

CHAPTER VI.

GRATUITOUS VISITS AND THEIR RESULTS—INSPECTION BEFORE THE CODE—ACT OF 1861 FOR INCREASE OF SALARIES OF PARISH TEACHERS AND REMOVAL OF THE INCOMPETENT—AN AMUSING CASE—"I JIST FUSHED TOO MICH."

I HAVE said that we were not going about like roaring lions with devouring tendencies. We had time to visit, and did visit, many schools which were not in receipt of grants. Those interested in the success of any school had only to ask for inspection and they got it, if other engagements made it possible. Many, many schools, badly ventilated, miserably furnished, and poorly taught, have I visited in the wilds of Inverness, Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney, and Shetland, for which no grant was claimed or could be paid, simply to carry out the instruction given to inspectors to furnish information respecting the state of education in particular districts. Probably some may have difficulty in believing that there could be so

much of the milk of human kindness in either Department or inspector as is implied in these purely gratuitous visits. Incredible as it may seem, it is solid fact. But these gratuitous visits were far from fruitless. While many of the teachers were old and hopelessly below certificate mark, there were not a few on whom kindly encouragement had a quickening effect, and who, when the possibility of a certificate was suggested to them, set to work pluckily and gained the coveted parchment which they had thought quite beyond their reach. Instances of this kind occurred in every one of the counties I have named. I need scarcely add that they were all most grateful. I never more fully realised that kind words cost little and are worth much.

During the first three or four years of my service the method of examination was very simple. There was a delightful absence of blue pencils, standards, and examination schedules. But though it was simple, it must not be inferred that it was necessarily slipshod or ineffective. On the contrary, it was thorough, and brought out clearly the strong and weak points of a school, simply because in the absence of a prescribed minimum of attainment up to which

it was necessary to go, and beyond which there was no strong inducement to go, both teacher and inspector had more elbow-room and more free play. I do not mean to say that this absolute freedom of action was always turned to the best account, or that it was not possible for both teacher and inspector to scamp their work, but I do say that a teacher whose heart was in his work gave instruction under healthier conditions and with greater efficiency from feeling that he was free to do what he thought best for those under his charge; free to take account of, and adapt his teaching to, varying degrees and kinds of ability; free to minister to the capacity of those who were "gleg at the uptak'," instead of making them mark time with those of duller mood. But it may be asked, What about teachers whose hearts were not in their work, and who had neither standards nor payment by results to keep them up to the mark? Did they not become backsliders and inefficient? No! for they knew that a report on each school was published in a blue-book (I forget at what time this was discontinued); that an entry was made on their certificates at every inspection; that their certificates were sent to the Department for revision every five years,

and, according as the entries were favourable or the reverse, were raised to a higher grade or left unchanged; and that a rise in grade meant a rise in payment, which ranged from £10 to £30 a-year, and was made directly to the teacher, who was, so far as these payments were concerned, the servant of the State, instead of being, as now, the servant of the school board or managers. This in all ordinary cases was sufficient to secure reasonable effort.

But what about the inspector whose heart was not in his work, for it cannot be claimed that he is necessarily of different clay? Well, the plain answer is that, then as now, he could within pretty wide limits scamp his work if he chose. I feel warranted, however, in saying that an inspector of average conscientiousness and capacity could, under the old and simple system, leave a school with as distinct an impression of what was good or weak in it, and give as healthy an impulse towards improvement, as under the more elaborate system of the earlier Codes.

Meanwhile, as these fixed grants were scarcely ever withheld, and were rapidly increasing with the increase in the number of schools, while the efficiency of both instruction and inspection,

especially on the other side of the Tweed, was more than doubted, some change became necessary, and hence in 1862 we got that best-abused of all educational measures, the Revised Code of Mr Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrooke.

After the passing of the Act of 1861, already referred to, which increased the salaries and provided for the removal of incompetent parochial teachers by an appeal to the sheriff, a number of cases of dismissal fell to my share, all of which, except one, I succeeded in settling to the satisfaction of the heritors on the one hand and the teachers on the other. As a rule, I found the heritors disposed to act kindly, even when incompetence was unquestionable and not altogether blameless. The teachers naturally wished to make as good a bargain as possible, and usually asked larger retiring allowances than the heritors thought right to grant, but, by small concessions on both sides, satisfactory settlements were arrived at, except, as I have said, in one case where not incompetence but deliberate neglect of duty and contumacy were in question, and dismissal without retiring allowance was the only possible course.

The most amusing case I had to deal with was in Sutherland, where the teacher, a respect-

able hale old man of upwards of seventy years of age, straight as a rush and active as a ghillie, had been in charge for nearly forty years, and for about twenty of them had done practically no work. His pupils had simply left him—an arrangement which had his full acquiescence, as it left him free to indulge his taste for fishing, in which his skill and liking were well matched. The Duke of Sutherland's factor, anxious to avoid even the appearance of harshness, was willing to give him the whole of his old statutory salary as a pension, and the continued occupancy of the dwelling-house, rent free; but failing to get the old man's acceptance, he requested me to try if I could bring him to reason. I called and found him at home. He was a bachelor. The schoolroom was a receptacle of all sorts of lumber, and on the solitary desk, which had evidently not been used for years, domestic articles of all kinds were lying, and among them a couple of fishing-rods and a fishing-basket. I introduced the subject gently, and pointed out to him that the terms proposed were much more liberal than he could expect if an appeal should be made to the sheriff.

“But it is,” he replied, “no fault of mine that I have no scholars. I am strong and well, and

able and ready to teach them if they would come to me, and I could walk up the river for miles and fush all day as well as any heritor among them. Why should I resign?"

"I know," I replied, "that you are a capital fisherman, but as all the teaching in the parish for twenty years past has been done in a well-attended General Assembly school, while you have had no scholars, the sheriff would be quite sure to pronounce you incompetent, and in that case you would not get more than two-thirds of your salary and no dwelling-house."

"But," he rejoined, "I *have* had scholars within the last twenty years."

"Have you really? How long is it since you had scholars?"

"Well, it will be about twelve years or so."

"How many had you twelve years ago?"

"Oh, four, and sometimes three, and two and the like of that, but it's not me that wud be driving them away. They wud just be going of their own wull, and it wass not my fault whatefer. I wud be ready to teach them if they wud come to me."

After further talk, which need not be detailed, I got him at last into what seemed a yielding mood, and produced an agreement, with which I had

been furnished, embodying the terms mentioned, and asked him to sign it. I handed him the pen, which he accepted reluctantly, and I thought I had gained my point. But the *ad vitam aut culpam* tenure of his office recurred to him, and throwing down the pen angrily, he said, "Why should I resign when I am in good health, and able and wulling to teach, and no fault can be laid to my charge? Wull the Duke not give me £5 more as he did to my neighbour in the next parish?"

"No," I replied; "you cannot get more, and will certainly get less and no dwelling-house, if it goes before the sheriff." He read the document once more, shook his head doubtfully, and looking earnestly in my face, said, "Is it the goot advice you'll be giving me?"

"Yes; I certainly advise you to sign it for your own sake."

He took up the pen again, and with another shake of his head he wrote his name very slowly, and with several halts during the operation indicative of a still possible refusal. When it was at last finished, and the document transferred to my pocket, I was tempted to find out his own real explanation of the desertion of his pupils, and said, "Some people say that your fishing had a

good deal to do with the falling away of the school."

"Well," he replied frankly (now that a signed resignation removed all danger), "I wud not jist like to deny altogether that it may have probably done some injury to the attendance."

"But," I rejoined, "many say that it was entirely owing to the fishing."

"Oh, that wud be saying jist too mich, but I did like the fushin' better than the teachin'."

"You fished a good deal, of course, in the morning and evening and during the holidays?"

"Oh yes," with a sly twinkle; "and sometimes when I should have been teachin'."

"Not surely during school hours?"

"Yes, it's the God's truth I did," with increasing frankness; "I did fush too mich. When the river wud be in good trum I wud often be giving the boys a holiday or two. Oh yes, I did fush too mich, that's the God's truth."

CHAPTER VII.

THE REVISED CODE AN INJURY TO SCOTTISH EDUCATION—THE “BEGGARLY ELEMENTS” SUPREME—INTELLIGENCE DISREGARDED — UNFAIR TO SCOTLAND BECAUSE BASED EXCLUSIVELY ON THE CHARACTER OF ENGLISH SCHOOLS — EDUCATION LEVELLED “DOWN,” NOT “UP”—MANY TEACHERS AND SOME INSPECTORS EDUCATIONALLY DEMORALISED BY IT—A PROOF THAT ENGLISH OFFICIALS DID NOT KNOW SCOTTISH SCHOOLS.

FOR any but educationists a disquisition on the Revised Code as injurious to Scottish education has probably little interest, but in a book of educational reminiscences some reference to it is necessary. I give this as a warning to the lay-reader who may wish to escape being bored.

