

CHAPTER XI.

SHERIFF NICOLSON—J. F. MACLENNAN—D'ARCY THOMPSON—
SWEARING IN LATIN—A READING PARTY—ALEXANDER
SMITH—'PUNCH' TO THE RESCUE—P. P. ALEXANDER.

WHILE living in Edinburgh I saw a great deal of Alexander (afterwards Sheriff) Nicolson, who was my colleague as examiner in philosophy for degrees in Edinburgh; of John F. Maclellan, advocate, cut off when little past his prime; of the late D'Arcy Thompson, Professor of Greek in Galway; of Alexander Smith, poet and novelist, who also died early; and P. P. Alexander, a man of fine literary faculty, but sadly wanting in continuous effort. How exhilarating were the evenings spent with these men. What an alternative they were to dutiful but monotonous writing of school reports; how brilliant their conversation, how happy their repartees, how genial their intercourse!

Nicolson the Celt—a name by which he was

universally known among his friends—a man of brilliant ability, literary taste, sympathetic nature, keen sense of humour, and very considerable capacity for philosophical research, passed through life amid crowds of cultured friends, but from want of steady continuous energy fell far short of the future which his friends predicted for him. He was the most delightful of companions, composed and sang songs which will be long remembered, but from his easy-going temperament he was surpassed, not in popularity, but in solid success, by many who were in intellect much his inferiors.

MacLennan was as industrious as he was able. He wrote a great deal for the 'Leader,' contributed to the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' the article on "Law"; was parliamentary draughtsman for Scotland, and in his treatises on 'Primitive Marriage' and 'Totemism' showed great research and independent thought. Failing health prevented him from rewriting 'Primitive Marriage.' While his theories on this subject have not met with general acceptance, the acuteness and ingenuity with which he supported them are universally acknowledged. It is certain that he gave a great impulse to such prehistoric research. As a companion his con-

versation was exceedingly stimulative and invigorating.

D'Arcy Thompson was then writing his 'Day Dreams of a Schoolmaster,' and read over to me part of the chapter "Back to Babel," in which he discussed the meaning and nomenclature of Latin cases. The original MS. ended somewhat thus: "You are tired, Reader, by this time. I can hear you indistinctly muttering, 'Confound these cases, do let them alone.' No, gentle Reader, they are already confounded, and I could heartily wish they were damned." I made a strong protest against this being printed, urging that it would be injurious to him as a teacher, and that Edinburgh parents would not tolerate *sweerin' at lairge* by an Academy Master. He at first obstinately refused to change it, but on the application of stronger pressure I convinced him of the inexpediency of arousing parental wrath, and he consented to a compromise. The paragraph now stands thus: "No, Reader, me judice illa antiqua vocabula non CONFUNDENDA sunt, quippe quæ jam satis confusa sint; sed prorsus et in æternum DAMNANDA." I think my advice was good. It is much safer to swear in Latin than in English.

I have a most pleasant recollection of a de-

lightful couple of months which I spent with him on the shores of Loch Long, as one of a small reading-party, to whom he acted as guide, philosopher, and friend, immediately before I entered Cambridge as an undergraduate. The weather was all that could be wished, and the party well assorted in respect of temper, tastes, and the extent to which our time should be apportioned between work and play. We read from two to three hours in the forenoon, and after lunch repaired to a comfortable shady spot close by, Homer in hand, to listen with delight for an hour or more to D'Arcy's translation of selected books into Anglo-Saxon speech, so well suited to the subject, of which he had such an admirable command. Then a couple of hours' fishing, generally successful, in the loch, followed by dinner and whist or light reading, finished the day. This reminiscence has a very sweet savour.

With Alexander Smith I was very intimate. He was a man singularly gentle, undemonstrative, and unassuming, with a large share of quiet humour, with not a particle of gall in his nature, patient of criticism, not in the least elated when it was favourable or even rapturous (as it was when the 'Life-drama,' his first great literary effort, appeared), and unruffled when it was ob-

viously unfair and born of bitter animus. Few men have been so much lionised as he was on its first appearance, but there was no affectation in the equanimity with which he listened to adulation in some respects overdone, yet perfectly intelligible from the unquestionably high level of many passages comparable with the best poetry of the nineteenth century. No one was more conscious than himself, or more frankly admitted, that much of the writing was young, that his imagination sometimes ran riot, that passion and sentiment were at times pitched on too high a key. This was no doubt the case, but as Jeffrey said of Keats, the spirit of poetry breathes through all the extravagance. The 'Life-drama' is wanting in constructive power, but it contains many beautiful passages, pearls exquisite in themselves, but arranged so artlessly and at random as to fall short of sustained effect. Many will remember the keen controversy that arose from reviews of the 'Life-drama' and 'City Poems' in the 'Athenæum,' in which Mr Smith was charged with gross plagiarism. It is perhaps difficult to deny that there was apparent ground for some of the charges, but it was contended—and reasonably contended—that a friendly or fair critic could have accounted for them as the outcome

of the tenacious memory of a man who, having read widely and with passionate admiration the works of many poets, had honestly employed (as his own) expressions and ideas which had been unconsciously assimilated. Other charges, however, and of these the majority, had a basis so ludicrously slender, and were prompted by an unfairness so obvious, that even 'Punch' came to the rescue. In a similar case lately the editor of the same periodical felt it to be a duty to administer a most scathing and well-deserved castigation to Henley for his mean and heartless depreciation of the merits of his dead friend Robert Louis Stevenson. None but very flagrant instances of hitting below the belt would tempt 'Punch' to deal with topics so alien to its appropriate *métier*.

The squib in which the ill-natured charges of plagiarism had keen and effective ridicule heaped upon them was ascribed to Shirley Brooks. It is now such an old story that it is probably forgotten by all but Smith's intimate friends, but it is perhaps worthy of repetition. I quote from memory, but remember enough of it to give a fairly correct notion of its general scope:—

“We find in Mr Smith the line—

‘The bees are busy in the yellow hive,’

“Obviously taken,” says ‘Punch,’ “from that well-known poem, ‘How doth the little busy bee,’ &c.

“Again, Mr Smith writes—

‘Each star that twinkles in the sky,’

which is again borrowed from

‘Twinkle, twinkle, little star.’

“Again Mr Smith—

‘And these be my last words,’

plagiarised from—

‘Were the last words of Marmion.’

“Again Mr Smith—

‘And islands in the lustrous Grecian seas,’

an obvious borrow from Byron’s

‘The isles of Greece.’

“Again Mr Smith—

‘A sigh and curse together,’

clearly taken from Scott, where the dying kid by its mother’s side is said

‘To draw its last sob by the side of its dam.’”

The article ends with a statement to the effect that it may safely be said that there is not a

word in Mr Smith's poetry that has not been previously used by some other poet.

One may imagine the appreciative laughter with which we joined Smith in seeing the *reductio ad absurdum* argument pressed home so effectually.

