

#### IV.—PLATE AND LADLE.

**O**F the elder comparatively little has been said. He joins with the minister in his work, assists him with affairs of the church, visits the parishioners in his district occasionally, but seems to go about his business on tip-toe, leaving little record of his doings. His principal duty is to stand at the plate. A trying job, no doubt, on the first occasion, but custom lends austerity, and soon he becomes his position. We have all seen the elder, as with silk hat carefully brushed, and black clothes completely free from dust, his face fixed with a stare of stern solidity, his hands clasped firmly upon his umbrella, he waits out the ringing of the bell, jingles his collection into the bag, and then, having handed it to the beadle, makes his way during the first prayer alike with ease and noise to his seat. That is the elder on Sabbath as he is known to many of us, but he has other duties than that of standing at the plate. During a vacancy the pillar o' the kirk has some importance. A young minister went one Sabbath to preach as a candidate for a church near Aberdeen. The rain poured heavily all morning; and before he got to the kirk he was wet to the skin. There were few hearers there to

meet him, and his chance of success was, on that account, gone. After the service the elder gave him a somewhat left-handed compliment. "Guid day to ye, then," he said, "if ye havena got the kirk, ye've at least got the steepin'."

Elders seem to be often in the rain. A Free Church elder having met the village Socialist and Freethinker—Dauvit Anderson by name—said to him. "I was rael gled to see ye at the kirk last Sawbath, Dauvit." "Weel, the fac' is," returned Dauvit, "I only droppit in oot o' the rain." "O Dauvit!" said the worthy elder, "ye'll never be onything if ye dinna gang to the kirk." "Aweel," responded the Socialist, "if I canna get on withoot makin' a cloak o' religion, I'll juist bide as I am." "But ye maun mind, Dauvit," added the elder with much emphasis, "that if ye dinna mak' a *cloak* o't ye've ta'en to makin' an *umbrella* o't, an' that's juist as bad."

An old seceder, who rode every Sabbath morning from Gargunock to Buchlyvie to attend the Burgher Kirk, was accosted one very wet day as he rode past the Parish Church of Kippen by the elder at the plate, with the words, "I'm sure, John, it's no' like the thing to see you ridin' in sic a doonpour o' rain sae far by to thae seceders. Ye ken the mercifu' man is mercifu' to his beast. Could ye no' step in by?" "Weel," replied John, "I wadna care sae muckle aboot stablin' my beast inside, but

it's anither thing masel' gain' in." John was evidently quite prepared "to mak' a stable o't."

Here is an instance of merited reproof administered by a pillar o' the kirk. A gentleman of means and atheistical tendencies had erected for himself a handsome mausoleum in the parish churchyard. It was a massive piece of masonry, and presented an aspect of considerable strength. One day, while going to view it, he met one of the elders of the parish church just leaving the churchyard. "Weel, ye've been up seeing that erection of mine?" observed the owner of the mausoleum. "'Deed, have I," replied the elder. "It's a gey strong place that," said the atheist; "it'll tak' a man a' his time to rise oot o' yon at the day of judgment." "My man," returned the elder, "gi'e yoursel' nae trouble aboot that; when that day comes they'll tak' the bottom oot o't, an' lat ye doon."

When Robertson of Irvine received a call for the second time from a Glasgow congregation the meeting of Presbytery held on the occasion was memorable. The Irvine commissioners put forth all their strength, and one of them, a plain, homely elder, made a speech at which all who heard it wondered for its spiritual insight and ability of tone. A member of Presbytery enquiring of Robertson who the man was, received the reply, "He's a man who lives in communion with God and mak's *shoon*."

An Argyllshire elder, on being asked how the

kirk of which he was a "pillar" got along, replied, "Aweel, we had 400 members. Then we had a division, and there were only 200 left; then a disruption, and only ten of us left. Then we had a heresy trial; and now there's only me and my brither Duncan left, and I ha'e great doots of Duncan's orthodoxy."