In 1872 Lord Young's Act was passed, a separate Scottish Department was instituted, and Scotland got for herself a code of greater elasticity and generally higher educational aims. We got rid of the Revised Code, which even in its merely formal application to Scotland did great harm, and retarded, if it did not in some important respects actually throw back, Scottish education

for ten or twelve years. It said, "Thus far shalt thou go"; but too many teachers completed Canute's command by practically adding, "and no farther," which is not, and should not be, found in any code. They said it too with a sincerity which Canute only pretended to have, and with a power which Canute knew he had not, and they consequently succeeded where he failed. It is now ancient history, and no shred of it will ever be restored. Its introduction into Scotland, however, deserves a few remarks, though in making them I depart somewhat from the intention I have expressed of avoiding technical topics. Let us give it any little credit it deserves. In England, and in some parts of Scotland also, educational reform was needed. It increased regularity of attendance, and it must be granted that if, under it, the majority of English children mastered the "beggarly elements" solidly and well even in a mechanical way, it did more than ever had been done before. But the remedy was violent and educationally barbarous. Its plan was inherently mechanical and therefore bad. England had little of a proud past in elementary education that could serve as a foundation for a solid superstructure, but even that little was absolutely ignored.

In the Revised Code reading, writing, and

arithmetic for a considerable time stood severely alone. It is difficult to believe that for five long years the only educational pabulum provided for English elementary schools was the three R's in their barest form, with bills of parcels as the loftiest aim in arithmetic. There was no suggestion about intelligence, composition, grammar, geography, or history. Teachers were not only tempted, but—being like other people merely human—practically forced by the pecuniary conditions of the Code to aim at, and be satisfied with reaching, a sordid minimum of attainment in the "beggarly elements," in which there was not necessarily a ray of intelligence. The clever child was allowed to dawdle and mark time because he was sure to pass, and so his energy was deadened because deprived of the healthy stimulus which a consciousness of making progress gives, while the dullard was drilled beyond his power of reception and to his injury. Inspectors were no doubt told that every school was to be judged as hitherto by its religious, moral, and intellectual merits, but this judgment unfortunately had not the effective sanction of possible increase or reduction of grant except in extreme cases. In other words, the highest grant might be, and often was, earned in the most

unintelligent and mechanical way, the intellectual life and tone of the school being wholly unmeasured. While this indictment is severe as to the treatment England received, it is infinitely more severe in regard to Scotland, whose past was the envy not only of England but of most other civilised nations, and which had such a splendid basis as the old parish schools afforded for an educational reform, suitable alike for the dull and the clever. This was entirely ignored, and there was substituted for it a measure which, even in skilful hands, could with difficulty be rescued from a dreary, wooden dead-level.

The second indictment against the Revised Code is that it was imposed on Scotland entirely on the result of inquiry into the condition of elementary English schools. It was apparently assumed either (1) that Scottish and English ordinary schools were similar in respect of the character and extent of the education given, or (2) that Scotland was so unimportant, such a mere pendicle to England, that her claim to a separate hearing could not be allowed, and that she ought not to make a wry face at the educational pabulum which was thought suitable for her bigger sister. Both assumptions were excessively irritating. The first implied absolute ignorance of our educational

history. In England national education was but of yesterday, in Scotland it was over two hundred years old. In England scarcely anything beyond the "beggarly elements" was taught; in Scotland lads went straight from the village school to the university. The English national and the Scottish parish teacher presented the same contrast. The former had never set foot within a university; the latter was often, and in several counties invariably, a graduate.

If the first assumption is to be charged against ignorance of Scottish education, the second must be attributed to unfairness and an unwarrantable desire for uniformity. For facility of administration uniformity is doubtless desirable, but it may be bought too dear, if by adopting it we throw into the background those higher branches, from the coincident teaching of which the elementary ones were not shown to have materially suffered, and which had placed Scotland in the van of educated nations. It is impossible to defend the policy which selected the lower standard as that to which the higher was to be assimilated. Surely the policy ought to have been one of levelling up and not of levelling down. Scotsmen felt that their cheap and comparatively liberal education had done too much good work for them to

acquiesce in its being absorbed into a system, the inferiority of which was admitted by all whose opinion was worth having. It is not too much to say that, up to the separation of the Scottish from the English Department, this "sauce for the goose sauce for the gander" policy was persistently and injuriously followed.

I have always thought it a proud tribute to Scottish education that, while the Revised Code was at once applied to England in full detail, we were exempted from its financial operation for the ten years of its existence. This exemption, however, did not wholly deprive it of its pernicious influence in respect of educative aim. The examination schedule and tabulation of results were in too many cases constantly before the teacher's eye, and created an unhealthy thirst for high percentage of pass as being the most quotable test of efficiency, while, at the same time, it fostered a comparative disregard of intelligence and a general narrowing of view. A number of the best parish schools pluckily declined to follow the multitude of devout worshippers in the temple of the new percentage divinity, and kept alive with creditable success the traditional aim of higher work; but I think it is beyond question that, in respect of the education by which the

best brain in our ordinary schools can be utilised, Scotland during these ten years stood still if it did not go back. That it did fall back in some districts is unquestionable. Among teachers of narrow views there was a strong tendency to consider inspection and examination over as soon as the standard subjects were disposed of. Less anxiety was shown to bring under notice the higher branches taught, and it was sometimes necessary to ask for what was formerly volunteered with something akin to ostentatious but healthy pride. I have had cases in which was shown such a consuming zeal for a high pass, as, had it extended over the whole field of school work, would in a short time have resulted in collapse from sheer exhaustion. Over one or two failures in arithmetic I have witnessed a piteous wail and a shedding of tears by a female teacher, in whose breast a lamentable want of animation and intelligence, weak geography, and weaker grammar, awoke neither shame nor sorrow. Such cases, I am glad to say, were very rare, and even for them it may be charitably pleaded that they had yielded to a temptation that might have been found too strong for many of us. The Revised Code demoralised many such teachers, and, I fear,

some inspectors, by putting them on vicious educational lines. It is matter for thankfulness, and highly creditable to our teachers, that they have so quickly and to such a large extent got rid of its unwholesome tendency.

It contained one obnoxious provision, which, more than any other, aroused the ire of Scottish parents and teachers alike—viz., that none but the children of those who supported themselves by manual labour, or small shopkeepers of similar social position, could earn for their school a share in the grant. The insertion of such a condition was due to absolute ignorance of Scottish schools. The framers of the Code did not know that in Scotland the sons and daughters of the mechanic and the merchant, the labourer and the laird, were taught in the same classes and sat on the same benches. They had no experience of the healthy influence of the admixture in our schools of pupils of widely different social position. Their view was purely an English one. The gap between elementary school and university in England was an unbridged gulf on the score of both education and expense: in Scotland the transition from the ordinary school to the university was easy to brains and perseverance. So little was this realised in England that Mr (afterwards

Lord) Lingen, then secretary to the Department, a man of singular ability and eminently just, had a correspondence of considerable length with the managers of Kirkwall Burgh School, the headmaster of which had advertised for pupils wishing such an education as would fit them to enter the university, the army, or civil service. Mr Lingen held that it was "simply idle" to say that a school in which mathematics and advanced Latin, Greek, and French were taught could be called a school for the working classes, and eligible for grants under the Code. The case was referred to me. I was asked to make such inquiry as would enable the Department to come to a decision. I made a census of the parents of the children attending the school, and sent up a list of the pupils and the occupations of their parents, showing that a large proportion were the children of working men. This list was signed as correct by several members of the Town Council. Mr Lingen was satisfied, and with characteristic fairness authorised payment of the grant.

So far as those points which respond to the test of inspection are concerned, this school was pretty much of the same type as many of the best parish schools.

CHAPTER VIII.

EFFECTS OF KINDLY ENCOURAGEMENT AND WORDS IN SEASON
—REV. DR MACKENZIE OF KINGUSSIE AND EDUCATION IN
THE NORTH—SYMPATHETIC PATIENCE OF TEACHERS OF THE
BLIND AND DUMB—ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL
FACULTIES.

No reminiscences in an inspector's life are so pleasant as those in which he is reminded of some kindly remark he had made at or after an inspection to a boy or girl of superior ability—a remark made casually and long forgotten by himself, but which, unknown to him, had acted as a living and permanent force in moulding character, awakening healthy ambition, and giving direction to a life. I have had many such experiences, and could name not a few men and women who have been stimulated to exertion by a passing word of commendation little thought of by me at the time, and long since forgotten, but which had, as results, brilliant careers at both Scottish and English universities. A lady re-

minded me lately that I had said to her brother, a boy in an Aberdeen country school, who had made a very good appearance in Latin, "My boy, you ought to go to College, you are sure to do well there." The remark took root. He persuaded his mother to let him go to college, and he is now a very eminent scholar, and fellow and tutor of his college in Cambridge. Another pupil in an Aberdeen parish school to whom I awarded a school bursary was thought to be qualified for the learned professions from my directing the attention of his teacher to the excellence of his examination papers. He too went to the university, and is now fellow of his college in Cambridge. I often regret that I did not more frequently utilise the vital force that lies hid in a word of kindly encouragement, and I venture to advise the younger inspectors, who have probably many years of work before them, to bear in mind and turn to account a power of influencing for good the lives of pupils who pass under their review, which is, I am convinced, much greater than they probably imagine.

