. This was pleasant enough in good weather, but on one occasion my visit was made on a wet day. The thick home-made woollen cloth, in which all the boys and many of the girls in Highland schools are clad, and which had been saturated with peat-smoke for months, and some of it perhaps for years, getting drenched with the rain, emitted an effluvium which, combined with the smell of the fir-branches and the absence of ventilation, rivalled for solidity and complexity of stench anything I ever experienced either before or since.

In the 'Sixties railway travelling on some of the branch lines was very primitive. One night the guard of the last train leaving Banff was reminded by one of the passengers that it was

some minutes past the starting time, and replied, "Oh ay, but Mr F. has a dinner-party the nicht, and I'm just giein' him twa or three minutes' preevilege."

On the Elgin and Rothes line I saw the Provost of Elgin walk across a field with a letter in his hand, which he waved to the driver of a train going at its usual full speed. The train stopped, and the guard took charge of the letter.

At Ordens, a siding on the Banff and Buckie branch line, I was instructed to go to this siding, and as the train approached to set fire to a newspaper or other material that would make a good blaze, and the train would stop. The night was very dark and windy, and I failed to set fire to the newspaper; but a stentorian shout which I executed had the same effect, and I was taken on board.

On another occasion I called on a school correspondent whose house was about a mile from a station on the Findhorn line. When I proposed to walk back to the station, he said, "You needn't take the trouble. I always stop it as it goes past." And he did. It is not matter for surprise that this line is now on the retired list.

CHAPTER IV.

FIVE STAGES OF CODE DEVELOPMENT—HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF—ELASTICITY AND HIGHER GENERAL LEVEL—LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH AND SIR HENRY CRAIK—THE AIM A RETURN TO THE IDEAL OLD PARISH SCHOOL—DULLARDS, LIKE THE POOR, ALWAYS WITH US—EARLY GENERAL REPORTS REPRESENT THE PRINCIPLE OF RECENT CHANGES—DULL AND CLEVER ALIKE PROVIDED FOR.

THE development of the Education Code may be described as having five stages. Previous to 1860 the administration of grants was conducted entirely by minutes, which were in 1860 reduced into the form of a code. This, with few important changes, regulated the action of the Department towards Scotland, so far as payments were concerned, up to 1873, when, following on the passing of Lord Young's Act of 1872, a Scottish Code was drawn up, and a separate Scottish Department established.

The second stage of Code modification may be dated as ranging from 1873 to 1886. During this period a number of changes were made,

comparatively unimportant but on the whole beneficial, which it is not necessary to describe in detail.

The third stage may be dated from 1886, when the first step was taken towards a modification of individual examination by its abolition in the lower standards. In the higher standards also there was a relaxation in both standard and class subjects, and, as a corrective of possible abuse of this relaxation, the principle of payments graded according to merit was beneficially introduced. A larger choice of class subjects was allowed, and a more important part in the work of the schools was assigned to them. Every year changes, not of great importance, but all in the healthy direction of greater elasticity, were made, till in 1889 there was a relief of fees for all pupils in the compulsory standards.

Another stage may be regarded as commencing in 1890, when individual examination in all the standards was abolished, and in 1892, when relief of fees was allowed for all children between five and fourteen—a relief extended in 1894 to children between three and fifteen. An unlimited choice of such specific subjects as school boards might think suitable for each locality, and subject only to the approval of the Department, was allowed.

In 1895 the whole basis upon which grants are made was changed, with the result of removing vexatious restraint, and at the same time securing equal efficiency.

The merit certificate, which has the same relation to the primary as the leaving certificate has to the secondary school, was for the first time referred to in 1891, and formed part of the Code in 1892.

What may be called the fifth stage of Code development was reached in 1898, when the method of annual inspection was largely changed, the Science and Art Department transferred to the Scottish Education Department, higher grade schools instituted in 1899, and the whole system of payment for different items abandoned.

To enter into the changes in fuller detail is unnecessary for the professional, and would be tiresome for the lay reader.