In a village in the south an elder was one day reproving an old woman, who was rather the worse of liquor, by saying, "Sarah, don't you know that you should fly from the tempter?" "Flee yourself," replied Sarah, not too well pleased at the interference. "O Sarah," said the elder, "I have flown." "Aweel, I think ye'll be nane the waur o' anither flutter," was Sarah's parting words.

Among the elders of a church near B— there was one who was seriously impressed with the solemnity of his office. Especially was this the case on Sacrament Sabbath, when the solemn duties of the Lord's Supper had to be performed. On one occasion a daughter of the elder was enquiring of a lady friend the nature of a certain function which the friend had been witnessing. "Oh," said the friend, "it was very solemn; I dinna ken what I could liken it to. . . . Ay, it was as solemn as your faither's saicrament face."

If anything went wrong, the elder, after the minister, was the man who was appealed to. Mr. Gerard was asked on one occasion to preach at Orphir at a sacramental preparatory service, but

when crossing from South Ronaldshay his boat got becalmed, so that it was past the hour of meeting before he reached his destination. That no time might be lost, the office-bearers resolved to proceed with the introductory services themselves, so that the preacher might be able to commence his sermon immediately he came up from the beach. Even when the prayer, praise, and reading lesson were over, however, Mr. Gerard had not put in an appearance, and two of the elders were sent out to ascertain the cause of delay. As they proceeded along the burn which runs down past the church towards the sea, they saw a man, stripped to the trousers, plunging out and in the water in the most ludicrous fashion; and on getting nearer they made the discovery that he was the missing preacher. They explained with some spirit that the congregation had been kept waiting his arrival for over an hour. "Oh, it's all right," was Mr. Gerard's reply. "I found a brood of wild ducks in the burn, and I thought it would be a pity to let them escape. I have seven of them in my hat, but there is one little deevil here yet which I must catch before I go to the church!" And he did it before he could be prevailed upon to go and preach his sermon.

When the pillars of the kirk found the minister in search of the wild ducks, they were relieved from some responsibilities, but occasionally the elder was called upon to conduct service. Shortly after the

Secession of 1843, a Gaelic congregation in a lowland town found that no minister had arrived on Sabbath morning to take the service. Before the close a messenger brought word of an accident that had happened to him on the road. The service was taken by one of the elders, who in his thanksgiving prayer offered up the petition, "We thank Thee, O Lord, that though Thou hast coupit the coach the minister is safe."

An elder presiding at a prayer meeting intimated that the 37th Paraphrase would be sung. He was, however, more familiar with the earthly courts of civil justiciary than the seraphic assemblies of heaven, and in reading the hymn caused his listeners to wonder as he proclaimed—

"Thus spake the Sheriff, and forthwith  
Appeared a shining throng."

It is said that an elder, conducting service, once prayed—"Lord, keep our minister humble, and we will keep him poor." That elder may have had a wide vocabulary, but his choice of words was not the happiest.

Nearly two generations ago the question of having their church building insured against fire was discussed by the kirk session of a country town. The economies of fire insurance might be sound enough as applied to their own personal property, but they took a different view of the matter where a sacred building was concerned. The climax of

debate was reached, and with it the finding of the meeting, as one of the worthy elders, with the faith of a Peter, said, "If God is not able to keep His own building, it is time to roup the business."

Dr. Norman MacLeod began his ministry in the Ayrshire parish of Loudoun. Among his parishioners were some rather notable freethinkers, whose views the young divine, with the energy and earnestness characteristic of him, thought it proper to assail and denounce. Naturally this caused a good deal of commotion and excitement in what had hitherto been a somewhat sleepy parish. One of his elders, who thought his minister's zeal outran his discretion, one day enquired of him "Mr. Macleod, hoo is it that we ne'er heard o' unbelievers hereabout till ye cam' among us?" "John," said the ready minister, "saw ye ever a wasp's bike?" "Hoot ay, aften," replied the elder. "Weel, lat them be, and they'll lat you be; but put your stick through the heart of it, and it'll be anither story."