In this connection I am tempted to refer to another of these half-forgotten but easily recalled incidents. I was lately reminded by an old and

valued friend, the Rev. Dr Mackenzie of Kingussie, of a conversation I had with him nearly forty years ago, to which at the time I attached no such importance as to think it should ever be recalled. In the autumn of last year we were discussing school topics, and in contrasting the educational condition of the Highlands early in the 'Sixties with its present position, I remarked that education in the north owed immeasurably more to him than to any man I knew. While with characteristic modesty he disclaimed the well-merited compliment, he said that all he had done had its origin in the conversation referred to. On my asking for an explanation, he said that soon after he had been elected minister of Lochcarron, he found education at a very low ebb in that parish; his congregation, as usual in the Highlands, very much reduced by the Disruption of 1843; his whole environment so unpromising, and affording so little opportunity for any one who wished to do a man's useful work, that he had thought of resigning his charge, and seeking a wider field of usefulness in Australia or elsewhere. He said that I strongly dissuaded him from this, and advised him to look around and consider in what direction, ministerial or secular, he could promote the interests of the

people among whom his lot was cast ; that education was a subject to the stimulation of which he could profitably devote all the energy at his command ; and that he would soon find, in this and other lines, such abundant occupation as would satisfy him that he was honourably earning his stipend of £150, although but few attended his church services. This advice he said took permanent hold of him, and he at once turned his attention to Slumby and Janetown, two hamlets in his parish inhabited by a very wretched class of crofters, many of whose children did not attend school at all, and none with useful regularity, mainly from want of suitable clothing. He set about raising funds to supply this want, and succeeded so well that, before his removal from Lochcarron, the parish school became a flourishing institution. He has been thirty-four years minister of Kingussie, where, under his fostering care, the public school is, if not the best, certainly one of the very best schools in the north of Scotland. It is attended by pupils from a wide circuit all round, and from Skye, Uist, and other islands of the Outer Hebrides. But his efforts have not been confined to his own parish. In every educational movement within his reach he has taken a prominent, judicious,

and effective part. His untiring and whole-hearted energy in founding bursaries leading from the ordinary to the secondary schools, his influence on the County or Secondary Education Committee, as well as on the Trust for Education in the Highlands and Islands, and the number of students who, thanks to him, have gone to the university and earned distinction, furnish a record which has, I believe, no parallel in Scotland. Of Dr Mackenzie, as appropriately as of any man I know, it may be said, "*Si monumentum quæris circumspice.*"

I have made the acquaintance of almost every variety of teacher, some brimming over with enthusiasm about special methods as the only good ones, others insisting on special subjects as the only important ones. Enthusiasts generally are successful in giving an impulse, often, no doubt, a lopsided one, but still an impulse in an amiable if not entirely practical direction; but there are two classes of teachers with whom I have often come into contact, and for whom I have great respect and even admiration, the teachers of blind and deaf-mute children. They have in quite an exceptional degree (what all teachers who are to produce the best results must have) untiring patience and sympathy with

their pupils' difficulties. I do not recollect having met any teacher of the deaf or blind who was not a model of sympathetic patience. This remark is almost unnecessary, inasmuch as their possession of these qualities might be inferred from their having chosen this kind of teaching as their life-work. They may have thought that it would be interesting, but they must have seen that it would be exceedingly difficult. This applies with greater force to the teacher of the deaf than to the teacher of the blind. It may be matter of opinion whether to be blind or to be deaf and dumb is the greater calamity, but, as a question of education, of mental health and balance, I am quite convinced that the deaf-mute is the greater sufferer. He is more difficult to teach and more isolated; a wider gulf than in the case of the blind separates him from continuous, interesting intercourse with his fellows. He can, no doubt, read, and, if of intellectual type, will reach a higher level of culture than the blind man, who may not have an attendant who can read to him as often as he wishes. But only relations or intimate friends of the deaf person will take the trouble to write, sign, or spell out on the fingers any but important matters. He has therefore little share

in the commonplace but interesting topics of daily life, which are as essential for mental as digestible food is for bodily health. Of him as of others it is true that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. By reading he will ameliorate the sadness of his life, but he will not get rid of the feeling of isolation, which is seldom the lot of the blind, who can freely take part in the interchange of opinions about subjects of general interest, which contribute so much, if not to culture, at any rate to the enjoyment of life. We accordingly find that the deaf-mute is usually a sadder, more suspicious, and less contented man than the blind. I have asked a good many blind persons whether they would prefer to be as they are or be deaf and dumb. The invariable answer, from both the cultured and the comparatively uneducated, has been that they would far rather be as they are. An old woman, who has been an inmate of Edinburgh Blind Asylum for about sixty years, put the matter in a nutshell in reply to my inquiry,—“The mind is aye fresh when the lugs are open.”

The abnormal development of one sense or faculty, as in some sort a compensation for the absence of others, is well known. I have seen

two very striking examples of this in the same asylum. One was a boy and the other a girl, both completely blind, and both largely imbecile. The boy, who is now fourteen years of age, has an ear for music so abnormally developed that he possesses the rare talent of "absolute pitch." If he is taken into a room and a note is struck on a piano, he will at once name the note. Take him into another room where the piano is at a different pitch, and he will name any note that is struck. Further, if all the ten fingers are struck down at once on the keyboard of an organ or piano, he will begin at the top note and name downwards every note struck. One day this remarkable power was turned to good account. When one of the organ pupils was playing, the *swell-coupler* went out of order, and, when pulled out, caused several notes on that manual to cipher (sound) without depressing the keys. None of the students were able to distinguish the notes in the resulting discord. In their difficulty they sent for this semi-imbecile boy, who at once enlightened them and the defect was remedied.

The girl, who was eight or nine years of age, was an inmate for several years but was ultimately sent home as hopelessly unteachable, and yet

she had the remarkable faculty of being able to tell instantly on what day of the week any date that could be mentioned would fall. Three or four years ago, when the Lord High Commissioner (Marquess of Tweeddale) and his suite visited the asylum, I gave each of them a separate card of all the months of the year. To every date they mentioned the girl gave at once the day of the week on which it fell. I tried her with the dates of the three preceding years with the same results. She made only one slip, and immediately corrected herself. She has not been taught, for the best of all reasons that the teacher has not the slightest idea how she does it. When asked how she does it, she replies apparently in the most brainless tone, "I don't know."

A most interesting experiment is being made in the same institution in developing the intelligence of a boy who is deaf, dumb, and blind, through the medium of another boy who has all his faculties. They are constantly together. By some unexplained sympathy, information can with comparative ease be conveyed to the blind and deaf boy through his companion, which without him could be done only with great difficulty.

His speech also is being developed by the articulation system.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD PARISH SCHOOLS — CANDLEMAS — CHANGED CUSTOMS — M. BIOT'S ESTIMATE — PARISH SCHOOLS' RELATION TO THE UNIVERSITY — FIRST SCOTTISH CODE — "NO USE PUMPING WHEN THE WELL'S DRY" — SCOTTISH AND ENGLISH GRADUATES COMPARED — A "STICKIT MINISTER."

SOME reference to the old parish schools and to some of the methods and customs that have long passed away is germane to these scholastic jottings. The contrast in respect of buildings and equipment between them and the schools erected by school boards is very striking. The modern demands for a certain number of square and of cubic feet per child were in many cases neither thought of nor provided. The desks were often double, the pupils facing each other — an arrangement admirably adapted for making discipline difficult by offering temptation to unnecessary talking and general restlessness. These desks were in many cases flat tables, which did not contribute to good penmanship. Steel pens

were not yet in general use, and the making and mending of quill pens made a considerable drain on the teacher's time. There was often even in large schools only one teacher, who, having many subjects to attend to, had recourse to various devices for saving time and securing efficiency. A boy well advanced in arithmetic would sometimes be placed beside one at a lower stage, the former being instructed to give assistance to the latter. By this plan the lower boy gained much, and the higher boy lost little if anything, inasmuch as there is no better method of getting a sound knowledge of a subject than by teaching it to others.

For the maintenance of discipline it was customary to employ an agency now, so far as I know, absolutely disused. A boy chosen by the teacher, and called a censor, was ordered to stand on a high form in a position commanding a view of the whole school, and call out the name of any pupil who was seen to be playing tricks on his neighbours, making a noise, or in any way breaking rules of discipline. The pupil so named was called up by the teacher and subjected to such punishment as was considered commensurate with the offence. This was a method of discipline in favour of which nothing

can be said. It was a confession of weakness on the part of the master, and aroused ill feeling among the other pupils against the unfortunate boy on whom was imposed the abominable task of "clyping" on his fellows. It furnished an ill-conditioned censor with a means of petty persecution of any schoolfellow whom he disliked, for he knew that no denial of misdemeanour by the accused would have weight against his authoritative accusation. It was in fact legalising what is universally and properly despised as one of the meanest and most sneaking characteristics whether of boy or man—that of betraying the delinquencies of comrades to those who have power to punish.

The observance of Candlemas as a holiday, which was in existence in my schoolboy days, has, I think, been entirely discontinued. On this day, February 2, the teacher occupied his usual seat at his desk, but it could not on this day be said—

"A man severe he was and stern to view."

On the contrary, an atmosphere of gaiety filled the room. It was by distinct recognition a holiday in the fullest sense. When the pupils were assembled the roll was called in the usual

way, but instead of each pupil answering "Here, sir," to his name and remaining in his place, he came up to the teacher's desk and deposited a gift varying, according to the means of the parents, from sixpence or a shilling to a crown. The boy and girl who made the largest contribution were called King and Queen. Oranges and gingerbread snaps were then distributed, and all went off on holiday.