Those who are old enough to remember the character of Government inspection between 1860 and the establishment of a separate Scottish Department, and have taken note of the changes that have bit by bit been introduced in successive Codes during the last fifteen years, can scarcely fail to have observed that, in a very substantial sense, history is largely repeating itself by a

return to the greater freedom of action of the old *régime*. But there is a difference in two very important respects: first, that generally higher aims and a more definite goal have been suggested to teachers and school boards; and secondly, that grants graded according to merit, not on individual but average results, secure a higher general level of attainment, which is surely the teacher's proper aim. These changes, under the eminently wise and skilful direction of Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Sir Henry Craik, have removed the temptation to overpress the dull and unduly keep back the quicker pupils. It is probable—nay, certain—that, under these relaxed and more reasonable conditions, the dullards escape the hard grinding that does them no good, and that the idle no longer appropriate more of the teacher's time than they have any right to; but it is beyond question that instruction is imparted under healthier conditions, and with better results, for that portion of our school population who are fitted to turn advanced education to good account.

I think it can be claimed that, given fairly satisfactory conditions of locality and parental care, the Scottish child, whether of ordinary or superior ability, has within his reach an education

that will enable him to discharge his duty as a citizen, and rise to the level for which he is qualified by natural gifts. We have a Code which, though not yet perfect, is steadily advancing in the right direction, and superior to any with which I am acquainted. Its aim—a very noble one—is to restore to our schools all that was good in the old parish schools, and in addition, to supply what was in many cases wanting in them—viz., sufficient attention to pupils of not specially “pregnant parts”—not of the growing kind—but who, though by nature intended to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, have yet a claim to get their lives sweetened and refined by as much wholesome education as they can assimilate. Fears are sometimes expressed that the working classes are getting too highly educated. Educated? No! but foolishly crammed with (for some of them) indigestible food, through the injudicious action of parents or teachers, with the result that a feeble half-starved professional man is the miserable product of what might, with appropriate training, have been a self-respecting and competent artisan. The evil, where it exists, has in itself the elements of cure. Never at any rate must it be said that opportunity of the highest education should not be afforded

to such sons of working men as year after year earn distinction in every intellectual arena at home and abroad.

By no code, however, need we expect to get rid of the boy or girl who unthinkingly crams up the *ipsissima verba* of history, and, rashly trusting to a treacherous memory, omits an absolutely essential phrase, the absence of which makes the answer ludicrous. Such a boy, in giving an account of Oliver Cromwell, writes: "Oliver Cromwell's eyes were of a dark grey; his nose was very large and of a deep red colour, but underneath it was a truly religious soul." Another, in answer to the question, "What was the Declaration of Indulgence in James's reign?" writes: "By the Declaration of Indulgence people were allowed to worship God in their own way. Seven bishops refused to do so. They were accordingly put on their trial and found not guilty." Another, in answer to the question, "Whom did George III. marry, and how many children had he?" throws, no doubt unintentionally, a grievous slur on the character of the old king by writing, "He had no wife but thirteen children." Another gave an interpretation of the Salic law which would have met the case of only one of all the kings who ever sat on a throne, if even the

tradition about Macduff can be depended on: "The Salic law says no one can be made king who was descended from a woman." Notwithstanding such thoughtless answers as these, it is beyond question that in all the changes of the Code the continuous aim has been development of intelligence, breadth of aim in the teacher, and permanence of result in the pupil.

In connection with this return to the elasticity of former days I have been pleased to find, on referring to some of my earliest general reports, suggestions for greater freedom, and a larger exercise of discretionary power for the inspector, to which practically, and with the necessary safeguards, effect has been given. I find on pages 95 and 96 of my general report for 1871 the following remarks:—

"A certain amount of freedom is beneficial, and indeed indispensable, for the best results. The work of both inspector and teacher should, doubtless, within certain limits, be definitely specified, but neither will be so effective if he is compelled to work with the limited range of a machine. I know that a very wide discretionary power is considered dangerous, but I cannot think the objection applicable here. The inspector who cannot, before leaving a school, make a note

as to whether, in conjunction with the examination schedule, the reading, writing, arithmetic, discipline, intelligence, and higher subjects are good, bad, or indifferent, with a result as approximately correct as the necessarily variable judgment of a mechanical pass or failure, is not fit for his duty. It is, after all, only a shifting from one point to another of the discretion which cannot, *under any system of payment*, be got rid of. At present the difference between the estimates of two inspectors as to the border line between pass and failure, and as to exercises of exactly suitable difficulty in dictation and arithmetic, leaves as wide a discretion, and involves cumulatively as large payments and forfeitures as the suggestion I have ventured to make; the difference being that the stimulus under my suggestion would be towards intelligence, instead of, as at present, towards a minimum frequently, and almost necessarily, mechanical. Accuracy would be as thoroughly secured as now, intelligence would be cultivated, and an interest created which would feed itself, oil the educational wheels, and lighten the teacher's labour."