The elder's chief duty was with the collection. The "pontifical" or bridge-making functions of Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions were exercised in the most literal way. The bridge across the Tromie was built in 1728 by the exertions of the Presbytery of Abernethy, and the cost was "defrayed out of the 'vacant stipends' of Kingussie." It was customary for Kirk Sessions all over the country to assist in work of this kind. The Kirk Session of Alvie, on May 1st, 1720, generously gave "a sixpence for

repairing the Bridge of Nairn, the inhabitants there petitioning for a general collection in the bounds of the Synod of Moray." There is an entry in the Kirk Session records, under date December 24th, 1730, to the effect that the Kirk Session of Kingussie record that thirteen pounds seven shillings Scots of bad halfpennies had been put into the church box. A tolerably good collection of bad money. The Session are silent as to buttons and peppermints.

There are come fine touches of kindly humanity connected with the collection. Donald MacPherson was sorrowfully constrained in his declining years to depend on others for his livelihood. And yet he made a point of saving a mite, week after week, for the missionary work of the church. Shortly before his death Donald sent the sum of 2s. 2d. carefully wrapped up in paper. The minister had great hesitation in taking the money from him, but he insisted. On being asked why he had made his contribution such an odd sum as 2s 2d. he replied, "Well, you see, I just counted up what a halfpenny for every Sabbath of the year would come to, saved one from week to week, and there's the money!"

The Kirk Session of Kingussie record a collection of counterfeit money. Every Kirk Session could not do so, at least, that is, if they had elders as vigilant as the one who did duty at Hawick. He was standing at his post one Sabbath morning when a lady gaudily dressed dropped her offering into the plate. The elder waited until she had reached her



seat, and then going up with a bad halfpenny between his fingers exclaimed in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, "Here, my wuman, tak' back your bad halfpenny; how daur ye offer the blin' and the lame to the Lord?"

An elder at Old Monkland was once disgusted to see a wealthy landowner throw a penny in the plate. "Come back, laird," he cried, "I'll no' tak' it aff your hand. Ye maun dae better than that."

It was a lady on another occasion, but she was equally meagre in her offering, and accordingly sailed into church, followed by the remark, "Gi'e us less o' your mainners and mair o' your siller."

A Fife laird put a crown into the plate by mistake, and, on discovering the error, proceeded to the elder to get back the money. "Na, na," said the worthy pillar of the kirk; "ye may put in what ye like, but ye maun tak' naething oot." "Aweel, aweel," said the laird, "I'll get credit in heaven for the crown." "Deil a bit," replied the elder, "ye'll juist get credit for the penny."

The elder was not always pleased with the size of the collection. A farmer, who chanced to be at dinner with a young minister, turned the conversation to the collections taken in the church of which he was an elder, and in the course of talk delivered himself thus, "When ye get a kirk o' your ain, dinna expeck big collections. Ye see, I was twal years an elder and had to stand at the plate. I mind fine the first Sabbath after the Disruption,

though our twa worthy ministers didna' gang oot, and the strange feelin' about me as I took my place at ane o' the doors o' Saint Andrew's Parish Kirk in Edinburgh. Noo, how muckle dae ye think I got that day?" "Oh, well, I know the church nicely—seated for at least two thousand—you might get two pounds." "Wad ye believe't? I only got five bawbees, stannin' i' the draucht for twenty minutes, too! If I had kent I wad raither ha'e put in the collection mysel' and covered up the plate. Mind, dinna expeck big collections."

Another elder ventured to give another minister a word of counsel, though on a different matter. A minister who used to do duty in Perth was wont to preach metaphysics and to draw his text from somewhat uninteresting portions of the sacred volume. One of the elders bore patiently for some time, but at last ventured to speak disapproval. Meeting the minister one day, he said to him, "Man, Mr. —, if ye wanna gie's evangelical sermons, ye nicht at least gi'e us evangelical texts."

But the elder's work sometimes became exaction. "Ay, man, John," said a Free Church minister, some time after the 1843 dispute, "an ye've left us? What, na, was your reason for that? Did ye think we were gaun an ill road?" "Oh, I daursay the road was guid enough," returned John, "but od, man, the tolls were unco high."