This is perhaps the proper place to try to strike a fair balance between the merits and demerits of the old parochial system which up to 1872 had been in existence for over two centuries. That it had, like all things human, some demerits goes without saying. It had not been able to keep pace with the growth of the population, and its undoubted tendency was to give more than a fair share of attention to the clever pupils and to neglect the dull. That under it the majority were in many cases somewhat neglected was a serious defect, but on the other hand it is quite certain that universal perfection in the "beggarly elements" of the Revised Code, or in the demands of the earlier codes, would never have gained for Scotland the place she has always held as an educated nation, or enabled her sons to fight their way

to eminence in every walk of life at home and abroad. This will be thought by many a palliation, though not a complete defence, of comparative neglect of the duller pupils; but it is arguable that any excess of effort to lay hold of and utilise the best brain of the school is more worthy of imitation, and is of more patriotic tendency, than an absolutely equal distribution of attention between dull and promising pupils. Is it unreasonable to say that even the "failing leans to virtue's side"?

We have the testimony of an important witness, M. Biot, the famous French physicist, who resided for some time in Scotland:—

"The results of education are such that they strike with astonishment those who observe them for the first time. The Scots, poor, and inhabiting a country by no means fertile, have risen by their education and civilisation to the level of, and, if the lower orders are considered, have surpassed, a nation which is regarded as one of the most enlightened on the face of the earth. Wherever a Scotsman goes, the education he has received in the parish schools gives his mind a peculiar power of observation, and enables him to extend his view far beyond the range of objects which occupy the attention of

persons of the same social status who have not been so educated."

Some may regard this as a very friendly, perhaps an over-friendly, estimate, but that it represents with approximate accuracy what was the characteristic feature of Scottish parish schools will be admitted by all who have had means of forming an opinion on the subject. Since the Reformation we had theoretically in every parish, and frequently in point of fact, schools which in respect of quality and cost the sons of the poorest in the land could make, and did make, stepping-stones to the university. There is no county in Scotland that cannot furnish examples of this kind.

One of the most remarkable cases—though there are many others of similar type—is the parish school of Udney in Aberdeenshire, from which, under the management of Mr Bisset, there went direct to the university during the twelve years before 1826 a number of lads destined to earn name and fame in a considerable variety of directions. Among these were Sir James Outram, Lieutenant-General of the Indian army, distinguished for both military and literary ability; Joseph Robertson, an antiquary of almost unsurpassed reputation and a historical

scholar of whom Dean Stanley said that, though he had known all the eminent historians of his time, he never met one who walked in the past with such completeness of knowledge. To these may be added John Hill Burton, who is mentioned as a contemporary of Robertson's at school and college, though Udney is not definitely stated as the school in which he was educated; James Craigie Robertson, Canon of Canterbury, a scholar and historian of repute; George Smith of Chicago, one of the founders of that city, and the first white man who slept in Milwaukee.

Not unlike Udney is Strichen parish school, which is responsible for Sir Alexander Anderson, Mr Murison, county clerk of Aberdeenshire, and Mr Giles, Fellow of Emmanuel, Cambridge; and again Mortlach School in which Field-Marshal Sir Donald Stewart and Lord Mount-Stephen were educated. Farther south Mr Peace, also a fellow of his college in Cambridge, must be placed to the credit of Marykirk parish school, in Kincardineshire. From Lochwinnoch, in Renfrewshire, many students earned high distinction in Glasgow University, two of the best known being the late Rev. Dr Watson of Dundee and the Rev. Dr Patrick, Professor of

Biblical Criticism in Edinburgh, whose three colleagues in the Faculty of Divinity—Professors Flint, Taylor, and Kennedy—are all products of parish schools in the counties of Dumfries, Argyle, and Banff. To these can be added Mr Mackinnon, Professor of Celtic Languages in Edinburgh; Dr Patrick, Editor of ‘Chambers’s Encyclopedia’; and Mr Struthers, formerly my colleague, and now assistant-secretary to the Scottish Education Department, all of whom owe to country schools in Argyle and Ayr and Renfrew the education on the strength of which they have reached their present position. This list could be lengthened by such names as Drs George and Alexander Ogilvie, ex-headmasters of Watson’s College, Edinburgh, and Gordon’s College, Aberdeen.

The parish schoolboy has always been, and is now, most satisfactorily represented in English Universities, in the professoriate of all the Scottish universities, in high legal positions, in the Church, in Medicine, and in the school inspectorate. With schools having such a record nothing more than an extension on the same lines was needed to meet every want. Such an extension, with additions demanded by changed commercial and technical requirements,

is now the aim of the Scottish Education Department.

In the Highlands and outlying sparsely populated districts there were no doubt a considerable number of parish schools in which John Knox's ideal was entirely lost sight of, where reform was much needed and has now been, as far as possible, made. It would not be safe to say that the schools that now have taken the place of the old parish schools send as many pupils direct to the university as were sent forty years ago. I know some parishes from which formerly lads went every year to the university, but from which no student has gone direct for the last twenty years. The reasons for this are threefold: (1) There is now what there was not formerly, a hard preliminary examination to pass in order to admission; (2) there is a large increase in the number of higher class schools and departments, to which admission is gained through the agency of burgh and county secondary committees, where the requisite preparation can be had; (3) there are now many more openings in commerce and manufactures for which university training is not imperative.

It is a fortunate circumstance that the Scottish Act of 1872 is as widely different from the

English Act of 1870 as the respective countries are in educational tradition. The English Act was one dealing professedly with elementary education. The Scottish Act was to provide education "for the *whole* people of Scotland." The word "elementary" is not found within the four corners of the Act. The decision by Mr Justice Wills in the Court of Queen's Bench, that it is illegal in England to use the rates to pay for higher education, does not affect Scotland. Such an action as that raised by the auditor of the London School Board could not with any chance of success be raised in Scotland. In the Scottish Act the grand tradition of direct connection between the parish school and the university was not lost sight of. The necessity of providing for all children a certain minimum of elementary education might make, and to a considerable extent has made, this aim more difficult of attainment, but the surrender of advanced education was not to be thought of. Hence the higher pitch of the Scottish Code in advanced subjects, while accuracy and solidity of attainment in elementary subjects were at the same time sufficiently safeguarded by grants graded according to merit.

In the preparation of the first Scottish Code,

and subsequent modifications of it, I had a large share, the secretary, Sir Francis (afterwards Lord) Sandford, honouring me by frequent consultations and much correspondence both private and official in connection with it. In the rearrangement of districts and staff, in drafting instructions for the inspection of higher class schools and other matters, I was much gratified by having my assistance asked and accepted. I need not say that to have enjoyed the confidence of one who had done so much for education as Lord Sandford is one of the happiest memories of my official life.

In the English Code of 1870 reading, writing, and arithmetic stood alone, and no provision was made under the head of ordinary subjects for intelligence, grammar, geography, or history. These were dealt with as special subjects. In the Scottish Code they were practically imperative, inasmuch as very considerable grants were earned for them as ordinary though not compulsory subjects. This was educationally good, but it made a very heavy addition to the work of the inspector, especially in the upper half of the school, where grammar and intelligent explanation of the reading lesson were part, and by far the heaviest part, of the reading test.

Reading in the higher classes was thus removed from the category of "beggarly elements," and became what is now in the merit certificate the subject *English*. The question was not whether the three higher classes could read creditably, had had the lesson intelligently explained, and had been taught grammar on good lines with satisfactory results in the class *as a whole*, but whether each individual pupil had imbibed sufficient grammar and intelligence to secure a pass in reading. There was nothing for it but to subject each pupil to this triple test, extract from him, sometimes laboriously, the requisite amount of attainment, and after weighing the claims of good reading as a make-weight against shaky grammar and doubtful intelligence, decide, from an average of the three factors, whether the grant had been earned or forfeited. Further, specific subjects were open to the three highest classes, and teachers, in their eagerness for large grants and higher reputation, presented pupils in great numbers. It was not unusual to have four or five subjects — such as Latin, French, physical geography, and magnetism — taken up by different sets of pupils in the same school, and all subjected to individual examination. From all this some idea may be formed of the

exhausting character of the inspector's work in these circumstances.

I remember a case in which I was obliged to recommend a refusal of the grant for intelligence and grammar in the lower, and for geography and history in the upper, half of a school. The teacher was a highly educated graduate, with ability to "get up" as much of any specific subject, however complex, as could earn the payment offered for it, but whose love of a large grant was fairly on a par with his teaching ability. He had evidently (though I did not know it till after the inspection) carefully weighed from a grant-earning point of view the competing claims of general intelligence, geography, and history, as against specific subjects, and had decided to throw his weight into the scale of the latter, in the hope that such vague subjects as general intelligence, &c., would be more loosely assessed than the hard facts with which specific subjects deal. I found the grammar and intelligence of one class barely passable, and of the other exceedingly poor. Geography and history were of similar type. Knowing him to be an able man and a very successful teacher, I was unwilling to recommend the refusal of both grants, unless I was quite sure that they

were justly forfeited. In this frame of mind I did my very best, struggling till I got into a state of vulgar heat in my efforts to extract the requisite amount of attainment, but completely without success. Thinking it possible that the children were either tired or timid, or that the teacher might have some more stimulative method than mine, I asked him (he stood by and had been a witness of my heroic but fruitless struggles) to try what he could make of them. With a coolness which was provokingly—or shall I say ungratefully—out of keeping with the energy I had been putting forth on his behalf, he replied, “Oh, there’s no use pumping when the well’s dry.” Now, as he must have known that he had not devoted five minutes to the instruction necessary, and yet had seen the martyr-like devotion with which I had pumped energetically for nearly an hour to find ground for recommending payment, his conduct seemed to me unfeeling, lacking brotherly kindness and well-earned gratitude, and I accordingly refused the grants with an almost unholy joy.