And again, on advanced subjects:—

“Would not the pupil and education generally

fare better if the inspector were instructed to record his estimate after an examination fairly elastic and suitable to the ages of the pupils, the locality, and the whole circumstances of the school? If inspectors as a body are not the kind of men to whom such discretion might be safely intrusted, it is surely not too much to say they ought to be. Under such a regulation there might be errors of judgment, but *such errors cannot be eliminated by any regulation*. This at any rate is certain, that at present all teachers may, many will, and all inspectors must, work more or less in fetters. An occasional error in judgment on the part of inspectors—who are always men of education, presumably of common-sense, and of either great or growing experience—would be a much less serious evil than the mechanical dead-levellism which must more or less characterise every system, whose goal is a minimum of which even the vaunted exactness is illusory.”

And again, in my report for 1874:—

“This discretionary power cannot be eliminated by any system however hard and fast. It is a power which, whether formally granted or not, will be operative as long as there are different mental and moral constitutions. It is con-

sciously or unconsciously exercised every day by every inspector in his consideration of the time of visit as favourable or unfavourable, of the character and class of pupils, of locality of school, of irregularity of attendance, &c. Its exercise will be all the healthier if it is distinctly recognised. I have a very strong conviction that it is only by such elasticity in the administration of grants that any approximation can be made to the maximum of usefulness."

These remarks, now nearly thirty years old, probably read by few and forgotten by all, seem fairly to represent the principle and direction of recent changes in the Code.

I did not, of course, go into details. It was too early to attempt that. I was content to enunciate the principle. Changes in an educational system affect so many and such varied interests that they must be made tentatively and with caution. The complex mechanism of the machine must be taken into account. Bit by bit, however, improvements have been made, here a little and there a little, till now after the elaboration of thirty years we have a Code better than any previous one, which by its elasticity permits us to cultivate amply the soil which is

best worth cultivating; while at the same time, by insisting that due care be taken that even the poorest soil shall not lie waste and unprofitable, it escapes the most severe, perhaps the only, censure to which the old parish school was open.

CHAPTER V.

DR JOHN BROWN'S ESTIMATE OF A KINDLY JOKE—ONE OF AN INSPECTOR'S FIRST DUTIES—CASES IN POINT—WHY ONE SHOULD NOT GO TO BERLIN—"GLAD TO SEE YOUR BACK"—"HE DISNA KEN THERE'S TWA DEES"—A PILGRIM DEFINED—"A GUTSY BRUTE"—"ARE YE THE GOAVERNMENT?"—MISTAKEN FOR SOME ONE ELSE.

I REMEMBER reading many years ago in Dr John Brown's preface to that charming volume of essays, 'Horæ Subsecivæ,' his advice to young medical practitioners: "Moreover, let me tell my young doctor friends that a cheerful face and step, and neckcloth, and buttonhole, and an occasional hearty and kindly joke, a power of executing and setting agoing a good laugh, are stock in our trade not to be despised. The merry heart does good like a medicine. Your pompous man and your selfish man don't laugh much, or care for laughter; it discomposes the fixed grandeur of the one, and has little room in the heart of the other, who is literally self-contained."

I think the inspector may profitably take the advice. I have often been guilty of deliberately "executing and setting agoing a good laugh" in a school, with no sacrifice of dignity or injury to discipline. On one such occasion a somewhat pompous friend, to whom I mentioned an incident of this kind, asked if it was not a little undignified to do so. I replied that I felt no need of imported dignity, and did not practise it; that the office was sufficiently hedged round with respect, and that any attempt to add to it was not only unnecessary but injurious.

One of the first duties of an inspector is to put teacher and pupils at their ease, if the best results are to be got at. During the first or second year of my service I went to examine a female school in Auchterless, the correspondent for which was the Rev. Dr Gray, himself an old teacher, of a hearty and impulsive nature, the kindest of men, and one whose career, from the plough-stilts through a phenomenally successful university course to a distinguished position in the Church of Scotland, is one of which any man might be proud. He told me, before entering the school, that the teacher had never been under inspection before, and was exceedingly nervous. He asked me to bear this in mind. I found this account

correct. Not only was the teacher nervous, but it was evident that, as usual, her nervousness had communicated itself to the children, who were ill at ease. Seeing this, I made some joke—I quite forget what it was—probably a very small one, but it was enough to produce a hearty laugh from both teacher and pupils, and show them that I was not a positive ogre. Dr Gray, whom I had never met till that morning, seeing my object, joined in and increased the laughter by giving me a sounding slap on the shoulder, adding, “Man, you’re a fine fellow!” I hope this incident may be considered worthy of mention as having in it an element of humour, and as illustrating the kindly and impulsive character of Dr Gray, rather than a clumsy attempt on my part at performing the difficult operation of gracefully patting one’s own back.