At a church social a gentleman incidentally mentioned that at the kirk he was brought up in, the

"plate" stood outside, while the elders watched it from the sentry boxes. One day a stranger had the curiosity to ask one of the elders how they did when, on a windy day, a pound note was placed in the "plate," and he was shocked to hear the saintly man exclaim, "We keep it doon wi' a causey, but it's mighty seldom we get the chance o' using ane!"

To be a Christian in the old days meant, to at least one good lady, putting silver in the plate, for, when asked about the religious convictions of a Dollar man, she replied, "Him a Christian! Na, na, he's no' that, for he never puts silver in the plate."

Douglas Stewart was known as very tight in money matters. What he gave at the door was always a disputed point among the elders. He settled their disputes by saying one morning, "I'm gaun to gi'e sax times my usual th' day." He put in a threepenny piece. "But it'll ha'e to dae for five weeks to come!" he added.

Two elderly ladies, who set out to attend service in the Auld Kirk, and discovered on the way thither that they had left home without the usual subscription for the "plate." They resolved not to return for the money, but to ask a loan of the necessary amount from a friend whose door they would pass on the way. The friend, delighted to be able to oblige them, produced a number of coins—half-pennies, pennies, threepenny and sixpenny pieces. The two ladies immediately selected a halfpenny

each. Later in the day they appeared to their friend again, and said they had come to repay the loan. "Toots, havers," exclaimed old Janet, "ye needna ha'e been in sic a hurry wi' the bits o' coppers; I could ha'e gotten them frae ye ony time." "Ou, but," said thrifty pair, in confidential tones, "it was nae trouble ava', for there was naebody at the plate, and we juist slippit in without onything."

The church of a village in Banffshire still possesses one of the old-fashioned square pews, which belongs to the laird. On one occasion the beadle was ill, and the minister brought in his stableman to collect the offertory. The man did not know his way about the church, and at first missed the square pew. Going back, he returned with the occupant's half-crown, but could not make the minister understand where he had got it, till at last, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, he whispered, "From the gentleman in the loose-box, sir."

"My friends," said the minister to his congregation, "I wish to remove a little misapprehension under which the majority of you are apparently labouring. When I asked you to give largely to the collection last Sabbath I did not refer so much to the size of the coin as to its monetary value. I mention this, as I noticed that the majority of the coins in the plate were pennies."

An elder who had just been promoted to official honours, took his son with him to assist in superin-

tending the duties. The boy, wishing to make himself as useful as possible, noticed some passing into the church without putting anything into the treasury, and cried out, "Faither, thae fock are gaun bye the *bred* without paying."

A missionary from Africa was in a northern village conducting a series of meetings. A young couple had been to hear him, and were so struck with what they heard that the next night they went back they resolved to give a shilling to the collection. Every time Dougal looked at the shilling, he thought it grew less and less, until he thought shame that they should give so small a sum for so grand a work. Dougal slipped out before the meeting was ended and went home and took £5 out of a box that Janet always guarded very jealously. He came back to the meeting and gave the money to the missionary, but what a noise Janet made when she found out where he got the money! "Never you fear, Janet," said Dougal, "the Lord'll be nae man's debtor; we'll get it a' back some day." Scarcely three months afterwards an old aunt of Janet's died, and left her a hundred pounds. "Eh, Dougal, man," said Janet when the news arrived, "what a pity ye didna gi'e £10."

Two brothers went up from a small village to see the sights of London, and when Sabbath came round they entered an Episcopal Church some time in advance of the hour of service. Taking up a prayer-book which lay in the pew the elder brother

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examined it page after page with evident curiosity. At last he laid down the book, and shaking his head, said, "Come awa' oot, Sandy, man; the service is just collect, collect, collect, frae end to end. It's no' the kirk for puir bodies like oorsel's."

It is not only the "puir body" who is meagre in his contribution. A gentleman on entering one of the Lochgilphead churches took from his pocket a threepenny piece and asked the elder in charge for change in halfpennies. The elder handed him six, and dropping one into the plate, the gentleman went into the church to enjoy the sermon!

Elders sometimes showed themselves to be keen business men.

A story is told of a Stirling elder who was much interested in the poultry business. In an English fanciers' paper he had seen an advertisement of eggs of an extra special brand, which he had heard recommended. The price was exceedingly high, but he determined to be the first in the district to have those fowls with the fine names—Wyomings, or Himalayas, or something to that effect. He did get the eggs, and the "set" came out very successfully. The birds were universally admired, and as they had the reputation of good layers, all the neighbours bespoke settings when the elder's young fowls began the egg manufacture. This in due time they did, and he had fancy eggs on the market. He charged for them, though, and if the neighbours protested, he instanced his enormous first outlay,



and the risk of total loss, and the eggs went off very well for a time. Then there was a falling-off in the demand. So the elder, finding that they would not go at fancy prices, and being already paid pretty well, resolved to let them go to his usual merchant simply as eggs. This got abroad, and the merchant was besieged for those eggs; for the experts believed they could tell the fancy ones from ordinary eggs. The merchant had a fine trade for three weeks. A day or two after that he met the elder, and said, "A lot o' folk got your eggs frae me and set them. They say they're a' bad. They'll no' come out." "Umph! they should come to me for their settin' eggs! Wha ever heard o' buyin' settin' eggs in a grocer's shop?" Then, in a burst of confidence, "I juiſt dippit the end o' them in boilin' water, ye ken—killed the germ. Od, if they want settin' eggs they should come to me honest-like."

A newly elected elder of a somewhat diffident disposition was hastily summoned to the death-bed of a parishioner. While getting ready for the occasion, he expressed his great anxiety to his wife lest he should break down in offering up a prayer. At length he was persuaded by his wife, and started on his errand. When he returned, his wife greeted him with the query, "Weel, William, hoo did ye get on?" The elder's face beamed with joy as he answered, "Oh, grand, Maggie, grand; he was deid."

A worthy old elder, who had no sympathy with new ideas of service, was wont to remark, "When I see folk sittin' i' their seats an' singin' wi' a' their heart, I feel it's praisin' God, but when they stand up wi' a bookie afore them, I think they're juist singin' a tune!"

A poacher in the north was a bit of a character. He seldom went to church, and when he did he was subjected to a good deal of notice. One morning the elder at the plate spied John at the kirk door, and thinking to joke at his expense, remarked, "Well, John, what's daein' wi' ye the day? it's no' often we see you here." "Oh," was the reply, "I had a bit errand, ye see;" and then, in a half undertone to some of the kirk members passing at the time, "Will ony o' you billies buy a gun?"

"Ah, David," said a minister to one of his parishioners whom he had met on the road enjoying his evening pipe, "I'm astonished at a man of your sense clinging to such a filthy habit as smoking—you who are an elder, and looked on as a pillar of the kirk. Do you expect to go to heaven when you die, David, with such a vile habit?" "I'll no' seek to tak' my pipe wi' me when my time comes," calmly replied the reprovèd elder. "But you know, David, that nothing unclean can enter heaven, and there is nothing so unclean as the breath of a smoker." "Ay, ay," was the reply, "but I expect that my last breath'll be my last smoke, so that

baith pipe and breath will be left ahint at the hinder en'."

A rev. gentleman who would never submit to the ruling of a Session, represented and discharged all the duties of minister and elder in his own person. On a certain occasion he was riding from home, and was unwittingly followed by a bull stirk, which kept close to the heels of his horse. A countryman, noticing the circumstance, slyly observed, as the minister was passing him, "I'm thinking ye'll be gaun to the Presbytery to-day, sir?" "What makes you think that?" queried the doctor. "Just because ye ha'e got your ruling elder ahint ye."

"Well, John," said a minister to one of his elders, "how did you spend the New Year?" "Oh just the same that ye spent it yersel'," replied John. "And what way was that?" queried the divine. "Weel," answered the elder, "I just took a bit dander roon' an' saw my folk, an' by that time I was weel enough."

At first Dr. M'Donald's flock found his services very acceptable, but by-and-bye questions and doubts began to arise. At last an elder called on him. After a little preliminary talk this gentleman remarked that he had come to announce that the congregation would be obliged to reduce the young minister's stipend. Dr. M'Donald owned that he was rather taken aback, since the stipend was an exceedingly small one already. But the thought which occurred to him was that no congregation

could possibly pay more than it could afford; so he cheerfully replied that he would be willing to take whatever the people could pay. It was the elder, in turn, who was taken aback. He looked reproachfully at the minister. "Sir," he said, "we thoct ye would have taken oor hint!"

One day a minister on going home from a meeting met one of his elders "very fou." "Dear me, John," he exclaimed, "how did you get in this state?" "Oh, minister," replied John, "it's a' due to thae Communion cards." "What!" cried the minister; "you don't mean to say you have been delivering your cards in that state?" "Oh, no," said John; "but the folks were a' that kind in offering me a drop that I was dune for afore I kent where I was." "But surely everyone did not offer you drink," continued the preacher. "Are there no teetotallers in your district?" "Oh, ay," answered the elder, "plenty of them; but I send theirs by post!"

An angling pic-nic was held on the Bervie water some time ago. The company were seated at lunch, with the minister in the midst of them. When the whisky was sent round Elder Grant remarked, "Gin the minister wasna here I'd taste ye," as he looked at the bottle. The minister, taking in the situation at a glance, replied, "Ca' awa', Jeems; I'm no' lookin'," suiting the expression by wheeling round and gazing skywards.

A young man from Edinburgh was addressing a prayer meeting in the north, and after the address

was over he said he would give out a hymn. "Na," said an old elder, "we maun ha'e a psalm." "No," replied the young man, "I'll give out a hymn; I can't get a psalm to meet my case." "What's he speakin' about?" asked an old wife who was sitting near. "Oh!" answered the elder, "this lad says he canna get a psalm to meet his case." "Weel, weel," said she, "I doot the lad hasna a case at a' if he canna find it in the psalms."

On a Fast Day a Free Kirk elder journeyed to a neighbouring town, where he met an old friend. "Hallo! Sandy," exclaimed his friend, "I thought this was your Fast?" "So it is, Jock," was the reply. "Weel, how are ye no' at the kirk, an' what dae ye want doon here?" further queried the friend. "Och, I juist cam' doon to get a whistle," was the worthy elder's reply.

An uninitiated elder was deputed from Strathaven Session to attend a meeting of the Hamilton Presbytery along with the minister. A young man came before them, and delivered a trial discourse on a subject that had been prescribed to him, and the reverend incumbent from Strathaven was the first to offer remarks upon it. "The discourse that we have just heard," he said, addressing the Moderator, "does credit to our young friend for his proficiency in the English language, but it occurs to me that he has, in his illustrations, entirely missed the scope of the Apostle's meaning." The elder thought it not only his incumbent duty to give his

opinion, but also to coincide with his minister, and accordingly followed immediately, lest he should forget exactly what his minister had said, "I perfectly agree wi' my minister in what he has said anent the young man's discourse, that it had been weel eneuch putten thegither, but that he has missed the scope of the Apostle." Some of his neighbours, who knew that John was ready on the slightest occasion to "throw bye his beuk and speak about beasts," questioned him about his opinion, after the meeting had been dissolved. "We're glad to see you sae learned amang the ministers; but how did you ken that the lad had missed the scope o' his text?" "Was I no' richt to side wi' my minister? he couldna be wrang—I aye gang along wi' him, and I ne'er found mysel' wrang yet." "But suppose the Moderator had asked ye what ye understood by the scope o' the Apostle?" "Ay, but he didna do't, and gin he had, I wad sune ha'e scop'it mysel' out at the door."