The parish schoolmaster had as a rule more or less university education, and in some counties, as I have said, he was invariably a graduate. And here I think I am warranted in saying that

the average Scottish graduate is, on the score of sound education, in no way inferior and in many respects superior to the average pass graduate of Oxford or Cambridge. From my personal knowledge as one of the examiners for degrees in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and from what I know of the pitch of the pass degree in Cambridge, I have no hesitation in saying what will be corroborated by all who have had the same means of judging, that the Scottish degree represents a higher level and a broader basis of education than the English pass degree. It is also quite certain that the preliminary examination for entrance is much more difficult in Scotland than in England.

As to honours graduates, when England and Scotland are compared in respect of population, number of university students, the social class from which they come (in England mainly from the wealthy, in Scotland mainly from the lower middle), the schools which furnish the preliminary training, the success of Scottish in competition with English students for appointments in the Indian Civil Service, it is by no means evident that the Scottish honours graduate must lower his flag in presence of his English rival. M. Biot is probably right in thinking that much of

the success which attends the efforts of Scottish boys after they leave school and university is due to a habit of self-reliance which has been fostered by their early school training. Few of them are, so to speak, spoon-fed or cradled in the lap of luxury. Urged on by the spur of necessity, they are compelled, from the first, to trust to their own resources, and from this are developed breadth of view and adaptability to new and varying conditions, to meet which the training of the average English boy has not so fully prepared him.

Many of these Scottish graduates were not only well-educated men but good teachers. There were, however, a few notable exceptions. Some of them were "stickit ministers," and education would not have suffered had they been also "stickit" teachers. There was one with whom I did not come officially into contact, who was known by the disrespectful name of "Cocky," from his conceited bearing. An anecdote is told of him which, though well known in Aberdeenshire, has probably not obtained general currency farther south. His discipline had never been good, and with increase of years did not improve.

The generally received version is that there was a good fishing-stream in the neighbourhood

of the school where the older pupils were in the habit of amusing themselves regardless of breaches of discipline and regular attendance. On one occasion of the annual examination by the Presbytery this burn happened to be in good trim. The highest class knew that if Cocky—a licentiate of the Church—was allowed to get as far as religious knowledge in the examination, their fishing pastime would be unduly curtailed. This must not be, and they took measures accordingly. The reading lesson was gone through with propriety and success. Then came spelling, and here their flank movement was to be made. A boy in the middle of the class was asked to spell *redemption*. He failed, and the next, and the next, down to the bottom of the class, each boy ringing an ingenious and ludicrous change on the apparently unspellable word. The ministers were utterly astonished. Cocky was not less so. His face became very red, and turning to the top boy, from whom he had no doubt he would get a correct spelling, he said, "You spell it, sir," and the response was "K-O-K-Y, *redemption*," followed by a rush to the door with the whole class at his heels.

Instances of this kind are exceedingly rare, and they are little likely to recur.

CHAPTER X.

JAMES BEATTIE — LESSONS FROM A SHOEMAKER'S STOOL :
"BAIRNS MAUN LIKE THEIR BOOKS" — "SHE HAS A
DREADFU' MEMORY" — "READ AS WEEL'S YE CAN DO" —
"WHAT ! ARE YE KEEKIN'?" — "HOO COULD I CHARGE
FEES?" — "EH ! MAN, BELL'S DEID."

I HAVE a very pleasing recollection of James Beattie, an old Aberdeen shoemaker, whose acquaintance I made, and of whose work in education I gave a sketch which appeared in 'Good Words' upwards of thirty years ago. As many of the present generation have not seen, and many who saw have doubtless forgotten it, I venture to reproduce it as probably not unworthy of a place among scholastic reminiscences.

LESSONS FROM A SHOEMAKER'S STOOL.

In the course of my wanderings I had the good luck not long ago to fall in with a very remarkable and interesting old man, James Beattie,

of Gordonstone, a village of about a score of houses, in the parish of Auchterless, in the north-east corner of Aberdeenshire. He is a shoemaker, but has conjoined with his trade the teaching of all the children in his neighbourhood. It is remarkable how largely the shoemaking profession bulks in the public eye in this respect. John Pounds, the Portsmouth cobbler, was the founder of Ragged Schools in England; and George Murray of Peterhead, also a shoemaker, formed the nucleus from which the Union Industrial Schools of that town have sprung. Many others might be mentioned. Probably scientific investigation may hereafter explain this affinity between leather and philanthropy.

Mr Beattie is now eighty-two years of age. For sixty of these he has been carrying on his labour of love, and he means to do so as long as he can point an awl or a moral, adorn a tale or a piece of calf-skin. He has sought no reward but that of a good conscience. None are better worthy of a recognition in 'Good Words' than the systematic unobtrusive doer of good deeds, and probably few will grudge James Beattie the honour.

While in his neighbourhood a friend of mine gave me such an account of him as made me

resolve to see him if possible. By making a start an hour earlier than was necessary for my regular duty, I had no difficulty in making out my visit to him. His workshop being pointed out to me—a humble one-storey house with a thatch roof, and situated in quite a rural district—I went up to the door and knocked.

I hope the three hundred and odd school-managers, with whom I am acquainted in the north of Scotland, will excuse me for saying here, that this ceremony—the knocking—ought always to be gone through on entering a school. It is not perhaps too much to say that, so far as I have observed, it is almost invariably neglected. The door is opened, and an unceremonious entrance is made, by which not only is the teacher made to feel—I know he feels it—that he is not the most important person there, which is not good; *but the pupils are made to see it*, which is very bad. I am aware that this is sometimes due to the fact that the teacher and managers are on the most familiar terms. It is not always so; and even when it is, I venture to think that the courtesy of a knock should be observed. I have never once, when I was alone, or when it depended on me, entered a school without knocking. This, however, by the way.

I had got the length of knocking at James Beattie's door, which was almost immediately opened by a stout-built man under the middle size, with a thoroughly Scotch face, square, well-marked features, eyes small and deeply sunk, but full of intelligence and kindness. The eyes, without having anything about them peculiarly striking, had a great deal of that quiet power for which I cannot find a better epithet than sympathetic. They are eyes that beget trust and confidence, that tempt you somehow to talk, that assure you that their owner will say nothing silly or for show; in short, good, sensible, kindly eyes. His age and leathern apron left me in no doubt as to who he was. I said, however, "You are Mr Beattie, I suppose?"

"Yes," he replied, "my name's James Beattie. Wull ye no come in oot o' the snaw? It's a stormy day."

"Perhaps," I said, "when you know who I am, you won't let me in."

"Weel, at present I dinna ken ony reason for keepin' ye oot."

I then told him who I was; that I was on my way to Auchterless Female School (about two miles off), that his friend Mr C—— had

been speaking to me about him, and that, as I was almost passing his door, I could not resist calling upon him, and having a friendly chat with one who had been so long connected with education. I added that I did not wish to see his school unless he liked, and that if he had any objections he was to say so.

“Objections!” he replied. “I never hae ony objections to see onybody that has to do wi’ education. It has aye been a hobby o’ mine, and I daur say a body may hae a waur hobby. You that’s seein’ sae mony schules will be able to tell me something I dinna ken. Come in, sir.”

In his manner there was no fussiness, but a most pleasing solidity, heartiness, and self-possession. He did not feel that he was being made a lion of, and he evidently did not care whether he was or not. I went in, and as a preliminary to good fellowship asked him for a pinch of snuff, in which I saw he indulged. The house, which does double duty as a shoemaker’s stall and schoolroom, is not of a very promising aspect. The furniture consists of a number of rude forms and a desk along the wall. So much for the schoolroom. In the other end are four shoemakers’ stools occupied by their owners, lasts, straps, lap-stones, hammers, old

shoes, and the other accompaniments of a shoemaker's shop. Two or three farm-servants, whose work had been stopped by the snowstorm, had come in, either to pass an idle hour in talk or in the way of business.

There were only ten pupils present, a number being prevented by the snow and long roads. When I went in some of them were conning over their lessons in a voice midway between speech and silence, and one or two were talking, having taken advantage of the "maister's" going to the door to speak to me, and the noise called forth from Mr Beattie the order, "Tak' your bookies, and sit peaceable and dacent, though there's few o' ye this snawy day. Think it a', dinna speak oot; your neebours hear ye, and dinna mind their ain lessons."

This is, I think, very good: "Although there's few o' ye this snawy day," your responsibility is individual, not collective. Many or few, the object for which you are here is the same—viz., to learn your lessons and behave properly. The snowstorm has kept many away, but it furnishes no excuse for noise or idleness. The old man's "though there's few o' ye" thus involved a great principle that lies at the root of all true teaching.

The order was obeyed to the letter. James

pointed out a seat for me on one of the forms, took up his position on his stool, and he and I began to talk. I am tempted to give it, to the best of my recollection, in his simple Doric, which would lose much by translation.

“You will not be very well pleased,” I remarked, by way of drawing him out, “about this fine new school which has just been opened at Badenscoth. It will take away a great many of your scholars.”

“Oh, man!” he replied, “ye dinna ken me, or ye wudna say that. I hae just said a hunder times, when I heard o’ the new schule, that I was thankfu’ to Providence. Afore there was ony talk o’ the new schule, I hae stude mony a time wi’ my back to the fire lookin’ at the bairnies when they were learnin’ their lessons, and whiles takin’ a bit glint up at my face—for I think some o’ them like me—and I’ve said, ‘Oh, wha’ll mind thae puir creaturs when I’m awa’?’ Ye ken,” he continued, “I canna expect muckle langer time here noo. Ay, even if I werena an auld dune man, as I am, I wud hae been thankfu’ for the new schule. I hae maybe dune as weel’s I could, but a’ my teachin’, though it’s better than naething, is no to be compared wi’ what they’ll get at a richt schule.”