P. P. Alexander was, I have said, a man of great ability, but had somehow lost his way in life. He would have made an excellent soldier, and, had the choice been allowed him, would have adopted a military career. Balked in this, it is said, by his father's opposition, he did not take kindly to a commercial life, and ultimately gave it up. Having a moderate patrimony, he could afford to be intermittently industrious in literary effort, while, partly from natural temperament and partly from disappointment as to his life pursuit, he was persistently Bohemian. Evidence of this latter characteristic crops up frequently in his writings, and notably in his admirable Memoir of Smith. In all he wrote — humorous, philosophical, or pathetic — one cannot help feeling that his capacity was much greater than his performance, and regretting that he did not by continuous steady effort do, what he evidently could have done, earn for himself high distinction in literature. He had a wide acquaintance with the literary circles of

Edinburgh — Bohemian and other — and spent many evenings with friends among whom there was, as he says, “Much hearty, careless talk, frequently of a dreadfully unintellectual character.” In the Saturday evening club of which I was for many years a member and which came to an end five or six years ago, killed by the steadily increasing lateness of Edinburgh dinner-hours, Mr Alexander was occasionally present. It was purely a conversational club. At its inception, and for many years afterwards, it was the weekly meeting-place of university professors, doctors, lawyers, artists, and others of distinctly intellectual type. Informal discussions, sometimes on scientific, sometimes on literary, sometimes on social subjects, were carried on with much spirit and enjoyment. The creature comforts were pipes and moderate indulgence in the wine of the country.

One night the change in the drinking habits of people was incidentally referred to. Doubts were expressed about the authenticity of twelve and twenty tumblers of toddy being drunk at one *sederunt*. I professed no knowledge, personal or other, of such feats; but I said that a farmer in Aberdeenshire, of the highest respectability and *wecht*, whom I knew intimately—a man often appointed

as arbiter in cases requiring sound judgment and accuracy of statement, and in whose veracity on ordinary subjects I had absolute confidence—assured me that he had been one of twelve farmers who had sat down to dinner at three o'clock in the afternoon, and at three o'clock in the morning every man had drunk twenty-four tumblers of toddy. Mr Alexander was present, and was evidently interested in my statement. Turning to me he said, "My dear Kerr, I have no doubt that you have correctly reported what your farmer friend told you, but I venture to say, on the strength of personal and very considerable experience in drinking whisky, that the story is not credible. The man who has taken twenty-four tumblers is not fit to give evidence."

I need not say that I found effective reply impossible, and that we all admired the quickness and logic with which he knocked the bottom out of a story so circumstantially told.

That he had sad as well as festive hours, and could give them finely poetical expression, is seen in the following lines:—

"Death! I have heard thee in the summer noon
Mix thy weird whisper with the breath of flowers:
And I have heard thee oft in jocund hours,
Speak in the festal tones of music boon—

Not seldom thou art with me late and soon,
Whether the waves of life are dancing bright,
Or, dead to joy of thought, and sound, and sight,
My world lies all distraught and out of tune.

But most—in lone, drear hours of undelight,
When Sleep consents not to be child of choice,
And shuddering at its own dread stillness, Night,
Hung like a pall of choky dampness round,
Makes Silence' self to counterfeit a sound—
Methinks it is thine own authentic voice."

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGES IN GRADUATION AND BURSARIES IN EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW—ABERDEEN, WHY DIFFERENT—DICK BEQUEST—GRADUATION AND BURSARIES FIFTY YEARS AGO AND NOW—UNIVERSITY NO PLACE FOR POVERTY OF BOTH PURSE AND INTELLECT—BURSARIES, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, SHOULD BE OPEN TO FREE COMPETITION — CROOKED ANSWERS FROM EXAMINATION PAPERS.

IN two very important respects there have been great changes in the southern universities of Scotland within the last forty years—the proportion of students who place the copestone on their studies in the Faculty of Arts by graduating, and the number of bursaries open to free competition. In Aberdeen it has always been the fashion to graduate, and not to do so almost a disgrace. In the southern universities the fashion was non-graduation. For this there were several reasons, the chief of which may be shortly stated. In Aberdeen graduation was encouraged by the Dick Bequest, which has done more for the promotion of advanced education than any fund with which I am acquainted.

From it every parish schoolmaster in the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray might receive, as an addition to his income, sums ranging from £25 to £50 per annum. The first condition of such payments was passing a severe examination in university subjects by the Dick Trustees. Practically these schools were open only to graduates, or men of graduate stamp. A man below graduate stamp could neither pass the examination nor bring his Latin pupils up to the mark of a good place in the bursary competition. In this competition there was another encouragement to graduation. The Aberdeen town council and other patrons of bursaries, instead of gratifying a petty love of patronage which delights in dispensing favours to the importunate, often altogether irrespective of merit, consented to be entirely guided by the competition list, except where special conditions had been laid down by the testators. Every year between forty and fifty bursaries of the value of £35 downwards—the majority of them open to general competition—were offered, and for these it is approximately true that *all students competed*. The test was creditably high, and the majority consequently came up from school well prepared. A satisfactory place in the competition was a good

guarantee for the present possession or future acquisition of attainments which naturally and easily issued in graduation.

In comparing Aberdeen with Edinburgh and Glasgow it must be borne in mind that in the two latter, as being large cities, there is a considerable proportion of casual students—that is, students who attend the university simply as in some sort a supplement to secondary education, and who have neither intention nor strong motive to graduate. They do not care for, because they do not require, a degree for success in life. These set the fashion of non-graduation. This was the case fifty years ago. Since then there has been an enormous and gratifying change. In Glasgow University in 1850 only 19 students took the degree of M.A.; in 1900, 123 did so. There is a similar increase of graduates in the Faculties of Divinity, Medicine, and Law. In Arts the increase is nearly seven times, and in the other faculties taken together upwards of five times, what it was fifty years ago. The larger number of students only very partially accounts for this. The number in 1850 was about 900, and now it is 2033, of whom 341 are women.

In Edinburgh University much the same is the case. In 1859 the number of graduates in Arts

was 16. In 1901 the number is 126. In 1858 the number of matriculated students in all the Faculties of Arts, Divinity, Law, and Medicine was 1426. In 1901 the number is 2929.

Still greater and more gratifying is the revolution that has taken place in the bursary system of Glasgow during the last fifty years. Principal Caird, in an opening address many years ago, said, "I regret much that the educational advantages which accrue to the University of Aberdeen from their initial bursary competitions we do not possess, and I should venture to call the attention of intending benefactors of this university to the circumstances, and to point out to them that there is no way in which they can so much promote the welfare of the university, or further the great ends for which it exists, as to largely increase the number of our competitive bursaries—of bursaries not clogged by any special conditions, but open to general competition." At that time the Snell exhibitions to Oxford, and the Breadalbane scholarships, were judiciously bestowed, after examination, on the best men, but the bursaries were scrambled for by students whose strongest claim was often simply greed or need. Greed has of course no claim: need alone—that is, poverty of both purse and intellect—has as little.

The university is no place for a man whose skull and purse are both badly lined. The bestowal of bursaries did not incite to intellectual effort, but to importunity of favours from town councils and private patrons, and had little or no effect in quickening the pulse of university life, or producing any of the fruits for which alone universities can fairly claim a right to exist, or promoting what is the true source of university success—a sound and efficient school training. Too many patrons failed to see that it is not the sole, nor even the chief, function of a bursary to supply a poor student with so much bread and butter, and that the virtue that lies in it is revealed only when it calls forth efforts hearty enough to deserve the bread and butter. Its function is not to support at college a probably lumpish lad who would make a good ploughman or artisan, but a very poor minister, lawyer, or doctor, and whose fitness as a recipient of the bounty rests on no higher ground than that he is acquainted with the influential members of a certain kirk-session or presbytery, or has a father who vigorously importunes a corporation, a town council, or a duke. There is room in the world for workers of all kinds, and the work for one who is poor both in purse and brains is with

his hands. No amount of bolstering up with presentation bursaries will profitably or permanently make him a successful man.

