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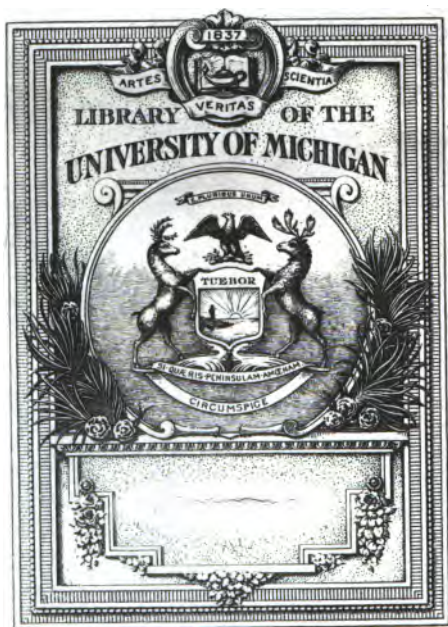
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# The Auld Scotch Minister.









A Visit of Sympathy.

# The Auld Scotch Minister

As Sketched in Anecdote  
and Story.



By

Nicholas Dickson,

Author of "The Elder at the Plate,"  
"The Kirk Beadle," &c.

Glasgow :  
Morison Brothers,  
1892.

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## THE CHERISHED WISH.

DURING an autumn holiday spent at St. Boswells, now a great many years ago, the members of a family from Edinburgh enjoyed themselves to the full under the combined influences of charming weather, high spirits, and lovely scenery. Among the numerous places of interest that were visited day by day, the monument at Penielheugh was one—a tall column erected by the tenantry of the Marquis of Lothian to commemorate the decisive victory at Waterloo.

It was not, however, the monument itself that formed the object of greatest interest to the holiday party; it was the fine panorama of Border scenery that may be seen by those who

care to climb to the top by the interior spiral staircase. Instead of facing such an exertion on a sultry August day, one of the ladies of the party preferred to remain below. Scarcely had she seated herself on a grassy bank, all gaily coloured and sweetly perfumed with wild thyme and violets; scarcely had she taken out her knitting to wile away half-an-hour, when a comely dame came forward and invited her down to the cottage which stands near the foot of the monument.

"Ye'll rest better here, ma'am, than out in the glare of the sunshine," remarked the matron, after seeing her guest comfortably resting in the cool and cosy parlour of the cottage. The guest was a matron as well, and, accordingly, the two mothers soon became occupied in discussing the never-failing subject of children, their troubles, trials, temperaments, and fifty other matters interesting only to wives, mothers, and weans.

"How many of a family have you?" asked the guest.

"Exactly half-a-dozen—an' here comes in the Benjie o' the lot." The child referred to was a



fine little fellow of seven or eight, done up in nature's colours of fair hair, blue eyes, and fresh complexion—the very picture of country health and hardihood.

“And what are you going to make of *him*?” asked the guest, who had listened attentively to the biographies of the older members of the flock.

“Oh,” said the matron, with a glow of pride and pleasure lighting up her handsome face and features, “his faither an’ me would like to see that yin wag his pow in a pu’pit some day.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the monument-climbers. Enough had been said, however, to illustrate the remark that long ago there were few parents in Scotland who did not cherish, in their heart of hearts, the wish that one of their sons might be consecrated to the service of the Church. The same wish is, no doubt, cherished still, but it does not seem to be so frequently expressed as it was forty or fifty years ago. In those days the usual question asked of a boy was not, “What is your name?” but “What are you going to be?” Out of every family it was expected that at least one boy

would reply that he wished to be a minister. "He was set apart for the Church," says Mr. Barrie in his story of "The Little Minister," "as doggedly as the shilling a week for the rent, and the rule held good though the family consisted of only one boy."

The mother of this same "little minister" set apart her boy while he was yet a child. "He was born with a brow whose nobility impressed him from the first. It was a minister's brow, and though Margaret herself was no scholar . . . she decided when his age was still counted by months that the ministry had need of him."

In "Guy Mannering," Sir Walter Scott gives us another instance of early wishes for the ministry in the case of Abel Sampson, commonly called, from his future occupation, Dominie Sampson. Having evinced from his very cradle an uncommon seriousness of disposition, his parents were encouraged to hope "that their bairn might wag his pow in a pulpit yet." Accordingly, with a view to such a consummation, "they pinched and pared, rose early and

lay down late, ate dry bread and drank cold water, to secure to Abel the means of learning."