"It is quite true," I said, "that you labour under great disadvantages, having both to teach and attend to your work at the same time."

"Weel, it's no sae muckle that, as my ain want o' education."

"You have had a long education," I replied.

"That's just what a freen o' mine said to me ance, and I mind I said to him, 'That's the truest word ever ye spak. I've been learnin' a' my days, and I'm as fond to learn as ever.'"

"But how do you manage to teach and work at the same time?"

"Ye see," he replied, "when I'm teachin' the A B C, I canna work, for I maun point to the letters; but when they get the length o' readin', I ken fine by the sense, withoot the book, if they're readin' richt, and they canna mak' a mistak' but I ken't."

Well said by James Beattie! He has discovered, by common-sense and experience, the only true test of good reading, "by the sense without the book."

"In spite of your own want of education, however," I said, "I understand that you have old pupils in almost every quarter of the globe who are doing well, and have made their way in the world through what you were able to give

them. I have heard, too, that some of them are clergymen."

"Ay, that's true enough," he replied; "and some o' them hae come back after being years awa', and sat doon amang the auld shoon there whar they used to sit. And I've got letters frae some o' them, after ganging a far way, that were just sae fu' o' kindness and gude feelin', and brocht back the auld times sae keenly, that I micht maybe glance ower them, but I couldna read them oot. Ah, sir! a teacher and an auld scholar, if they're baith richt at the heart, are buckled close thegither, though the sea's atween them. At ony rate, that's my experience.

"See, sir," he continued, holding out a point of deer's horn, "there's a' I hae o' a remembrance o' ane that's in Canada, a prosperous man noo, wi' a great farm o' his ain. When he was at the schule here, he saw me makin' holes wider wi' a bit pointed stick, and he thocht this bit horn wud do't better,—and he wasna far wrang,—and he gied it to me. Weel, he cam' back years and years after, and I didna ken him at first. He had grown up frae being a bairn, no muckle bigger than my knee, to be a buirdly chield. I sune made oot wha he was; and as I was workin' and talkin' to him, I had occasion to use this bit horn.

'Gude hae me,' says he, 'hae ye that yet?'
'Ay,' said I, 'and I'll keep it as lang as I hae a hole to bore.'"

Returning to the subject of teaching, I said,
"How do you manage after they have got the alphabet, and what books do you use?"

"Weel, I begin them wi' wee penny bookies; but it's no lang till they can mak' something o' the Testament; and when they can do that, I chuse easy bits oot o' baith the Auld and New Testaments that teaches us our duty to God and man. I dinna say that it's maybe the best lesson-book; but it's a book they a' hae, and ane they should a' read, whether they hae ither books or no. They hae 'collections' too, and I get them pamphlets and story-books; and when I see them gettin' tired o' their lessons, and beginning to tak' a look about the house, I bid them put by their 'collections,' and tak' their pamphlets and story-books. Ye ken, bairns maun like their books."

Well said again! "Bairns maun like their books,"—a necessity far from universally recognised, either by teachers or the makers of school-books. Many a healthy plant has been killed by being transplanted into an ungenial soil, and kept there; and many a promising school career has

been marred or cut short by books that "bairns couldna like."

"You teach writing, arithmetic, and geography, too, I suppose, Mr Beattie?"

"I try to teach writin' and geography; but ye'll believe that my writin's naething to brag o', when I tell ye that I learnt it a' mysel'; ay, and when I began to mak' figures, I had to tak' doon the Testament, and look at the 10th verse, to see whether the o or the 1 cam' first in 10. I can learn them to write a letter that can be read, and, ye ken, country folk's no very particular aboot its being like copperplate. Spellin's the main thing. It doesna mak' (matter) if a bairn can write like a clerk, if he canna spell. I can learn them geography far eneuch to understand what they read in the newspapers; and if they need mair o't than I can gie them, and hae a mind for't, they can learn it for themsel's. I dinna teach countin'. Ony man in my humble way can do a' that on his tongue. At ony rate, I've aye been able. Besides, I couldna teach them countin'. Ye see, I maun leeve by my wark, and I'm thankfu' to say I've aye been able to do that; but I couldna do't if I was to teach them countin'. It wud mak' sic an awfu' break in my time. When my ain grand-

children hae got a' I can gie them, I just send them to ither schules."

"What catechism do you teach?" I asked.

"Ony ane they like to bring," he replied. "I'm an Episcopalian mysel'; but I hae lived lang eneuch to ken, and, indeed, I wasna very auld afore I thocht I saw that a body's religious profession was likely to be the same as his father's afore him; and so I just gie everybody the same liberty I tak' to mysel'. I hae Established Kirk, and Free Kirk, and Episcopal bairns, and they're a' alike to me. D'ye no think I'm richt?"

"Quite right, I have no doubt. The three bodies you mention have far more points of agreement than of difference, and there is enough of common ground to enable you to do your duty by them without offending the mind of the most sensitive parent. I wish your opinions were more common than they are."

During the conversation the old man worked while he talked. He had evidently acquired the habit of doing two things at once.

"I should like very much," I said, "to see some of your teaching. Will you let me hear how your pupils get on?"

"I'll do that wi' pleasure, sir," he replied;

“but ye maun excuse oor auld-fashioned tongue.”

He took off his spectacles, and laid aside his work, I presume out of deference to a stranger; and was about to call up some of his scholars, when I requested him not to mind me, and said that I should prefer to see him go on in his ordinary way.

“Weel, weel, sir, ony way ye like; but I thocht it was barely dacent to gang on cobblin’ awa’ when ye were examinin’ the bairns.”

He accordingly resumed his spectacles and his work, adjusted his woollen nightcap or cowl, striped with red, white, and black—an article of common wear by day among people of his age and occupation—and, looking round, said, “Come here, Bell, and read to this gentleman.”

This remark was addressed to a little girl about eight years of age. Bell came up when called.

“She has a dreadfu’ memory, sir! I weel believe it wud tak’ her an hour and a half to say a’ she has by heart.”

Bell read fluently and intelligently, spelt correctly, and afterwards repeated a whole chapter of Job with scarcely a stumble, and so as to convince me that she really had a “dreadfu’ mem-

ory." Her answers to several questions proposed by myself were wonderfully mature. I have seldom seen a child whose solidity of intellect and thoughtfulness struck me more than that of Bell M'Kenzie.

"Come here noo, Jamie," he said, addressing a very little boy, "and if ye read weel, or at any rate *as weel's ye can do*, to this gentleman, ye'll get a sweetie; but if ye dinna, ye'll get naething."

What a world of kindness and consideration there is in these five little words, "as weel's ye can do," even as they appear on paper! It was a *strict*, but not a *hard* bargain. I daresay the modification, "as weel's ye can do," was suggested by Jamie's very tender age: he was just over three. Less than "weel" would earn the sweetie; but it must be *as weel's he can do*. The test was, as it should always be in such cases, a relative one. In order, however, to apprehend the full effect of the modifying words, it is necessary to hear the tone of the old man's voice, to see the gentle pat on Jamie's back with which they were accompanied, and the childlike confidence with which the little urchin of three years came up to the old man of nearly eighty-two, and, resting his arm on the apron-covered knee, began to spell out his lesson, having first

assured himself by an inquiring look into the "maister's" face that the stranger meant him no harm. The awl was used as a pointer, and Jamie did at first pretty well—for his age, I thought, wonderfully well, but to the old shoemaker's mind, "no sae weel's he could do," and he had to give place to another boy. He did so, but the tears came into his little eyes, and remained there till he was taken on a second trial, and reinstated in favour. He earned and got his sweetie; that was a good thing. He had pleased the "maister," and was no longer in disgrace; that was evidently a far better thing.

The Bible class was then called up.

"That cratur' there, Jean," he said, putting his hand on a little girl's head, and looking kindly in her face, "is a gude scholar, though she's but sma'."

Jean, reassured by the remark, and prepared for the ordeal, gave a smile, and commenced reading the 26th chapter of Numbers. It was difficult, and even Jean halted now and then as a proper name of more than ordinary difficulty came in her way.

"I doot it's a hard bit that, Jean," he said; "is't a' names?"

"Na, nae't a'," she replied, with an emphasis

on the *a'*, which left it to be inferred that a good part of it was names.

"Weel, do the best ye can; spell them oot when ye canna read them. Come here, Jessie," he said, addressing the biggest girl present, probably eleven years of age, "and see if they spell them richt." Turning to me, he said, "I'm no sae fond o' chapters fu' o' names as o' them that teach us our duty to God and ane anither; but it does them nae harm to be brocht face to face wi' a difficulty noo and then. It wad tak' the speerit oot o' the best horse that ever was foaled to mak' it draw aye up-hill. But a chapter like that maks them try themsel's in puttin' letters thegither, and naming big words. I daur-say ye'll agree wi' me, that to battle wi' a difficulty and beat it is a gude thing for us a', if it doesna come ower often."

"I quite agree with you," I replied.

"Weel, when it's a namey chapter like that, I get my assistant" (with a humorous twinkle of his eye)—"that bit lassie's my assistant—to look ower't, and see if they spell't richt. I couldna be sure o' the spellin' o' the names withoot the book."