The appeal of Principal Caird and others has met with a very satisfactory response, in respect of both number of bursaries and conditions of tenure. The conditions vary considerably, but the bursaries may, with tolerable accuracy, be divided into three classes—(1) those awarded by patronage; (2) those awarded by competition with restriction to certain names, localities, or schools; (3) those open to unrestricted competition. In 1850 there were in all 65 bursaries, 38 of which were in the Faculty of Arts, 25 in Divinity, and 2 in Medicine; only 3 of these were open to competition. In 1900 there are 441 bursaries, of which 287 are in the Faculty of Arts, and the other 154 are in the Faculties of Divinity, Law, Science, &c. One-fourth are awarded by patronage, one-fourth are open to free competition, and one-half are open to competition with restrictions as to names, localities, &c. The annual value of the patronage group is £2759, of the open group £2754, and of the restricted group £5819. It is matter for regret that the last group should, in comparison with the other two groups, bulk so largely in number

and value. In a number of cases the preference is given only and strictly *cæteris paribus*. If it were competent to make this the rule in all cases, there can be no doubt that more good would be done. In the great majority of cases, however, the conditions of election are sufficient to ensure that the successful candidates, though perhaps not the best, have passed a good examination.

I took a keen and active interest in the question of competition *versus* presentation bursaries, and in an address in 1871 at a meeting of the General Council of Glasgow University, which the committee were good enough to issue in the form of a pamphlet, I was able to show from the statistics of Aberdeen University how fruitful the competition, and how comparatively barren the presentation, bursaries were; that in an important sense an open bursary competition was the backbone of the university; that by means of it secondary schools were healthily stimulated; that graduation was encouraged, and that, while only two-thirds of the bursary funds were open to competition, nearly nine-tenths of the university honours were gained by competition bursars. The annual value of fellowships, scholarships, and

bursaries is £14,450; but this does not include the Snell exhibitions, nor some other foundations, such as the Ferguson Scholarships, open but not confined to Glasgow University.

In Edinburgh in 1859 there were 70 bursaries in Arts; in 1901 there are 236. The majority of these come under the head of patronage. It is impossible to distinguish accurately between those awarded by competition and those awarded by patronage, but a considerable number of those that appear under the head of patronage are gained by practically open competition. To this class belong the Heriot, Sibbald, and Town Council bursaries. The annual value of fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, and prizes is about £18,920.

The result of this increased number and opening up of bursaries to free competition has been an infusion of spirit and healthy emulation into university life. But even so it is impossible to exclude ludicrous blunders from the written exercises of the most immaculate institution known to man. Such blunders, fortunately, are not typical, but *vari nantes in gurgite vasto*. As in morals so in examination papers,

“The evil that men do lives after them,

The good is oft interred with their bones.”

The sustained excellence of a translation or composition is not a quotable article like a full-blooded blunder. The fate of superior productions is to be noted and "interred" among the examiner's papers. I have a good many such relics of degree examinations—the work of John (now Dr) Marshall of Edinburgh High School, T. S. Omond, James Colville, and others, which make a most satisfactory counterpoise to the blunders of weaker men. With this explanation I do not fear to lower the character of our universities by the following examples, which may lighten an otherwise somewhat heavy chapter.

While I was examiner for degrees in Edinburgh and Glasgow universities a great many noteworthy cases of ludicrous answers came under my notice, a few specimens of which I venture to give. A candidate for the medical preliminary examination translated, "Nilus crocodilum alit belluam quadrupedem," "No crocodile carries on war with quadrupeds." Lest I should be charged with not "ploughing with my own heifer," I think it right to mention that a friend asked my permission to give this example in a paper on secondary education which he wrote for 'Fraser's Magazine' several years ago.

For the same examination the following sentence was set: "Quo prodigio territis omnibus cecinere vates oriens Romanorum imperium vetus Græcorum ac Macedonum voraturum."

One candidate, evidently desirous that I should not think that he was translating at random, gave, so to speak, chapter and verse for his work in the following way:—

"Quo (which) omnibus (all) prodigio territis (with great fear) cecinere vates (the prophets began to sing), oriens (praying for) imperium Romanorum (the power of the Romans), vetus Græcorum (the clothes of the Greeks) ac Macedonum voraturum (and the — of the Macedonians)." Obviously, on the analogy on which the boy's mind was working, he should have crowned his work by writing "the appetite" of the Macedonians.

Another version was the following:—

"Quo (by which) vates cecinere omnibus territis (the prophets deceived the whole earth), imperium oriens Romanorum (the commanding voice of the Romans), vetus Græcorum (the vice of the Greeks) ac Macedonum voraturum (and the fury of the Macedonians)."

These seem excellent illustrations of the fact that a little learning is a dangerous thing. The

students knew just enough of Latin to lead them astray.

In an excellent secondary school which I examined two or three years ago, I set a passage from Cicero's letters, in which he reproaches his friend for not coming to live with him, and urges that at any rate he should pay him a visit every year, in the following terms: "Sed feram ut potero, sit modo annum." This was translated, "But I shall tell you as well as I can, though it be after the manner of old women."

I set also the following passage: "Tanta vis avaritiæ in animos eorum veluti tabes invaserat," and got for the translation, "So great a greed had entered their spirits, just like cats." The *tabes* furnished such an obvious suggestion of *tabby* as could not be withstood.

I got three versions of Virgil, *Æn.* ix. 181:—

"Ora puer prima signans intonsa juvena."

- (1) "The boy signing with youthful lips helping the shout."
- (2) "A boy first blowing with his mouth the curved bull's horn."
- (3) "The prayer while the boy was singing was first intoned in his youth."

For complexity and variety of blundering I think I may fairly claim that these three hold the field. They have also this specialty, that

while they are neither more nor less nonsensical than scores of other "howlers," we can trace up to its source the false light that

"Leads to bewilder and dazzles to blind,"

for every single word except *curved*, which is a leap into the absolutely dark. For the rest it is possible to plead the existence of a faint but misleading glimmer of daylight.

Again, Virgil, *Æn.* vii. 382:—

"Impubesque manus, mirata volubile buxum,"

where the youthful band instead of "admiring the whirling top," as they ought to have done, are represented as "admiring the talkative landlady." The evolution of *talkative* from *volubile* is easy. The conversion of *buxum* into a *landlady* is harder, but probably due to the supposition that a youthful band would naturally regard *buxom* as a usual and fitting characteristic of *mine hostess*.

Another:—

"Nemo est fortior leone, tamen leonem vir occidere potest"; "Nobody is stronger than a lion, but a man can kill a *tame* lion."

Another:—

"Ampliauit urbem, adjecto Cœlio monte"; "He filled the city, having thrown down the mountain of Cœlium."

Another, Virgil, *Æn.* iv. 245:—

“*Illâ fretus agit ventos, et turbida tranat
Nubila. Jamque volans apicem et latera ardua cernit
Atlantis duri, cœlum qui vertice fulcit.*”

“She crosses the straits like the wind and gives up a disagreeable husband. And now wishing she sees a bee and the length and breadth of the stern Atlantic, which touches the sky at a vertex.”

“Enthusiasm,” according to one, was derived from *ὁ θεός ἐν ἡμῖν*; and according to another from a Latin term *thyas*, a female bacchanal who rushed madly about shouting, “*Evoe! Bacche!*”

These instances of “howlers” are of comparatively recent date. I find in my note-book others considerably older. While I have an impression that I found the two following in the revision of examination papers, it is possible that they may have been noted down as the experience of others:—

“*Est medici sitim restinguere et sedare,*” “A doctor’s duty is to quench his thirst and sit down and rest himself.”

“*Utro pollicitus est quod antea negaverat,*” “He promised to the uncle what he had refused to the aunt.”

To candidates for degree I prescribed a number

of words and phrases for derivation and explanation. One was "sepulchre," with which many were correct, a few wrong, but only one amusing.

"Sepulchre—derived from *se*, negative, and *pulcher*, fair, the place where beauty fades"; a very ingenious conjecture, creditably reasoned out, and for which we might have been thankful if we had not *sepelio* to fall back upon. I could not in my heart refuse to give him a few marks. Another was "catechism," which gave occasion for many wild guesses, all of which were wrong. The simplest was "from *κατέχω*, to restrain, a questioning calculated to restrain from falling into sin." Another and more elaborate one was, "a compendium in which the facts of any particular set of truths are broken up, as it were, and presented in a definite form. This meaning is easily traceable to the two Greek words from which it is derived, *κατά*, down, and *χίζω*, to separate or break."

Many other attempts were made, all wrong, as I more than half expected, but the most amusing was the following:—

"Catechism—derived from *κατά*, down, and *χάσμα*, a gap, a set of questions arranged to keep people from stumbling into the bottomless

pit." This was completed by a sort of Euclidian Q.E.D.—"in short, a catechism." The author of this answer became a respected and most orthodox minister. An intending medical student translated a line from Virgil—

"Jacet ingens littore truncus,"

"His huge body was laid upon a stretcher."

These two examples show how translation is apt to take form and colour from one's professional aims. The aspirant for holy orders found in "catechism" a reference to the bottomless pit, and the medical student in "littore" a reference to the litter of ambulance work. "Prevaricate" was derived from *præ* and *varicosus*, full of veins.

Candidates for the preliminary medical examination are responsible for a large number of queer answers.

A "papal bull" was said to be "an image blessed by the Pope and worshipped by Roman Catholics."

The "equator" — a line passing through the centre of the earth, where the sun is hottest.

A "cabal" was variously a kind of cabinet, or a rope generally belonging to a ship for mooring it.

The "Romance languages" were, according to one, the languages in which novelists write, and according to another, the languages spoken in the time of Romulus.

A "journeyman" was a person who travels with goods.

"Christian Fathers" were pious heads of families.

"A coign of vantage" was a lucky penny.

The "Pole-star," a star fixed on to the heavens at the north pole, on which the earth seems to spin round.

"Paradox" — some ridiculous writing like another writing.

"Apocryphal" — that which is hidden from man's comprehension.

We must admire the delicacy, whatever we may think of the Latinity, of the lad who translated *cana fides* by "the faithful dog," adding as an explanatory note, "I am quite aware that the gender of *cana* is feminine, but I shall not stain my page with the abominable word." His French, too, was weak—"Je n'eus que le temps de me jeter derrière un bouquet de lauriers, et à plat ventre: I had only time to throw behind me a bunch of keys and a flat folding-door."

CHAPTER XIII.

ORKNEY — KIRKWALL CATHEDRAL — “ PICTS’ HOUSES ” AND
STANDING-STONES—RENTS SIXTY YEARS AGO, “ I SUD PAY A
HEN ” — “ THE HAITHENS ATE TAM ” — “ I THOCHT I WAS
NEEDIN’ A SNUFF ” — NORTH RONALDSAY — SHAPINSAY—
COLONEL BALFOUR—MAESHOWE AND THE ANTIQUARIES—
PROFESSOR AYTOUN—COLOGNE CATHEDRAL.

FOR the first sixteen years of my official life, from 1860 to 1875, Orkney and Shetland formed part of the district under my charge. My last visit was in 1879. Since then more frequent communication, with an excellent service of steamers, has no doubt wrought many changes, and made these outlying islands much better known; but forty years ago they were so little known that many persons, in other respects well informed, thought of them as in some sort the refuse of creation—some of the rubbish for which no use could be found, and which had been tossed out into the great lumber-room of the ocean to be out of the way; inhabited by a race with whom the civilised world had no commun-

ion, living on fish, dressing in sealskin, gloriously ignorant of broadcloth, destitute of education, coming into the world and leaving it without benefit of clergy. Many thought they spoke Gaelic—not that that is any fault, only it is not the case. They are and have always been as ignorant of Gaelic as we are of Chinese. The general appearance of the Orkney group is flat, but there are some bold headlands over 1000 feet in height. No trees meet the eye except in some sheltered spots under the protecting care of large buildings. So long as young plantations are protected from the sea-breezes they grow well enough, but as soon as they show their heads above the sheltering wall they become stunted. Pomona or Mainland is by far the largest of the group, with a length of thirty, and a breadth of about eight, miles.

The two largest towns are Kirkwall, the capital, and Stromness, with a population of 4000 and 1700 respectively. It is surprising to find that seven hundred years ago, on this extreme verge of civilisation, there arose a cathedral in Kirkwall, more perfect, very little smaller, and in some respects finer, than that of Glasgow. The architecture is Romanesque, with a little of the Early Pointed style. It is in good repair, and a

portion of it has been partitioned off and is used as a parish church. This part has been thoroughly spoiled by pews, ugly square windows, and unsightly galleries, as ill suited to the beautiful nave of the old cathedral as knickerbockers or a dress coat would be to a monk.

Within an easy walk from Kirkwall is Wideford Hill, from the top of which nearly all the islands may be seen; and no one who goes there on a clear day will hesitate to admit that the scene before him, looking seaward, is one of exquisite beauty. In calm weather the sea, landlocked by the islands, resembles a vast lake, clear and bright as a mirror, and without a ripple save from the gentle impulse of the tide. Here a bluff headland stands out in bold relief against the horizon, there the more distant islet is almost lost in sea and sky; on one side a shelving rock sends out a black tongue-like point, sharp as a needle, losing itself in the water where it forms one of those reefs so fatal to strangers, but which every Orkney boatman knows as we do the streets of our native town.

From this hill you can cast your eye on structures that are memorials of every form of religion that has ever existed in Scotland. Stennis and its standing-stones are in sight eight or ten miles

off. Nearer to you are some of those inscrutable mounds called Picts' houses, which are found in great numbers all over the islands. On the Isle of Egilsay stand the walls of probably the earliest Christian church in Britain, with its peculiar cylindrical tower, of which there are only other two in Britain,—at Brechin and Abernethy,—and close beside you the cathedral and the churches of every considerable denomination in Scotland. The standing-stones of Stennis are still about thirty in number, forming portions of two incomplete circles, the larger being about a hundred yards in diameter, and the smaller upwards of thirty. The stones vary in form and size. The largest is about fourteen feet high, but the average height is from eight to ten. They are grand, solemn-looking old veterans, painfully silent regarding their past, as if ashamed to speak of the bloody rites in which they may have had a share. They were formerly called Druidical circles, perhaps for no better reason than that their history is utterly unknown. Of the mounds called Picts' houses we know as little. They are of two kinds, very similar in construction. The smaller seem to have been the dwellings of the early inhabitants of the country, and the others the sepulchres of their dead.

Within the last sixty years great progress has been made in agriculture, but the thriftlessness of the farming in the first half of the nineteenth century is well illustrated by an anecdote I had from the proprietor of Shapinsay. His father, observing that one of his tenants was always in difficulties, though he did not pay a farthing of rent, said to him that he was surprised at his being so much in want, seeing that he had a good croft and paid nothing for it. "Oh, Captain Balfour," he replied, "I dae pay a rent." "Why, what rent do you pay?" "Weel, I sud pay a hen." He thus took shelter under the fact that a hen was exigible, but he did not venture to say it was paid.

Another tenant, whose rent of 10s. had been in successive years reduced to 7s. 6d., 5s., and 2s. 6d., was at length for importunity's sake allowed to sit free. After a year or two he again presented himself on the rent day to the laird, who, at a loss to know what more he could want, said, "Well, Robert, do you wish a further reduction of rent?" "Oh, Captain," he replied, "ye're jokin' me noo; but I just cam to say that if ye dinna big me a barn I maun flit."

An Orkney laird showed great dexterity in dealing with a tenant whom he knew to be fairly

comfortable in respect of means. On the tenant asking for a loan the laird at once consented, and gave him a cheque on his banker. "Pay Robert S. the sum of £20, if he has no money of his own." "Na!" said Robert, "I winna hae't."

The islanders are brave and hardy. During the season of egg-gathering they may be seen at one time climbing a precipice to rob the nests, at another swinging from the face of a rock with nothing between them and almost certain death but a rope round their waists. They thus naturally acquire the habit of talking of danger and even of death in a way that seems to indicate indifference to both. Probably few, however, reach the degree of coolness exhibited by an old man who went out one day with his son to gather eggs. The son descended the face of a high rock with one end of a rope round his waist, the other being fastened to a stake above, while the old man remained in his boat at the base in case of accident. The precaution was not unnecessary, for the rope or the stake gave way, and the lad fell into the sea. There was a considerable ground-swell, and the poor boy had sunk once or twice before his father could rescue him, but at last he was taken into the boat almost lifeless. This elicited from the father the simple remark,

“Eh! I’m thinking thou’s wat, Tam.” The saying that those born to be hanged will never be drowned, is probably no truer of hanging than of other deaths. Tam was reserved for a different but scarcely more enviable fate. An acquaintance of the old man’s, years afterwards, reminded him of Tam’s escape, and asked what had become of him, to which the father replied in the same indifferent tone, “Tam? our Tam? Oh! Tam gaed awa’ to a far country and the haithens ate him.”

For another similar anecdote I have the trustworthy authority of an eyewitness. A man was one day gathering eggs on the face of a precipitous rock, and while stepping cautiously along a ledge little broader than the sole of his foot, he came to an angle round which he must pass. The wall-like steepness of the rock, and the narrowness of the ledge, made this under any circumstances difficult and dangerous. The difficulty, however, became an apparent impossibility when he found that he had the wrong foot first. To turn back was impossible, to get round the corner while his feet were in that position was equally so. The danger was observed by my friend who related the incident, and who looked on with terror at the awful consequences of a false step or stumble.

The man paused for a minute, took off his broad bonnet, in which he carried, as was customary, his snuff-horn, and, after taking three hearty pinches, replaced the horn in his bonnet and his bonnet on his head. Then straightening himself up, he made an agile little spring, got the right foot first, rounded the point, and reached the top in safety. My friend, who waited for his ascent, said to him, "Man, Johnnie, were you not feared?"

"Eh, man, if I had been feared, I wudna be here."

"I daresay that," replied my friend; "but what made you think of taking a snuff when you were in such danger?"

"Weel," he answered, with admirable simplicity and truth, "I thoct I was needin't."

One can scarcely dismiss Orkney without a short reference to North Ronaldsay, the most primitive, most curious, and most remote of the whole group. It is also the most difficult of access. Perhaps I was unusually unlucky, but I made four attempts to reach it without success. With the fifth I succeeded. There was not then, as now, an inter-insular steamer. The firth between Sanday and North Ronaldsay is a dangerous one, and wind and tide must be carefully consulted. If you start too late to reach

it before the turn of the tide, you are almost certainly carried back to your starting-point, unless the wind be all the more favourable. The island is very flat, the highest elevation being less than fifty feet. What strikes one at first sight as most peculiar is a drystone wall, which goes right round the island a little above high-water mark, between five and six feet in height, with small holes left in it at regular intervals. It serves the double purpose of depriving the winds as they pass through it of the saline vapour which used to blight the crops, and of keeping the sheep out on the shore. The grass is very valuable, being required for the cattle, so the sheep must have other fare. What other fare than grass, we naturally ask, can a sheep have? Seaweed, nothing but seaweed, and small patches of *Plantago maritima*, or similar stunted herbage. From January to December hundreds of sheep stroll about, like the pariahs of the brute creation, outside that inhospitable wall. They are called wild sheep, are lean and scraggy and more like goats.

I found 81 pupils on the school roll, and only 8 different names. Every one is a cousin, uncle, or aunt to everybody else on the island. The average attendance is 30, but on the day of my

visit the weather was very boisterous and only 5 were present. Almost every rood is cultivated. There are therefore no peats, and there is no wood except when an unfortunate ship is wrecked. Coals are very expensive. To obtain a supply of fuel they have recourse to an expedient practised by the Arabs, and, I think, also by the inhabitants of Cornwall. Every family has a cow, and when the byre is cleaned out, the dung-heap is not used for manure but is mixed with straw, cut into pieces, and dried in the sun. At the end of a year it is fit for burning. One can understand why the cow is made so much of. It is not every animal that can supply meat, drink, clothing, and fire. There was then no inn on the island, and there is probably none now. The minister was from home, and I was thrown on the hospitality of a farmer, whose genuine kindness I shall not soon forget, and with whom I spent a very pleasant day and night. I found him a very ingenious, clever fellow, who could turn his hand to anything, and do everything well. He united in his own person the varied offices of farmer, watchmaker, smith, carpenter, kelp-maker, and if I am not mistaken, doctor, in all of which capacities he was purely self-taught. He had never been

farther south than Kirkwall, and had no desire to leave his little world, to which he was passionately attached. He knew all about it; but his knowledge, like charity, though it began at home did not end there. He was well up in the politics of the day, had a keen sense of humour, was full of anecdote, and well acquainted with the works of Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens.

I have a most favourable opinion of the Orcadian and Shetland character. In it industry, self-reliance, and courage are combined with the gentleness more frequently found in woman.

In addition to other amiable qualities the people are exceedingly hospitable. I found them so, and I have no reason to think they have changed. Any person with a fair appearance of respectability can count on a most kindly reception at an Orkney or Shetland fireside. Some one has called hospitality a savage virtue. Be it so; then some savage things are very lovely, estimable, and of good report, furnish memories that will stand the tear and wear of many a long year, and, amid a desert of, it may be, polished but meaningless conventionalities, retain a freshness unfading and unchangeable, like all things good and genuine.

Among the many happy reminiscences of my sojourn in the north not the least memorable are those connected with the late Colonel Balfour of Balfour and Trenabie, whose acquaintance I made early in my official career, and whose friendship I enjoyed till his death. His beautiful castle on the island of Shapinsay, about five miles from Kirkwall, must have caught the eye of the tourist, and his splendid hospitality is well known to a wide circle of men eminent in literature, law, archæology, and folklore. A man of culture, wide reading, exquisite taste in art and music, a generous landlord, and the very soul of kindness, he was beloved by his tenantry, and highly respected by all who knew him. During the sixteen years when my duties lay in that district Balfour Castle was my headquarters for a week or two every year, and I was very seldom the only guest. I happened to be there when a party of antiquaries, including Mr Farrer, Dr Joseph Robertson, Dr John Stuart, and the Rev. Dr Joass of Golspie, all well known to scholars and geologists for the width and accuracy of their knowledge, opened up the Maeshowe, the largest of those inscrutable mounds. It consists of a chamber fourteen feet square and twenty high, with a recess in each of three walls. The

walls are finely built and quite entire, though erected no one knows how long ago. A great many Runic characters were engraven on them, and an excited buzz tingled the ears and quickened the pulses of the whole antiquarian world. The mystery was at length about to be solved. Alas! the Runes when interpreted by experts proved next to nothing. The disappointment was scarcely less than that of the Antiquary on discovering that A.D.L.L. meant nothing more than "Aiken Drum's lang ladle."

The guests on another occasion were the officers of the Channel Fleet on their visit to the north; on another, General Burroughs, who is said to have been the soldier who first entered the Redan in the Crimean war; and almost every year Professor Aytoun on his visit to his sheriffdom of Orkney and Shetland. All such meetings were delightful and exceedingly interesting, and even when (which was seldom) Colonel Balfour and I were left to a *tête-à-tête* over our evening pipes in the smoking-room, there was no want of conversational topics, such as art, poetry, travel, archæology, and history. The figure which bulks most largely in my recollection of those visits is Professor Aytoun. Those who knew him will readily understand what a charming addition he

made to such a company as I have mentioned, and will remember how, over his evening tumbler and cigar, his features, which in repose were somewhat heavy and almost uninteresting, were lit up by the merry twinkle of his expressive eyes, and with what charm and point he narrated humorous incidents of his personal and professional experience. I remember a most humorous account he gave of his second marriage tour. He was passing through Cologne, which he had previously visited, and required no guide through the cathedral. He wished, moreover, to revel again in its marvellous beauty and have a deliberate walk through it with his young wife, undisturbed by the ever-present officious commissionaires ready to pounce on all tourists. He knew how persistent they were in their offers of guidance, and how difficult to shake off, but he resolved not to be victimised, and he succeeded. "I was walking," he said, "up the aisle when a commissionaire, who thought from my dress that I was an Englishman, came up and offered his services in fairly good English. I put on my most stupid look, and shook my head, as if I didn't understand him. He felt he was on the wrong tack, and thought I might be a Frenchman, and repeated his offer in French. Of course

having failed to understand English, I was not going to understand French, and I again stared at him stolidly and again shook my head. Failing a second time, his next attempt was Italian, which I again refused to understand, with if possible a still more unintelligent look. Spanish was now resorted to, with of course the same result. When he got at last to the end of his tether, I turned round and said with the broadest Scotch accent I could command, 'Man, ye bletherin' eediot, I canna mak ayther heid or tail o' a single thing ye've been gabbling about.' This settled him, and finding me hopeless he left me to myself."

The Professor had a story of a very taciturn witness from whom an advocate could get only the shortest of answers. Hoping to tap a source of free speech by referring to his native place, he asked where he lived.

"Sorn," said the witness.

"That is a village in Wigtown, isn't it?"

"No."

"It is a very healthy place, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the witness.

"Now, do people often die in Sorn?"

"Just aince."

CHAPTER XIV.

SHETLAND—FAIR ISLE—A PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE—FOULA—A
RUNNING COMMENTARY ON THE LAST CHAPTER OF
ECCLESIASTES.

IN the early years of my service there were only three or four schools in Shetland to which an annual visit was due, and there was only one steamer a-week. I had consequently three or four days which I usually employed in visiting other schools, with a view to induce the teachers to become certificated. In 1865 two friends, the Rev. Drs Mitchell of South Leith and Elder Cumming of Glasgow, were making a cruise among the islands on business connected with the Home Mission Scheme of the Church of Scotland, and I was tempted to join them in a visit to Fair Isle, on which I had not yet set foot. It lies about midway between Orkney and Shetland. We set sail in the cutter *Nelson* on a perfectly beautiful morning. The wind, though fair, was extremely light, so much so that for a time we

realised Coleridge's idea of "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." After a long sail we got near the island, and found the rocks so absolutely wall-like that there seemed no spot where it was possible to land. There are, however, on the east side two little creeks towards which the captain steered. We saw a considerable number of people on the sky-line, who were evidently watching our movements with interest. When it became clear that we were making for the landing-place, there was a simultaneous rush off in different directions, and in a few minutes all but a few had disappeared. This puzzled us a good deal at the time, but was afterwards explained. The skipper rowed ashore and told those who had not scampered off that two ministers were on board the cutter on a missionary cruise among the islands, and were going to land. On his return he told us that the people had run off, thinking our vessel was a revenue cutter with an officer on board in search of possible deposits of tobacco smuggled from the Dutch fishing-boats, a number of which were then in the neighbourhood. The news that ministers and not excisemen were about to land spread like wildfire, and there was a rush of men, women, and children to the creek. Two boats were pushed off, the crew of one consisting

of five nice-looking boys, the other of full-grown men. They were soon alongside, and sprang on board with a not disagreeable absence of ceremony arising from eagerness and excitement. On landing we found a considerable crowd awaiting us. Singularly enough it happened to be the fast day, and the arrival of two ministers was regarded as a specially providential occurrence. They were pressed to stay over Sunday and assist the missionary in celebrating the communion. It was pointed out that this was impossible; that the arrangements for visiting as many of the islands as possible were all made, and that they were quite unable to give three or four days to one island. All seemed satisfied with this statement except the missionary, who, with a persistence and earnestness strangely out of keeping with what seemed a decidedly lymphatic temperament, pressed us to stay over Sunday. This being still refused, he begged us to stay over one night at least. Thinking that he had perhaps some special reason for persisting in his request, we asked him, and got for answer that he had just thought of improving the occasion of the presence of two ministers by getting married, there being no resident minister who could tie the knot, and it might be a long time before he would have

another opportunity. As he had reached the mature age of at least forty, his proposal could not be objected to on the ground of youthful indiscretion. It was, besides, an indication of spirit and activity so totally at variance with the general bearing of one, the motions of whose spirit seemed

“dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus,”

and of such good promise, that his request was thought worthy of consideration. It was accordingly suggested that as there were to be three services in different parts of the island during that day, the proclamation could be made at each, and the marriage take place in the evening. It was not forgotten that proclamation of banns at week-day services was unusual, but the circumstances were peculiar and the emergency great. The would-be bridegroom said he was not sure that that would do.

“Hadn’t you better,” said one of us, “go to your bride and see what she says about it?”

“Well,” he replied, “I would need to see her *at any rate*,” with a significant emphasis on the last three words.

“What, have you not spoken to her about it at all?”

“Oh no,” he replied. “I was just going to ask her. I think she will marry me, but I thought it better not to ask her till I knew whether you could stay till to-morrow.”

He went and saw her, and came back somewhat downcast, saying that she thought it was “awfu’ sudden,”—that she had no objections to marry him provided the ministers could wait till to-morrow, but it was too hurried to be proclaimed and married on the same day. We could not wait, and, so far as I know, the poor man is still in the misery of single blessedness.

He had not been long in the island as a missionary, and was supposed to combine the duties of preacher and teacher. I can say nothing about his efficiency in the former capacity, but it was evident that in the latter he had done nothing. I visited the schoolhouse, which had obviously been long disused. I found it dismantled, part of the roof off, three tables that had served for desks, one form whole, another broken. The sole occupant was a hen, perched comfortably on a joist over which there remained a fragment of the roof. There was abundant evidence that the building had for a long time been used as a henhouse. The parents expressed great anxiety for the resump-

tion of school-work. There is now a school, which is regularly under inspection.

There are some families of Methodists in the island. They were present at some of the services, and interspersed the sermons with a succession of Scripture phrases, sighs, ejaculations, and groans, some of which seemed singularly misplaced. Formerly, and it may be still, it is said that the excitement of a rousing sermon produced convulsions. A Shetland minister, observing that this had a very distracting effect on the rest of the congregation, recommended sudden immersion in cold water as a sovereign remedy, which, it is said, served the double purpose of immediate cure and ultimate prevention.

The ministers having accomplished the object of their visit to Fair Isle, made ready to start for the island of Foula, lying about twenty miles west of the mainland of Shetland, and fifty from Fair Isle. Our skipper said that we should have a good tide for Foula at midnight. After a late sermon in the church, which was filled from corner to corner, we made our way to the shore accompanied by a great portion of the congregation. Some had not yet got Bibles, and rowed out with us to the cutter to

get them. It was a very striking midnight scene. The clergymen handing Bibles and religious books to a group of eager claimants, the almost breathless stillness of the night, the hour, and the locality, one of the least frequently visited spots under his Majesty's sway, combined to invest the scene with a peculiar interest.

We must, however, get clear of the island before the tide turns. Good-bye is accordingly said, and we set sail much pleased with our visit, and with a very kindly feeling towards those interesting islanders. Owing to the lightness of the wind it took us twenty-eight hours to reach Foula, which from its great height was provokingly visible for a great part of the time. It is not so large as Fair Isle, but more picturesque. Viewed from the east it presents a serrated appearance, having five large hills, the highest of which is above 1400 feet. The inhabitants did not show the same interest in our visit as the Fair Isle men, the reason probably being that they have more frequent intercourse with the mainland, and also because not more than one-fourth of the population belonged to the Established Church. The great majority were Methodists. Dr Elder Cumming remembered having seen, on a similar visit three years

before, an old man of ninety-four years of age, and, hearing that he was still alive, we went to see him. He was apparently in good health, and in full possession of his faculties, but a martyr to rheumatism. He gave us a very hearty welcome, and Dr Cumming after some conversation asked if he might read a chapter from the Bible and engage in prayer. The old man readily assented, and the Dr took a seat under the large opening in the roof, which did double duty as chimney and window, and chose the last chapter of Ecclesiastes as specially suitable in a short service for the benefit of one over whose head the summers and winters of ninety-seven years had passed. He listened with the greatest attention, and anxious to show that he understood the scope of the chapter, and that the minister was not spending his labour for that which profiteth not, he accompanied the reading with a running commentary in a subdued but audible voice which was very trying to the reader, and at some parts provocative of more than a broad smile. For example:—

Dr Cumming. "The strong men shali bow themselves."

The Old Man. "I was a strong man ance, but I'm a weak man noo."

Dr Cumming. "And the grinders cease, because they are few."

Old Man. "Ay, that'll be the teethache."

Dr Cumming. "And those that look out of the windows be darkened."

Old Man. "Ay, that'll be when the sight fails."

Dr Cumming. "Because man goeth to his long home."

Old Man. "We maun a' gang there sometime."

This went on more or less through the whole chapter. The Dr, as the person more immediately concerned, and sitting in the fierce light from the hole in the roof, heroically kept a perfectly grave countenance throughout, but others were not so successful, and truth compels me to admit that "the teethache" was responsible for a sound that cannot be characterised as other than an unsuccessfully suppressed snigger.

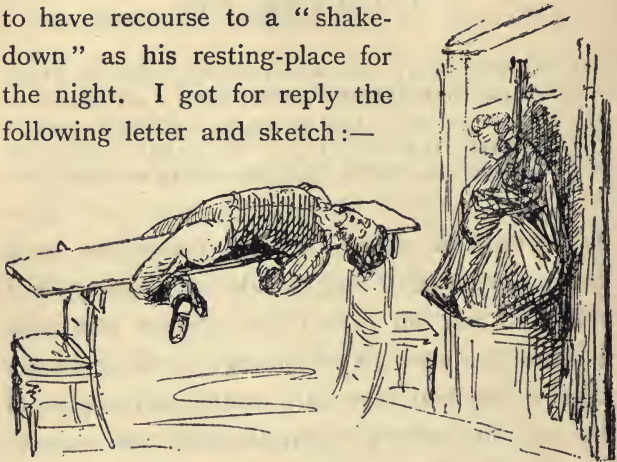
I visited almost every island in Shetland, and everywhere was treated with the greatest kindness. During the past quarter of a century almost the whole of my numerous friends there have passed away.

CHAPTER XV.

GENERAL HOSPITALITY—THE MINISTER'S MAN—REV. DR HANNA
—“RAEL COAMFORTABLE”—“SHE TAK'S A BIT BLAW HER-
SEL'”—“CA' YE'T NAETHING TO BE FORCED TO GANG TO
THE KIRK ILKA SUNDAY?”—“YE HADNA YOUR PURSE
OOT HERE”—PATHETIC CONTRAST—THREE DINNERS.

I SHOULD be guilty of great remissness as a chronicler, and of ingratitude as a guest, if I failed to put on record the almost invariable hospitality shown to me during the whole of my official life, and especially in the earlier part of it, and in country districts when the correspondents for the schools were usually the ministers of the parish, sometimes proprietors, sometimes factors, &c. Nothing could be heartier than the welcome or more genuine than the kindness with which one was greeted year after year. Every visit ended with the kindly “Haste ye back again.” Often a well-chosen party of friends was invited to assist in passing a pleasant evening. I was naturally anxious to make a

return for all this hospitality, and when at home had frequent opportunities of doing so. On one occasion I invited a friend from the North to pay me a visit when he could, and promised that if my house was full I would do my best to make him comfortable, even if it should be necessary to have recourse to a "shake-down" as his resting-place for the night. I got for reply the following letter and sketch:—



"I am much obliged by your comforting suggestion anent the shake-down at Aberdeen. Believe me, if I thought you were in town when I find myself there, I should go to you had I no better prospects for the night than being the occupant of a shelf like his Grace late of Wellington, or a soiled-linen bag or basket-berth behind your bedroom door."

The Scottish minister with a sense of humour finds in the working of his parish abundant materials for interesting and amusing conversation. His personal dealings with his parishioners furnish him with anecdotes delightfully fresh. The unconscious drollery and quaintness of the minister's man, though perhaps less pronounced than formerly, are not yet extinct, and specimens of it are often narrated with the genuine faculty of a raconteur. One mentions an amusing incident, and, stimulated by the example, a second follows with another suggested either by similarity or contrast, and the ball is kept rolling till the evening has passed all too quickly. All anecdotes lose immensely when committed to paper, and the tone and manner of the narrator are absent. I remember the late Rev. Dr Hanna, Dr Guthrie's colleague, bewailing to me, in a tone midway between jest and earnest, the probable appearance in print of one of his very good stories. "Isn't it shameful," he said. "A story that I have been using at intervals for a month past, and which would have done duty for another half year, is going to be printed, and I shall never dare to tell it again." I said I should like to hear the story, and he was

good enough to tell it to me. His version, to the best of my recollection, was this. Dr Balfour, the minister of Colinton—and grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson—was a man highly respected by all who knew him. His coachman was a model of punctuality, and a favourite with his master's circle of friends. On one occasion when Dr Balfour was dining with one of his neighbours, John was ordered to have the carriage at the door at ten o'clock. Knowing John's strict punctuality, and as it was a winter night, Dr Balfour proposed to leave so as not to keep his servant shivering in the cold. The party, however, was a very pleasant one, and the host, anxious to keep Dr Balfour a little longer, said he would give John a dram to console him for the delay. This dram he took kindly. Shortly afterwards the hostess, with whom John was a great favourite, in passing through the hall saw him at the door, and, not knowing that he had already got a dram, offered him a second, which John did not refuse. By-and-by the butler, John's intimate friend, ignorant of the two previous drams, offered him a third, to which also he made no objection. At last Dr Balfour came away, got into his carriage, and John mounted the box and drove off. He

had not gone many hundred yards when he pulled up and, going to the carriage window, gave it a hearty tap, saying, "Are ye coamfortable, Dr Balfour?"

"Yes, John, I'm quite comfortable."

"Are ye sure ye're quite coamfortable, Dr Balfour?"

"Yes, John, I'm quite sure I'm comfortable. Why do you ask?"

"Weel, Dr Balfour, I'm just rael coamfortable mysel'." He then mounted the box and drove home.

The tendency on the part of coachmen to yield to gentle persuasion of this kind seems not to be confined to dwellers north of the Tweed, if credence is to be given to an incident of a somewhat similar type described to me lately by a canon of the English Church. Archbishop Thomson, on returning from a dinner-party, discovered from the very wobbling motion of his carriage that his coachman had been receiving very generous treatment in the kitchen of his host, and, apprehensive of possible misadventure, ordered him to come down and go inside the carriage, the Archbishop himself mounting the box and taking the reins. The night was very dark. On reaching the palace

gate the porter opened it, and, supposing that Robert was as usual on the box, asked in a low voice, "Well, how is the old bloke to-night?" to which his reverence, maintaining his incognito, replied, "Oh, the old bloke is inside the carriage drunk."

Stories of this kind were being told one night at a dinner-party in a country manse, when I took occasion to tell how I had been led astray by the sly humour of the minister's man at Lintrathen, who was driving me to a school in that Forfarshire parish. John and I were enjoying our morning pipe when, in the absence of any more interesting topic, I asked him if he smoked much, to which, in broad Forfarshire Scotch, he replied, "Ay, I tak' a gude reek."

"I suppose, John, you could not give it up now?"

"Weel," he replied, "I wudna like to gie't up."

"But you couldn't give it up? Could you?"

"Oh, I could gie't up. I hae gien't up."

"Have you really? Is it long since?"

"Ay, it's twa year since."

"And did you give it up for long?"

"I gied it up for sax month."

"And what made you begin it again?"

"Weel, it was my wife made me begin again."

This gave me an opening for some moral reflections of which I promptly took advantage. I may premise that I had never seen and knew nothing of John's wife.

"Well, John, I am glad you have such a sensible wife. She just thought you were too old a man to give up a habit you had acquired when young, and that you might spend sixpence a-week in many a worse way than on two ounce of tobacco." I paused for a few seconds, expecting a reply of some kind, but John was silent, and I resumed my comments on his wife's good sense, saying, "She probably found the house more comfortable for both herself and you when you were having your smoke. You were perhaps a little cross when you were not getting it, and your wife showed great good sense in making you begin again." I continued in this strain for some time longer in praise of the unselfishness of his better half, when I thought I detected an amused smile and a sly twinkle in John's eye, and then came the remark, "I'm nae just sure that she wad hae been sae ready makin' me tak to the pipe again, but she taks a bit blaw hersel', and when I gied it up she had to gie't up, and she wantit to begin't again hersel'."

There was in John's composition a certain

amount of self-assertion and inoffensive conceit, born of long service and responsibility for the management of the glebe. When talking to me of the Rev. Dr Chree, the excellent parish minister of Lintrathen, a man of wide reading and high culture, with, however, only a secondary interest in matters agricultural, but for whom John had in everything but farming the most unbounded respect, John remarked, "Ay, he's a rael fine cratur, but he has nae sense" (meaning as to management of the glebe).

One day when Dr Chree and he were standing together near the manse, some people passing by respectfully took off their hats. Dr Chree, for whom no doubt the salutation was meant, not recognising them, asked John who they were, to which John replied, "I dinna ken *them*, but it appears to be some folk that kens *me*."

A different type of man was the beadle of Gamrie in Banffshire, who when requested by the minister to do some little work in the garden, replied, "Na, I'm nae paid for doing that."

"Man, Robert," said the minister, "you are well enough paid for all you do; you get" (mentioning his wage) "for ringing the bell for a few minutes on Sunday, and for laying the Bible

and psalm-book in the pulpit, and that is all you do."

"Ay," replied Robert, "and ca' ye't naething to be forced to gang to the kirk ilka Sunday?"

The Rev. Mr Cruden, in relating the incident to me, admitted that Robert's remark was not complimentary to his preaching, but he thought it had sufficient humour to make it worth repeating.

The beadle of Kilwinning church was another who not unnaturally expected any service apart from his regular duty to be recognised with more or less generosity. He had, however, greater delicacy, but not less point, than the Gamrie beadle in making known his expectation of recompense. He was in the habit of showing visitors over the remains of the abbey in that parish. On one occasion he had done so for a lady who on leaving him at the churchyard gate offered him only barren thanks, to which the wily Robbie replied, "Weel, my leddy, when ye gang hame, if ye fin' oot that ye have lost your purse, ye maun recollect that ye havena had it oot here."

On another occasion Robbie had to dig a grave for the wife of a well-to-do but niggardly farmer. He was accordingly prepared for some bargaining on the farmer's part about payment for his work.

When the interment was duly completed the farmer said to Robbie that he was obliged to him for the trouble he had taken.

“Oh,” said Robbie, “there’s nae sense in that, ye ken. It’s just four-and-saxpence.”

“Four-and-saxpence! I thought you beadies did this for nothing.”

“Oh, faith no. I just ay get four-and-saxpence.”

“I’ll not give you four-and-saxpence. I’ll give you half-a-crown.”

“Faith, I’ll no tak it.”

“Well, if you’ll not take half-a-crown, you’ll get nothing.”

“Very weel,” said Robbie, digging his spade into the grave, “Dod, up she comes.”

Robbie got his four-and-saxpence.

Another sexton, on whose features there was always an obvious though partially suppressed smile when he was engaged in the gloomy function of filling up a grave, was asked the reason of this, and replied, “Man, I’m aye gled it’s no me.”

Exceptions to hospitality of the heartiest kind were exceedingly rare. Only one outstanding case occurs to me. A Rev. Doctor, who was correspondent for the school in his parish, never failed to put in an appearance during the in-

spection. After remaining for a short time he asked me year after year the same question—viz., “About what time will the examination be over?” On being answered two or three o’clock, as the case might be, he invariably expressed deep regret that he had an engagement at one or two (always an hour sooner), otherwise he would have been glad to see me at the manse. I learned to expect with certainty his question and regretful rejoinder.

In pathetic contrast with manses where, either from private means or good stipend, the *ménage* is comfortably elastic, and free from constant and necessary keeping down of butchers’ and bakers’ bills, there are others in the islands and on the mainland in the north of Scotland where the family is large and the income small. I remember inspecting a school, the correspondent for which was an old fellow-student in Glasgow. He was a highly distinguished scholar, of blameless character, and a good preacher, but had not yet been lucky in the race for success. He had married early, had a pretty large family, and a small income. He asked me as an old friend to take dinner with him after the inspection. I accepted the invitation. The dinner was simple but quite satisfactory: first a plate of excellent

broth, then the beef with which it had been made, and then a nice bread pudding. When the last appeared on the table, evidently as much to the delight as beyond the expectation of his children, one of his boys, about seven years, looked up beamingly in his father's face and said, "Daddy, we're getting three dinners to-day." There was pathos in the obvious inference that the usual dinner consisted of a single course. The dinner was nicely served, and, I believe, cooked by the minister's wife. There was no appearance of a servant in the establishment. I am glad to add that a good many years ago he got promotion, which he had long deserved.