As the boy, who had thus been consecrated to the Church, gradually unfolded his character and developed the grace that was fondly believed to be in him, every peculiarity was carefully watched and noted by his anxious and admiring parents. The less he was like other boys the more was he considered to be in better form and fashion for the pulpit. When the celebrated Dr. George Lawson, of Selkirk, was a little fellow, it was quite evident, says his biographer, Dr. John Macfarlane, that he was "out of the ordinary." The boy's thirst for knowledge was intense, while his desire for work on his father's farm was the reverse of intense. He was sent, on one occasion, to a mill in charge of a horse which carried a sackful of grain to be ground into meal for the family use. Thinking that the horse was at one end of the halter, like every other orthodox animal in similar circumstances, the boy proceeded on his way to the mill absorbed in thought or reading a book. The horse, apparently an observer of human

nature, and a humorist in his way, seeing the boy otherwise engaged than in attending to duty, slipped the halter, took to grazing by the wayside, and allowed the future minister to go forward to the mill alone.

Judging from this incident that the boy was not destined for farm work, but for the Church, the parents took him to their minister, the Rev. Mr. Mair, in order to be guided and strengthened by the advice which they expected to get from him. Mr. Mair listened attentively to the views and proposals stated by Mr. and Mrs. Lawson. During the interview the boy had withdrawn to a window recess, and was there employed in writing with his finger on one of the panes—probably noting the heads of his first sermon. But whatever he was engaged in doing, the boy was awakened out of his indifference to the presence of the family minister by hearing that worthy saying, in angry tones, “I tell thee, Mr. Lawson, he has no mother wit. If a man wants lair he may get that; if he wants riches he may get them; and even if he wants grace he may get it. But if a man wants common sense, I tell thee, he will never get that.”

Not a very promising outlook for George Lawson and the pulpit in which his parents had hoped one day to see him wag his pow. It is but right, however, to add, for the sake of all parties concerned, that ere long the boy began to show so much precocity and promise, that Mr. Mair took every opportunity of helping forward young Lawson in his education and preparation for the ministry.

In the next story it is not the minister who is consulted about another boy, but the school-master. Dr. Guthrie, in his "Autobiography," relates that one day a countryman called on Mr. Linton, headmaster of the Brechin Grammar School, and asked advice with reference to the professional outlook of a youth accompanying him. "Mr. Linton, ye see, my laddie's fond o' lair, and I should like to gie him a gude eddication."

"And what would you like to make of him?" asked the master.

"Oh, if he gets grace we'll make him a minister."

"And what if he gets no grace?"

"Weel, in that case we'll just make him a dominie."

There was common sense in this finding of the countryman, although it bore a little hard upon the headmaster perhaps. History, however, does not record that the master took the matter amiss, in which case he is clearly entitled to his share of any common sense that was going.

The author of "Ministers and Men in the Far North" tells us that the subject of one of his sketches, the Rev. Alexander Gunn, in very early youth gave indications of tastes and likings far above those which usually characterise boys. On one occasion Alexander was sent to the hill pasture to mind some cattle feeding on the common there. When evening came he returned bringing with him cattle, indeed, but few of them belonging to his father. Knowing the hasty temper of the old man, the farm servants expected to see the boy severely reproved or punished for his carelessness. The farmer, however, only quietly remarked, "I suppose the Lord has other work for the boy than minding my cattle."

## THE BOY'S OWN IDEA OF THE MINISTRY.

THIS absorption in thought, to the neglect of duty, was by no means peculiar to all boys destined for the ministry. Some of them were as fond of fun and frolic as were those companions who had chosen the law, the army, the navy, or any of the other professions and handicrafts. In his "Two Centuries of Border Church Life," Mr. Tait tells us that Dr. Waugh, when a boy, was regarded as the most active and energetic of all his school companions. Fond of adventure, and a great lover of nature as she is seen in the fields and on the hills, the boy used to rise early and leave home for an hour or two. On appearing at breakfast he would laughingly

say, "I have been seeing foxy and hearing the linties."