After the Bible lesson, and as a supplement to it, Jessie, the assistant, was ordered to ask the Shorter Catechism. She ranged pretty nearly

over it all, and received, on the whole, surprisingly correct answers. Meantime the old man went steadily on with his shoe, all eye for his work, all ear for blunders. Once he heard one girl whispering assistance to another, which he promptly and almost severely checked by, "Dinna tell her; there's nae waur plan than that. If she needs help, I'll tell her mysel', or bid you tell her."

A boy who stumbled indifferently through an answer was punished with "Ay, ye're no very clear upon that, lad. Try't again. I doot ye haena stressed your e'en wi' that ane last nicht." He tried it again, but with not much better success. "Oh, tak' care! ye're no thinkin'. If ye dinna think o' the meanin', hoo can ye be richt? Ye might as weel learn Gaelic."

After several other correct answers, I had a very good example of the quickness of perception which long experience gives. A little girl having broken down, opened the catechism which she held in her hand, and craftily began reading instead of repeating the answer. The shoemaker's ear at once caught it up. He detected from the accuracy of the answer, and at the same time from the hesitating tone in which it was given, the effort of reading, and said, in a voice of con-

siderable severity, "What! are ye keekin'? Hae ye your catechiss in your han'? Hoo often hae I telt ye o' the dishonesty o' that? Ye're cheatin', or at ony rate ye're tryin' to cheat me. Do I deserve that frae ye? Did I ever cheat you? But ye're doing far waur than cheatin' me. Oh, whatever ye do, be honest. Come to the schule wi' your lessons weel by heart if you can; but if you've been lazy, dinna mak' your faut waur by being dishonest."

It will be seen from this sketch of his teaching that Mr Beattie is a man of no ordinary type. I have succeeded very imperfectly in conveying an adequate notion of his kindness and sympathy with everything good. I was surprised to find, in a man moving in a very narrow circle, such advanced and well-matured theories of education. His idea of the extent to which difficulties should be presented in the work of instruction—his plan of selecting passages instead of taking whatever comes to hand—his objection to whispering assistance, "Dinna tell her; if she needs help, I'll tell her mysel', or bid you tell her"—his severe but dignified reproof of dishonesty, "Ye're cheatin' me, but ye're doing far waur than that. Oh, whatever ye do, be honest!" &c.—his encouragement to thoughtfulness and intelligence, "If

ye dinna think o' the meanin', hoo can ye be richt?"—seemed to me most admirable, well worthy the attention of all who are engaged in similar pursuits, and certainly very remarkable as being the views of a man who has mixed little with the world, and gained almost nothing from the theories of others.

It was evident from the behaviour of the children that they all fear, respect, and love him.

I sat and talked with him on various subjects for a short time longer, and then rose to bid him good-bye.

"But, sir," he remarked, "this is a cauld day, and, if ye're no a teetotaller, ye'll maybe no object to gang up to my house wi' me and 'taste something'?"

I replied that I was not a teetotaller, and should be very glad to go with him. We went accordingly, "tasted something," and had a long talk.

He has, for a country shoemaker, a remarkably good library. The books generally are solid, some of them rare, and he seems to have made a good use of them. His opinion of novels is perhaps worth quoting—

"I never read a novel a' my days. I've heard bits o' Scott read that I likit very weel, but I

never read ony o' them mysel'. The bits I heard telt me some things that were worth kennin', and were amusin' into the bargain; but I understan' that's no the case wi' the maist o' novels. When a body begins to read them, he canna stop; and when he has dune, he kens nae mair than when he began. Noo it taks me a' my time to read what's really worth kennin'."

I asked him what had first made him think of teaching.

"Mony a time," he replied, "hae I asked that at mysel'; and its nae wonder, for I never was at the schule but eleven weeks in my life, and that was when I was a loon (laddie) about eleven years auld. I had far mair need to learn than to teach, though I'm no sure but to teach a thing is the best way to learn't. Amaist a' that I ken, and it's no muckle to be sure, I got it by learning ithers. But ye've asked what made me begin teachin'? Weel, sir, it was this: When I was a young lad, there were seven grown-up folk roun' about here that couldna read a word. Some o' them were married and had families, and there was nae schule nearer than twa mile, and in the winter especially the young things couldna gang sae far. Ane o' the fathers said to me ae day: 'Ye ken, Jamie, I canna read mysel',

but oh, man, I ken the want o't, and I canna thole that Willie shouldna learn. Jamie, ye maun tak' and teach him.' 'Oh, man,' I said, 'hoo can I teach him? I ken naething mysel.' 'Ye maun try,' he said. Well, I took him, and after him anither and anither cam', and it wasna lang till I had aboot twenty. In a year or twa I had between sixty and seventy, and sae I hae keepit on for near sixty years. I soon grew used wi't, and custom, ye ken, is a kind o' second nature."

"But how did you find room," I asked "for sixty in that little place?"

"Weel, sir, there was room for mair than ye wud think. Wherever there was a place that a cratur' could sit, I got a stoolie made, and every corner was filled. Some were at my back, some were in the corner o' the window, and some were sittin' among the auld shoon at my feet. But for a' that there wasna room for sixty; and so a woman that lived across the road had a spare corner in her house, and when the bairns got their lessons they gaed owre and sat wi' her, and made room for the ithers. Ye see, the fathers and mithers were aye in gude neebourhood wi' me. They were pleased and I was pleased, and when folk work into ane anither's

han's, they put up wi' things that they wudna thole at ither times."

"You must have had great difficulty," I remarked, "in keeping so many of them in order. What kind of punishment did you use?"

"Oh, sir, just the strap. Ye might hae seen it lying amang the auld shoon."

"And did you need to use it often?"

"Ou ay, mony a time, when they were obstinate. But I maun say, it was when the schule was sae close packit that I had to use't maist. When they were sittin' just as close as I could pack them, some tricky nackits o' things wud put their feet below the seats, and kick them that was sittin' afore them. Order, ye ken, maun be keepit up, and I couldna pass by sic behaviour. I've seldom needit to chasteese them for their lessons," he continued; "the maist o' them are keen to learn, and gie me little trouble."

"Have you any idea," I asked, "of the number of pupils you have passed through your hands during these sixty years?"

"Weel, I keepit nae catalogue o' names, but some o' them that tak' an interest in the bairns made oot that they canna be less than fourteen or fifteen hunder. I weel believe they're richt."

“And you have never charged any fees, I understand?”

“Fees! Hoo could I charge fees? I never socht, and I never wanted a sixpence. But I maun say this, that the neebours hae been very kind, for they offered to work my bit croft for me, and it wudna hae been dacent to refuse their kindness. And they gied me a beautiful silver snuff-box in 1835. That’s it,” he said, taking it out of his pocket; “wull ye no tak’ anither pinch?”

I did, and then said that I was glad to learn from his friend Mr C—— that, a year or so ago, he had been presented with his portrait and a handsome purse of money.

“Deed it’s quite true, and I was fairly affronted when they gied me my portrait and £86, and laudit me in a’ the papers. Some o’t cam’ frae Canada and ither foreign pairts; but I ken’t naething about the siller till they gied it to me, for they cam’ owre me, and got me to tell them, without thinking o’t, where some o’ my auld scholars were leevin’. I said to mysel’ when I got it, that I was thankfu’ for’t, for I wud be able noo to buy the puir things books wi’t.”

“You supply them with books, then?” I inquired.



“Fees! Hoo could I charge fees?”

"Weel, them that's no able to buy them," he said, with a peculiar smile.

I have not succeeded in analysing this smile to my own satisfaction, but, among other things, it expressed commiseration for the poverty of those who were not able to buy books, and a deprecating reproof of himself for having been unwittingly betrayed into an apparent vaunting of his own good deeds.

"You must have great pleasure," I said, "in looking back to the last sixty years, and counting up how many of your old scholars have done you credit."

"Oh, I hae that!" he replied. "I've dune what I could, and there's nae better wark nor learnin' young things to read, and ken their duty to God and man. If it was to begin again, I dinna think I could do mair, or at ony rate mair earnestly, for education than I hae dune; but I could maybe do't better noo. But it's a dreadfu' heartbreak when ony o' them turns oot ill, after a' my puir wark to instil gude into them."

I led him by degrees to take a retrospect of the last half century. He told me, in his simple, unaffected Doric, the history of some of his pupils, keeping himself in the background, except where

his coming forward was necessary either to complete the story or put in a stronger light the good qualities of some of his old scholars. He paused now and then, sometimes with his hands on his knees and his head slightly lowered, sometimes with his head a little to one side and his eye looking back into the far-off years, and I saw, by his quiet, reflective look, that he was scanning the fruits of his labours, his expression varying from gaiety to gloom, as the *câreer* of a successful or "ne'er-do-weel" pupil passed in review before him.

I complimented him on his haleness for his years.

"Yes," he replied, "I should be thankfu', and I try to be't; but, I'm feared, no sae thankfu' as I should be. Except hearing and memory, I hae my faculties as weel's when I was ten year auld. Eh! what a mercy! hoo mony are laid helpless on their back lang afore they're my age, and hoo few are aboon the ground that are sae auld!"

Here the old man's voice faltered, and tears of genuine gratitude filled his eyes.

"Of a' them that began life wi' me, I just ken ane that's no ta'en awa'. There were twelve brithers and sisters o' us, and I'm the only ane that's left. My father dee't when I was sixteen.