I was reminded lately, in a letter from a most successful lady teacher in one of the Edinburgh Merchant Company schools, of the first occasion on which, upwards of twenty years ago, she had, as a little girl, undergone the terror of a first inspection in a country school in Aberdeenshire. She was a pupil in the school, and had been taught by a nervous teacher to regard an inspector as a terribly severe personage, and, when

the dreaded day came, was in a state of abject terror. It fell to her lot, she told me, to read the verse from "Bingen on the Rhine,"—

"There's another, not a sister," &c.

When she had read it I gravely asked her who that other was, to which she tremblingly answered, "His sweetheart, sir." She said that my laughter at her answer put her considerably at her ease, and changed her childish ideas of an inspector.

She said that I asked another question in geography, "What river is Berlin on?" accompanied by a hope that she had never been there. She answered correctly, that it was on the Spree. I then asked her what she thought I meant by hoping she had never been there, to which she replied that it was not good for any one to be "on the spree." She says that I laughed again and made her feel quite comfortable.

Incidents like these prove that Dr John Brown's maxim, that "a kindly joke is stock-in-trade of a medical man not to be despised," applies also to a school inspector.

Nervousness on the day of inspection is not confined to young girls who are passing through

the ordeal for the first time. I remember a teacher, upwards of fifty years of age, whose school I had often visited, and always found in excellent order, confessing to nervousness in a somewhat humorous way. The relation between him and me was one of mutual confidence and respect. I knew that he was a superior scholar and an excellent teacher, and he knew that this was my opinion. After the inspection, which was as usual highly satisfactory, when I bade him good-bye he said, "Good-bye," adding, "There is no man, Mr Kerr, whose face I am better pleased to see than yours, but I am always glad to see your back."

In spite of many years of successful experience and hearty commendation, the inspection day was still a burden which he was glad to shake from his shoulders.

But, besides being nervous, children may be dull and listless as the result of spiritless teaching. In such circumstances a joke or an intentionally absurd question has an awakening effect which is entirely salutary, and, if the experience of my colleagues in the inspectorate is the same as mine, they sometimes come off second best. Once by way of stimulant I asked a somewhat sleepy history class which of the four Georges

wore the largest hat, and a boy, who had not till then opened his mouth, replied, "Him that had the biggest heid." The class woke up. In another school, and in similar circumstances, a boy on being asked where the river Dee was, answered correctly that it was in Aberdeenshire. Assuming quite a serious look, I asked him if he was not mistaken, adding that I thought the Dee was in Kirkcudbright and flowed into the Solway Firth. He was a bashful boy and made no reply. To give the class a needed fillip I appealed to them to settle whether the boy or I was right. To give a verdict against the inspector was of course not to be thought of, and there was silence for a time, but at last a boy put his hand to his mouth and said to his neighbour in a stage whisper, not meant for, but which reached, my ear, "He disna ken there's twa Dees."

There are few children so stupid that their intelligence cannot be tapped if a suitable subject is chosen and a right method adopted. It is told of an inspector that in the examination of a class in easy arithmetic he observed that one boy had not answered a single question correctly. Wishing to discover if the boy was hopelessly stupid he unintentionally "set agoing a good laugh" against himself by one

of his questions. The school was in a fishing village, and the question was on a subject with which he supposed (and correctly as it turned out) the boy was familiar. "Suppose," the inspector said, "there was a salmon that weighed ten pounds, and it was to be sold at twopence a-pound, what would the salmon be worth?" To this the boy at once replied, "It wudna be worth a curse."

Such experiences are not confined to Scotland. An English inspector, when testing the intelligence with which reading was taught, asked the meaning of the word pilgrim which occurred in the lesson, and got for reply that a pilgrim was a man who went from place to place. "Well," he replied, "you are so far quite right, but you might tell me something more about him. For example, I am here to-day [let us suppose Lancashire], I go to Accrington to-morrow, Blackburn next day, and Todmorden next. Am I a pilgrim?" "Oh no, sir," said the little girl with unconscious innuendo; "a pilgrim is a *good* man."

A Scottish colleague, in dealing with a reading lesson on natural history where it was said that the cow is a graminivorous animal, asked the meaning of that big word, and was told that it

was grass-eating. He then asked what an animal that ate flesh would be called, and promptly came the answer, "Carnivorous." Pushing his inquiries still further, he asked what an animal that ate both grass and flesh would be called. No reply for a considerable time. To help them towards an answer he pointed out that graminivorous was eating grass, carnivorous, eating flesh, and that an animal that eats *everything*, both grass and flesh, would be what? "A gutsy brute," was the reply. This recalls an answer given in a lesson on religious knowledge, the subject being the "wise and foolish virgins." The teacher asked what were the two classes into which the virgins were divided, and got from a girl, whose religious knowledge and natural history had got mixed, the answer, "Vertebrate and invertebrate."

I have some reason to suspect that I was not on all occasions as fastidious as to necktie, buttonhole, and general "get up" as Dr John Brown thinks incumbent on young doctors. For on one occasion, when my knowledge of Aberdeenshire was very imperfect, the minister of Rhyndie, Mr Anderson, whose parish school I was to visit, wrote to say that I should travel by rail to Gartly, and that his servant would

meet me with a conveyance. I took his advice and arrived at the station comfortably dressed in winter costume, roughish greatcoat and wide-awake hat. I saw a gig at the station, the driver of which was evidently on the outlook for some one. He looked at me, but it was quite clear that I did not come up to his expectation of the person he was sent to meet. I fancy he expected to see a person faultlessly apparelled, and with at any rate the finishing touch of a tall hat. While he kept looking round for such a person, and quite overlooking me, I went up to him and asked if he came from the manse of Rhynie. "Yes," he replied, in a tone in which combined respect and disappointment were quite evident, and with a glance at my wideawake hat, "Are ye the Goaverment?" I said I was, and got into the gig. I felt, however, that I had seriously lowered his respect for a Government official.

An experience a few days later led me to suspect that in the matter of dress I was possibly somewhat below par. My work for a fortnight or so was in the neighbourhood of Huntly, which I intended to make my headquarters for the time. I was then busy writing my essay for the Burney prize, open to all Cambridge graduates of not

more than three years' standing, and wishing to avoid the bustle and noise of a hotel, I decided to take private lodgings. Suitable quarters were recommended to me—two comfortable rooms in a quiet part of the town. I said to the landlady that they would suit me very well, and asked if I could have them. "How long," she asked, "will you be wanting them for?"

"A fortnight or so," I replied.

"Ah!" she answered; "I never let my rooms for less than a month."

"I am sorry for that. They would suit me nicely, but I cannot possibly stay for a month," and I made a step towards the door.

Not wishing to have the rooms unlet, she turned an inquisitive eye on me, and said, "Will you be much in the house when you are here?"

Amused at the question, and beginning to fence, I said, "I shall be both in and out a good deal."

"Will you be out much at night?"

"Not much, and at any rate not very late."

Failing to make much headway by these questions, she went direct to the point. "What will you be doing when you are here?"

Fencing was no longer possible, and when I told her my business in Huntly, she said with many apologies, "Oh, you'll get the rooms for as long or as short as you like; but I saw that some folk were coming to give some concerts here, and I thought you might be one of them."

For undiluted vulgarity in tone and sentiment the following incident is perhaps unmatched.

A woman whose husband from small beginnings had laid past enough to start a carriage, of which she was inordinately vain, met a friend one day in the street shortly after this advance in respectability. He bowed and said, "How do you do?" "Eh, sir," she replied, "I'm fine, but I'm richt sorry ye've met me the day, for ye see our horse cast a shoe yesterday, and ye've caughted me waukin'."

Almost as unique a specimen of frank and sensible tipsiness is the answer given to a gentleman who on a night of dense fog lost his way in Leith. He knew that if he could get to Constitution Street the tramway-line would be a sufficient guide. Meeting a man, he asked if he could direct him to that street. For reply he put his hand on the gentleman's shoulder and said, "Mý son, I'm too drunk . . . to give any information . . . to any person . . . upon any subject."