The Rev. Dr. Gillan of Inchinnan was a ready wit, of whom numbers of capital stories are told. One day a young elder, making his first appearance in the Glasgow Presbytery, modestly sat down on the very edge of a bench near the door. By-and-bye the minister, who had been sitting on the other end rose, and the elder was just falling off when the door opened, and Dr. Gillan entered, who, catching him in his arms, with his usual readiness ex-

claimed, "Sir, when you come to this place you must try and stick to the *forms* of the church."

In a riverside resort not far from Glasgow, great indignation was caused amongst the old fogeys and "Holy Willies" anent Sabbath sailings of pleasure steamers. A meeting was called for a Monday evening to protest and take steps to stop the terrible sin. An old and well-known elder, who was asked to open the meeting with prayer, began in the following manner, "Oh, Lord, ye ken what's brocht us here the nicht. Ye wad see in this morning's paper hoo your day wis desecrated yesterday."

A certain Auld Kirk Border minister employed a local character named Tammas to cover the top of the wall surrounding his garden with lime and broken glass. Running short of glass, Tammas inquired for the minister and asked him if he had any empty bottles about the house he could spare to break up to put on the wall. "No," said the minister seriously, "we've none just now; but there's to be a meeting of the elders the morn i' the manse, and if ye come round efter they're awa' there'll be plenty."

Jock Bowie was a notorious poacher who flourished up till recently in a certain district of Scotland. A bit of a wag, as well as a bit of a ne'er-do-weel, Jock kept Sabbath and Saturday alike despite the remonstrances of his neighbours. An old farmer, an elder of the kirk and a strict Sabbatarian, was especially severe upon Jock for his shortcom-

ings, and that worthy, who had his doubts as to the elder's godliness, determined to get even with him upon the first opportunity. Jock was as skilful an angler as he was a poacher, and upon one occasion, having captured an extra large basket of trout, he resolved to present a portion of the catch to the elder. The gift having been duly accepted, the wily Jock remarked casually, "But, elder, I clean forgot to tell ye—the fish were caught yesterday (Sabbath)." "Weel, John," returned the elder, gazing steadily at the contents of the basket, "I dinna see that that was the fau't o' the troot."

An authenticated story comes from a village near Glasgow. The minister, during a course of lectures on the Commandments, frequently made use of the expression "rob and steal," as illustrative of the swiftness with which that crime is generally detected and punished. On emerging from the church one day an old woman addressed an elder, "But wha is this Robin Steel the minister's aye speakin' o'?" The elder was quick to appreciate the joke. "Oh," said he, "it's somebody the minister's haen words wi' afore he cam' here. Ne'er fash yoursel' about it."

Although it may be that he was 'cute, the elder, with all his faults, was honest.

A retired gentleman recently revisited the scenes of his early days, and called on a farmer whom he had known when living in that district. After the usual greeting and several inquiries the





visitor remarked, "I saw by the papers some time ago that you had been made an elder. I was pleased to see that you were sae muckle respeckit." "Oh, ay, man," said the farmer, "but I had to gi'e it up." "Oh!" exclaimed the visitor, "naething wrang, I houp?" "Na, na," said the farmer emphatically. "But you see my father afore me an' me, we've aye been in the wey o' trokin' a bit horse at the Muir Market, an' *the twa things dinna gang weel thegither.*" The selling of a horse was the reason given; he said nothing about selling a man.

Two tourists staying at Loch Ness resolved one fine Sabbath morning to go for a row on the loch. They met the boatman leaving his house, dressed in a suit of glossy black, and carrying a big Bible under his arm. "We want to go for a row," said one of the tourists. "Dae ye no' ken that it's Sabbath?" was the reply; "ye'll no' get a boat frae me the day; forbye, I'll ha'e ye to know that I'm an elder o' the kirk." The tourists thought that even an elder might be tempted, and they offered him good money. "No," said he, after hearing their price, "I'll no' let ye the boat, but I'll tell ye what I'll do for ye. Dae ye see yon green boatie doon among the rushes?" "Yes," they said. "Weel, she's ready, with the oars inside. Juist row oot to the middle, an' I'll come doon to the bank an' swear at ye. But never mind, juist row on, an' I'll ca' for the money on Monday."