My aulder brithers was a' oot at service; and as I was the only ane that was brocht up to my father's trade, my mither and the younger anes had to depend maistly on me; and I thocht I was a broken reed to depend on, for I hadna mair nor half-learned my trade when my father dee't. I mind the first pair o' shoon I made; when I hung them up on the pin, I said to mysel', 'Weel, the leather was worth mair afore I put a steek (stitch) in't.' Ye ken they werena sae particular then as they are noo. If the shoe didna hurt the foot, and could be worn at a', they werena very nice aboot the set o't. Mony a time I thocht I wud hae lost heart, but regard for my mither keepit me frae despairin'. Whiles I was for ownin' beat, and askin' the rest to help us; but my mither said, 'Na, Jamie, my man, we'll just work awa' as weel's we can, and no let the rest ken.' Weel, I wrocht hard at my trade, and when I should hae been sleepin', I wrocht at my books, and I made progress in baith. Ah, sir," said the old man, with a pathos I cannot reproduce, "naebody that hasna had to fecht for the best o' mithers can understan' my feelings when I saw at last that I was able to keep her and mysel' in meat and claes respectably. I've had mony a pleasure in my lang life, but this was worth them

a' put thegither. Ay," he said, and his voice became deeper and richer, "it's grand to win a battle when ye've been fechtin' for the through-bearin' and comfort o' an auld widow mither that ye like wi' a' your heart! For, oh! I likit my mither, and she deserved a' my likin'."

Here he broke down, his eyes filled, and, as if surprised at his own emotion, he brushed away the tears almost indignantly with his sleeve, saying, "I'm an auld man, and maybe I should think shame o' this, but I canna help being prood o' my mither."

"I think I can understand both your perseverance and your pride," I replied; "you must have had a hard struggle."

"Ay, I cam' through the hards; but if I was to be laid aside noo, it wud be nae loss to my family, for they're comfortable, and could keep me weel eneuch; and I'm sure they wud do't."

"You were well armed for the battle," I replied, "and it was half won before you began it; for you evidently commenced life with thoroughly good principles and strong filial affection."

"Yes, I've reason to be thankfu' for a gude upbringing'. Mony a callant is ruined by bad example at hame. I canna say that for mysel'. Whatever ill I hae dune in my life canna be laid

at my father or mither's door. No, no; they were a dacent, honest, God-fearin' couple, and everybody respeckit them."

"Their example seems not to have been lost upon you; for you, too, have the respect of every one who knows you."

"Weel, I dinna ken," he replied; "everybody has enemies, and I may hae mine, but I dinna ken them—I really dinna ken them."

"Have you always lived in this village?" I asked.

"Yes; and, what's curious, I've lived under four kings, four bishops, four ministers, and four proprietors. And for mair than sixty years I've gane to the chapel at least ance a-week, and that's a walk o' eight mile there and back. That's some travelling for ye. I never was an hour ill since I was fourteen year auld."

He still looks wonderfully hale; but he says that for some time past he has felt the weight of years coming upon him.

"Sometimes," he said, "I grow dizzy. I dinna ken what it is to be the waur o' drink, but I think it maun be something like what I've felt—just sae dizzy that if I was to cross the floor and tramp on a bool [marble] I would fa'."

Judging, however, from his haleness, one

would think him not much above seventy, and even strong for that, and with probably years of good work in him yet. He expresses himself clearly, methodically, and without an atom of pedantry, though in the broadest Scotch. He is, as I have said, an Episcopalian, and says, "When it is a saint's day, and the bairns are telt no to come to the schule, for I maun gang to the chapel, if I have occasion to gang doon to the shop a wee in the morning afore chapel-time to finish some bit job, I catch mysel' lookin' roun' for the bairns, though there's nane o' them there. Na," he continued, "I couldna do without my bairns noo at a': I canna maybe do them muckle gude, but I can do them nae harm; and as lang as I can try to do them gude, I'll no gie't up."

Thus ended my first morning with James Beattie, in February 1864, and I felt as if I had been breathing an atmosphere as fresh, bracing, and free from taint as that which plays on mid-ocean or on the top of Ben Nevis.

I saw him a second time in January 1865, and, though it was again a snowy day, I found twenty pupils present. The shoemaking and schoolwork go on as before. The awl and the hammer are

as busy as ever, and his care of his bairns unabated. I had scarcely sat down before I asked for "Bell," whose "dreadfu' memory" had surprised me the previous year. I saw, from the grieved expression that passed over his countenance, that something was wrong.

"Eh! man, Bell's deid. She dee't o' scarlatina on the last day o' September, after eighteen hours' illness. There never was a frem'd body's¹ death that gied me sae muckle trouble as puir Bell's."

Evidently much affected by the loss of his favourite pupil, he went on to say, "She was insensible within an hour after she was ta'en ill, and continued that way till a short time afore she was ta'en awa', when she began to say a prayer—it was the langest ane I had learned her—and she said it frae beginning to end without a mistak'. Her mither, puir body, thocht she had gotten the turn, and was growing better, but whenever the prayer was dune, she grew insensible again, and dee't aboot an hour after. Wasna that most extraordinar'? It behoved to be the Speerit o' God workin' in that bairn afore He took her to Himsel'. Ay, it'll be lang afore I forget Bell. I think I likit her amaist as if she had been my ain.

¹ A person not a relation.

Mony a time I said she was owre clever to leeve lang, but her death was a sair grief to me nane the less o' that. I'll never hae the like o' her again. I've a sister o' hers here. Annie M'Kenzie," he said, addressing a little girl, "stan' up, and let this gentleman see ye." Turning again to me, he said, "She has a wonderfu' memory too, but no sae gude as Bell's. She's just about six year auld. She has a prayer where she prays for her father and mither, and brithers and sister. Puir Bell was the only sister she had, and I said to her ae day that she shouldna say 'sister' ony mair in her prayer; and, wud ye believe't, sir? the tears cam' rinnin' doon the cratur's cheeks in a moment. I couldna help keepin' her company. Ye wudna expect that frae ane o' her age. She has a brither, too, aboot three year auld, that will come to something. He has a forehead stickin' oot just as if your han' was laid on't."

Jamie had made good progress during the year, and earned another sweetie easily. He has been promoted to the dignity of pointing for himself, and no longer requires the awl.

Mr Beattie seems as vigorous as when I saw him a year ago. The only indication of greater feebleness is, that he has taken regularly to the use of a staff. He walks, however, nimbly and

well; but he says the dizziness comes over him now and then, and he feels more at ease when he has a staff in his hand.

He asked me if I could not come and see him next day. I said I was sorry I could not. "I am awfu' vexed at that," he said; "this is the last day o' my eighty-first year. The morn's my eighty-second birthday, and I thocht I might maybe never see anither, and I made up my mind to gie the bairns a treat. They're a' comin', and they get a holiday. I'm awfu' vexed ye canna come."

"I wish very much I could," I replied.

"A' the neebours," he said, "are takin' an interest in't, and the Colonel's lady has sent me a cake to divide among the bairns—that's a sma' thing compared wi' a' her gude deeds, for she's a by-ordnar fine woman. Ye maun come up to my house and get a bit o' the cake."

I objected that it was scarcely fair to break it before to-morrow.

"Ou ay, ye maun taste it. She'll no object to you gettin' a bit o't afore the bairns."

I yielded of course, and spent another pleasant hour with him, during which I had my first impression confirmed as to his single-hearted benevolence and altogether fine character. I

shook hands with him, and as I was leaving said that I had some intention of sending a short sketch of his labours to 'Good Words.' I asked if he had any objection to his name being mentioned.

"Weel, sir," he said, "I'm real gratefu' for your kindness in coming twice to see me, and takin' notice o' me the way ye've dune. It's far mair than I deserve. I dinna think the readers o' 'Good Words' will care muckle about the like o' me, and I've never been fond o' makin' a show; but if ye think an article wi' my name in't wud encourage ithers in my humble way to do a' they can for the upbringin' o' puir creaturs that hae nae ither way o' gettin' education, I'll no forbid ye to do just as ye like."

"Well, then, I'll do it. Good-bye!"

"Wull ye gie me anither shake o' your han' afore ye go? I may never see ye again."

"Most willingly," I replied.

He took my hand in one of his, and, laying his other on my shoulder, said, "I'm no a man o' mony words, but I wud like ye to believe that I'm gratefu', real gratefu', for your kindness—as gratefu' as an auld man that kens weel what kindness is can be; and I wud like ye to promise, if ye're hereabouts next year, and me spared till

that time, that ye'll no gang by my door. Wull ye promise this?"

I gave the promise, and was rewarded by two or three kindly claps on the back, a hearty squeeze of the hand, and "God bless ye, and keep ye!"

The moral of James Beattie's life requires no pointing. A life that has been a discipline of goodness, and to which benevolence has become a necessity—"I canna do without my bairns noo at a', and as lang's I can try to do them gude, I'll no gie't up"—has a simple eloquence that needs no aid, and admits of no embellishment from well-balanced phrases.

I saw the old man once more. A few months after my notice of him appeared, his friends and admirers thought it their duty to recognise his noble work by presenting him with a purse of money. I was asked to make the presentation. I consented willingly, and had the pleasure of putting into his hand a purse of eighty sovereigns. His reply was short and characteristic, ending with "I canna mak a speech, but ye ken I'm gratefu'. It wud be unceevil to refuse your kindness, but I dinna deserve't." He passed away in his eighty-fifth year.

James Beattie was a man who had been diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord!