

## *THE MINISTER'S MISTAKE.*

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DAVIE DOONS, and his wife, "Coal Katie," first began the business of selling coals in a very humble way. Davie's back was for long both "cairt an' cuddy" in the carrying out of the customers' coals, but, orders increasing through the business push of his wife, Davie at length managed to purchase a second-hand cuddy for seven-and-sixpence, and making

another purchase of an oblong soap-box from a wholesale grocery store, he got it mounted on a pair of home-made wheels, and henceforth publicly drove about his own conveyance.

He named his newly-purchased cuddy, Katie, after his wife, and the beast's keep cost him little or nothing. In the course of the week an auld straw bass which some housewife had thrown on the street, or anything of a similar sort, would serve the humble animal with a good meal, washed down with a long drink of cold water from the horse-troch. Every morning, too, Davie bought the cuddy a new scone, rubbed her auld nose wi't, and ate it himsel'! while every Sunday, Katie was led out to "grass" on some neighbouring park, getting her stomach corrected by a free feed of nettles, Scotch thistles, and docken leaves.

When the minister looked Davie up—which event usually happened about yince in the twa years—he always excused himself for non-attendance at the kirk by declaring that business was sae bad and the profit on coals so small that he couldn't afford to buy Sunday clothes—unless the minister consented to admit him in his native full-dress suit of coal-gum blacks! In this way Davie dodged along as best he could, and with his pipe in his cheek, a gospel tract in his waistcoat pocket, and a hunderwecht of coals on his back, he thought himself pretty fairly provisioned for both worlds. Things went on in this style, cannily enough, until one day the poor cuddy set down one of her fore feet on a piece of old wood with a five-inch roosty nail sticking through it.

"That's a sair job for baith me and the cuddy," remarked Davie, as he bent down to pull out the nail. The forecast turned out too true.

On the third day the cuddy, it was noticed, limped badly when in the cairt, and by the end of the same week she was a fair cripple, laid up in the stable. Davie was much put

about at the accident. He might have spared his wife for a week, he thought, but not so well the indispensable cuddy. Davie, however, struggled on as best he could, poulticing the cuddy's disabled foot, and carrying out the customers' coals on his ain honest back, when one day he met the minister in the middle of the road.

"Well, David," began the minister, "how are you keeping, and how's all at home?"

"Weel," replied Davie, letting his coal-bag swing down on the ground, "I'm aboot or'nar' mysel', but things are a' wrang at hame—Katie's in the way o' deein', I fear."

"Dear me," said the minister, "I'm truly concerned to hear of this."

"And so am I, sir," replied Davie, scratching his toozie head, "It's a sair mornin' for me when Katie's no fit for her wark, for then, ye see, I've got to cairry the customers' coals about on my ain back," and here Davie sympathetically rubbed first one shoulder and then the other.

"Dear me, David, I'm quite astonished to hear you speak thus," said the minister, who very naturally thought that Davie was referring to his wife, instead of the disabled cuddy; "do you really make Katie carry about the customers' coals on her back?"

"Well, no jist exactly on her back," replied Davie, "but she pu's them along the streets in the cairt."

"David! David!" exclaimed the minister, "thus to abuse your helpmeet and best friend!"

"Ye may weel say that, sir! my helpmeet and best frien', indeed. She's wrocht lang and sair for me, and has cost me but little for food. She's a truly teuch auld yaud o' a beast to pu' in a cairt, an's worth twa pownies ony day."

"David, my dear man, do not, I pray thee, speak of her in that way," said the minister, with averted look.

"It's the candid, even-down truth I'm tellin' ye," replied Davie, "I'm gie'n her nae mair than's her due. She's been

a teuch, willin', workin' auld yaud since the first day I had her"

"Why, my good man," said the minister warmly, "you speak of Katie as if she was some old horse."

"She's worth twa o' ony horse on the road, I'm tellin' ye. Pit her atween the twa trams, and I'll bate my bonnet she pu's alangside o' ony horse or pownie in the coal trade."

"Yes, yes, David," said the minister, "but, pray, tell me, what is the matter with Katie?"

"Weel, we was oot thegither wi' the coals, ye see (the minister nodded), and she set her foot doon on a five-inch roosty nail. The plaguey thing has beel't up to the vera shank bane, and I'm deid fear't she'll crap owre't."

"And I have never heard of this till now, David?" said the minister, reprovingly.

"Oh, ye ken fine she's no a kirk-gaun animal," replied Davie, with a quiet laugh. "She's a teuch auld yaud atween the cairt trams, as I before remarked, but what's her religious value is mair than I could say."

"She has a soul to save, David," said the minister.

"Weel," stammered Davie, "that may be so, but I'm doubtfu' if she's aware o't." And Davie, tickled with the humour of the thought, "clauted" the back of his head, and glanced sideways at the minister with a twist in his face like a ravelled hank of thread.