In Dr. Donald Macleod's interesting memoir of his famous brother, we learn that Norman, while a student at the University of Glasgow, used to spend his Sundays at home in the manse of Campsie. These weekly visits frequently gave occasion for grave concern on the part of father and mother; for coming, as Norman did, in the full swing of fresh and buoyant excitement after the restraints of study, the noisy fun and ceaseless mimicry in which he indulged, made them afraid that the young student would not be sedate enough for the ministry. As we all know, these anxieties and fears were soon dispelled and laid for ever.

From the manse comes the following story of two boys who had set their hearts, not on books or learning, but on a steak-pie which their mother had provided for her husband's guests at a Communion season. Giving way to temptation, the boys went about their work in a way which showed that they had an eye to the practical illustration of a scriptural text to which, no



doubt, their father had often directed their attention. Carefully and neatly cutting off the pie crust, the two "gorbies" regaled themselves with the savoury steak. When that was done, they filled up the vacant space with grass, replaced the crust, and surmounted the dish with a piece of paper on which they had inscribed the text referred to—"All flesh is grass." When that pie was opened, the "tableau" may be better imagined than described. "One of these boys," we are assured by the author of "Reminiscences of Dunfermline and Neighbourhood," "afterwards became a most distinguished preacher, unsurpassed for natural oratory as he was for a noble, generous heart."

It is interesting to turn from these incidents of parental solicitude and boyish exhibitions of character to the boy himself, for the purpose of ascertaining his own sentiments with regard to his destination for the ministry. From Dr. Hanna's "Mémoires of Dr. Chalmers" we learn that almost as soon as he could form or announce a purpose, the future famous Scottish preacher declared that he would be a minister. The sister

of one of his school-fellows at Anstruther remembered breaking in upon her brother and him in a room to which they had retired together. There she found Chalmers standing on a chair and preaching most vigorously to his single auditor below. Not only had he then resolved to be a minister, but he had actually fixed upon his first text, and that was "Let brotherly love continue."

Another famous Scottish preacher, Dr. Alexander Carlyle, of Inveresk, took to addressing an audience while still a child—an audience larger than that which listened to Chalmers. At six years of age, Carlyle one Sunday morning found that about a dozen old women had been unable to obtain entrance into the parish church of Prestonpans, where his father was minister. To this "overflow meeting" the child actually proposed to read a portion of scripture, and the better to hear the infant teacher, the auld wives set him on a tombstone, from which he read to an audience, increased to about a score, the whole of the "Song of Solomon."

In connection with this incident, one of the child's hearers afterwards found him playing,

like any ordinary child, on a staircase. Stroking his head and caressing him, she called him a fine boy, and expressed the wish that he would not only be a minister like his father, but that he would be his father's successor in the parish of Prestonpans. "No. no," replied the child, "I'll never be minister of that church, but yonder's my church"—pointing to the steeple of Inveresk, which could be distinctly seen from the place where the infant seer delivered this prophetic utterance.

Different boys have, of course, different minds on the subject of the ministry, and, accordingly, we may be prepared to hear of some who had no ambition to wag their pow in a pulpit. From the MS. of John Ramsay, Esquire, of Ochertyre, and published lately under the title of "Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century," we read of a minister who called a meeting of his friends and neighbours to discuss the question whether his only son should be a clergyman or a manufacturer. This discussion had been rendered necessary by the fact that both father and son held different opinions on the matter. After

the discussion had proceeded some time the former asked, with considerable emotion, "But who will, after I am gone, take the charge of my MSS. on the Fathers, which have employed so much of my time?" A matter-of-fact lady of the party at once replied, "Singe hens wi' your sermons, Mr. Thomas, and let your son follow his own inclination." What the world has lost by that young man's being allowed to have his own way can never even be guessed, for the MSS. on the Fathers were in all probability consigned to the kitchen, and used up in the practical but unromantic process of singeing hens and other farmyard fowl. To what base uses may not our most cherished works be turned!

Hugh Miller, too, had a mind of his own with reference to the expression of a wish on the part of his uncles that he should prepare for the Church. In his "Schools and Schoolmasters" Hugh tells us that he had no particular wish and no particular fitness to be either lawyer or doctor; and as for the Church, that was too serious a direction to look in for one's bread, unless one could honestly regard one's self as

*called* to the Church's proper work, and he could not. "There," said Hugh's uncles, "you are perfectly right—better be a poor mason, better be anything honest, however humble, than an *un-called* minister."