An elder, who was somewhat "thrawn," was con-

stantly at war with the minister in meetings of session. The moderator stood this opposition for a long time, but at last endeavoured to bring the elder to his senses. The argument had been sustained for over an hour, when the minister said, "I doot, John, ye are no' open to conviction." "Ay, meenister," said John emphatically, "I am open to conviction, but show me the man that'll *convict* me!" He failed to *apprehend* the difference in the meaning of the words.

If the elder sometimes outwitted a customer, he occasionally disagreed with his brother in office. Two elders, members of the same Kirk Session, had made themselves notorious by their quarrelling. Their mutual friends represented to them that their conduct was very unseemly, and a meeting was arranged to reconcile them. After they had shaken hands and professed mutual esteem, the first elder said, "It's a Christian duty to gi'e in." "Ay," replied the other, "we should gi'e in to ane anither." "Yes," exclaimed the first imperatively, "but it's you that maun gi'e in, because I canna." And so we leave them to settle their difference.

The following story about the late Duke of Hamilton and his Arran tenants illustrates a common enough phase of sectarianism. During the races at Hamilton one year his Grace invited a number of tenant farmers to Hamilton Palace to witness the sport. Among those who came were two elders in the Parish Kirk, and one who held a

similar office in the Free Kirk. Just before leaving the Duke asked the Free Churchman how he had enjoyed himself. "Grand, your Grace—grand! And I've won some bits o' bawbees too; but dinna let on aboot it to onybody, for I'm an elder." "Tuts, never mind that!" said the Duke. "So-and-so and So-and-so have been betting too, and they also are elders." "Oh, ay, they are elders, nae doot; but they are Auld Kirk elders, and they're no' nearly so strict aboot their duties as us Free Kirk folk!"

The minister and elder of a church in the Highlands went out one day to visit the members of the congregation. After making one or two calls, they began to feel hungry, so the minister went up to the first house they came to and asked if they could have something to eat, as they had been out visiting all afternoon. "Certainly," said the old woman, who cordially invited them to come in. The table was brought forward, and a nice jug of milk, plate of cakes, and print of fresh butter were set down. The minister took one end of the table, and the elder the other. They were not long started when the old woman, noticing they were cutting the fresh butter on different sides, remarked, "Ye micht baith cut the butter on one side, and leave it dacent for ither folk coming." "Oh, never mind," said the minister, "it will be all one which side it's cut on *when we're finished*."

A Stirling minister going on holiday was made

the subject of a quiet sarcasm from one of his elders. Owing to the dampness of the session-house he kept his pulpit robes at home, but as the manse was to be shut up during his absence, and the "gown" would be required for his substitute, the question was raised as to where it should be kept during the week. Various places were suggested, but the problem was settled by the pawky suggestion, "Ye canna dae better than keep it i' the poopit; it's the driest spot i' the kirk."

What may be regarded as a branch of the eldership is the deaconate—an order which was revived some years ago, and which is observed in some of the Presbyterian Kirks.

A cautious deacon, in offering prayer at a meeting of a somewhat strict denomination, thanked God, in a moment of forgetfulness, for the salvation of all men, but he immediately qualified this sweeping admission with a touch of genuine casuistry, by adding, "Which, O Lord, as Thou knowest, is true in one sense and not in another."

An old woman, who had a chronic habit of sleeping in church, called at seat-letting time upon the treasurer of the congregation. "I have come to pay my seat," she said, laying down her money. "Your seat?" returned the treasurer, who was a bit of a wag. "Losh, I think, Janet, you mean your bed."

"Is William at home, Mrs. Brown?" asked the minister, as he was going the rounds of a mining

village. "No, sir; he's awa' to the toun the day," replied the guidwife. "I'm sorry for that," said his reverence, "because I wanted to tell him that he had been appointed a deacon." "A deacon! sir," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, "I'm rale gled to hear o't, for to tell ye the truth, onything's better than a collier noo-a-days."