"Have you had a doctor to see her, David?" next enquired the minister.

"If it's the veterinary surgeon ye mean, he wadna waste tuppence worth o' medicine on siccan an auld wrocht-oot animal as she is, I fear. She can pu' a cairt o' coals when weel, but beyond that she's worth jist naething!"

"She's surely worth praying for, David?" said the minister.

"Weel, sir, if prayin' wad bring her roun', the suner were intae't the better, for my back's fair broke daein' her

wark ;” and Davie once more rubbed his shoulders with evident feeling.

“Go home, David,” said the minister, “and read a chapter to her, having faith in the result ; and I do hope and trust that this sore and trying affliction may be duly blessed to both you and your wife.”

Half an hour after, Davie was home and had related his interview with the minister almost word for word as it occurred.

“Ma patience, pray for the cuddy !” exclaimed Davie’s better-half on hearing the story, “wha was gie’n ye drink, Davie ?”

“Oh, it’s a richt,” said Davie, “but drunk or sober, I’ll baith pray and chapter Katie in the stable this very nicht, for if I’m to cairry oot the customers’ coals much langer I’ll soon hae a corn on my back as big as Benlomond.”

That same night Davie took down the big-print Bible, and telling his spouse to bring matches and a candle, he made straight for the stable door.

“Licht the can’le,” he said, getting out his spees and preparing for serious work. “I wad like to wale a chapter wi’ a verse or twa suitable to our present affliction, but whaur to fa’ on’t I’m bate to ken.”

“Try the Revelations, Davie,” said his wife, “there’s wonderfu’ passages there.”

“Revelations, did ye say ?” and turning over the leaves of the Book as it lay spread on his knee, he at length concluded just to take a chapter at random, when, just as he was proceeding to open his mouth with a big—BEHOLD ! the disabled cuddy suddenly drew up her hind leg, and letting fly, knocked the spees frae his e’en, the Bible owre his heid, and himself owre the box he sat on.

“Eh !” yelled Davie, on getting to his feet, “did ever ye see siccan rank unbelief ! an’ after a’ the minister’s talk, tae ! Her a sowl to save ! She’s a perfect auld heathen !”

"'Deed, I kenn'd weel enough frae the first that 'salts' wad hae sair't her better than Scriptor," put in Davie's better-half.

"I'll jist awa' up this instant and let the minister ken the result," was Davie's answer, and, quick on the thought, he at once set off in the direction of the minister's manse.

"Weel, David, my good man," began the minister, "how's Katie haudin' now?"

"Mair life and spunk in her than I could have believed, and mair infidel unbelief, tae, I'm sorry to confess."

"David! David!" expostulated the minister.

"Oh, ye may David, David me as lang's ye like; but when I made to read a chapter to her, the infidel auld yaud kick't the Bible slap owre my heid. There's conduct for ye!"

"Deplorable! deplorable!" exclaimed the minister, with both hands elevated in mid air. "She must have altogether lost her senses. I'll just put on my hat, and come along and speak to her."

"You'll speak to her, minister?" questioned Davie, scratching at his toozie heid in fell surprise.

"Yes, David, I'll seriously argue the point with her," replied the minister, turning away to get his hat and stick.

In two minutes Davie had returned to the house, and warned his wife that the minister was coming along to see the cuddy.

"And me in this state," said his wife, "my face and twa hands as black's a sweep's! I'll jist rin in next door for twa minutes, and ye can tell the minister I'm oot makin' my markets."

A moment after, the minister's solemn step was heard in the lobby.

"Here already, minister?" said Davie, as the reverend gentleman stepped across the threshold.

"Yes, but where is Katie, your disabled helpmeet?"

"She's in the stable, and I'll tak ye in to see her the noo. Sit doon a minute."

"In the stable!" exclaimed the astonished minister. "How can you be so unkind as to keep her in the stable?"

"And whaur then would I keep the cuddy if no in the stable? Surely ye widna expect her to stay wi' me an' my wife in the kitchen, even though she has been a guid helpmate?" replied Davie.

"Do you mean to tell me that it is the donkey and not your wife that you have been referring to all this time!" exclaimed the amazed and confounded minister.

"Of coorse! and nae yin else," said honest Davie.

"What! Am I to understand that you call the animal 'Katie,' and that there is nothing the matter with your wife's leg after all?" demanded the minister, in solemn tones.

"Bless my heart, minister, did ye ackwally mistake my wife, Katie, for 'Katie' the cuddy?" laughed aloud Davie, his coal-gum countenance puckered with a thousand merry wrinkles.

A moment after the completely dumfounded minister had hurriedly fled the spot. The disabled cuddy recovered the use of its foot in due time; but when the minister meets Davie on the road he very conveniently looks up to his native skies and keeps the far-away side of the street.

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