## THE DIVINITY STUDENT.

RELEASED from school and the schoolmaster, the lad who had been set apart for the service of the Church went in due time to the University, and there commenced the long career of study which was to prepare him for the much-coveted distinction of entitling him to wag his pow in a pulpit. In clerical memoirs and biographies we read much of the minister's college career and companionships. There is, however, one chapter which is but too often "blackened out" or omitted altogether—we refer to the temptations which beset the student, and which, in too many instances, "lay him low and stain his name."

No one can read "Redgauntlet," we fancy, without being much interested in the personal history of Nanty Ewart as related by himself

to Alan Fairford on board the smuggling brig of which the former was the skipper. Nanty had been a divinity student once, but his narrative explains the downcome. "I have no doubt," remarked Fairford, "your present occupation is more lucrative: but I should have thought the Church might have been more——." Alan stopped, recollecting that it was not his business to say anything disagreeable.

"More respectable you mean, I suppose?" replied Ewart. "And so it would have been, Mr. Fairford, and happier, too, by a thousand degrees. But there was my father—God bless the old man, a true chip of the old Presbyterian block, walked his parish like a captain on the quarter-deck, and was always ready to do good to rich and poor. Off went the laird's hat to the minister as fast as the poor man's bonnet. When the eye saw him—Pshaw! What have I to do with that now? But he might have been the wiser man had he kept me at home instead of sending me at nineteen to study divinity while lodging at the head of the highest stair in the Covenant Close."

Nanty then details the story of the temptation that befell him in the form of his landlady's daughter, whose foot was never off the stair as he went out and came home from his classes. "I would have eschewed her," continues Nanty, "I would, on my soul, for I was as innocent a lad as ever came from Lammermoor; but there was no possibility of escape, retreat, or flight, unless I could have got a pair of wings or made use of a ladder seven storeys high to scale the windows of my attic. It signifies little talking; you may suppose how all this was to end. I would have married the girl and taken my chance—I would, by Heaven!—for she was a pretty girl, and a good girl, till she and I met. But you know the old song, 'Kirk would not let us be.'"

After all this, Nanty goes on to say that he longed and yearned to see his father, but matters had gone so far that a return to the manse was out of the question. The broken-hearted old man had done nothing for six days but cry out, "Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory is departed from my house."



The ex-divinity student then went to sea, and after many stirring adventures there, he once more had it in his heart to see his father, and put matters right in the Covenant Close. It was too late to do either, however, and so Nanty resumed his old courses—"sailed under the black flag and marrow bones, was a good friend to the sea, and an enemy to all that sailed on it."

It is a touching story this wreck of a much-loved son of the manse. But for his early career and subsequent profligacy, there was much that might have blossomed into excellence and even nobility of character in the person of Nanty Ewart. Sir Walter will not have written this story in vain if his warning has acted as a danger-signal, or lighthouse, to keep others off the rock on which a promising student of divinity suffered such disastrous shipwreck.

Of very different texture from Nanty Ewart was another divinity student, but drawn by the same master's hand—Reuben Butler, whose early life and struggles with poverty are all graphically described in "The Heart of Mid-Lothian." After many blunders in country work, something

similar to those described in a former chapter, it became quite clear that Reuben was not destined for the ordinary routine of a farm. "I see nothing ye can make of that silly callant, neighbour Butler," said David Deans to the boy's grandmother, "unless ye train him to the wark o' the ministry, and ne'er was there mair need o' poorfu' preachers than e'en now in these cauld Gallio days, when men's hearts are hardened like the nether mill-stone, till they come to regard none of these things. It's evident this puir callant of yours will never be able to do an usefu' day's wark unless it be as an ambassador from our Master, and I will make it my business to procure a license when he is fit for the same, trusting that he will be a shaft cleanly polished and meet to be used in the body of the Kirk, and that he shall not turn again, like the sow, to wallow in the mire of heretical extremes and defections, but shall have the wings of a dove, though he hath lain among the pots."

Accordingly, Reuben was sent to the University of St. Andrews to study for the Church. After the usual course there, he obtained license as a

preacher of the Gospel, with some compliments from the Presbytery by whom it was bestowed. "He can wag his head in a pulpit now," said the young preacher's grandmother to her friend and neighbour, David Deans.

"Reuben Butler, gudewife," said David with solemnity, "is a lad I wish heartily weel to, even as if he were mine ain son—but I doubt there will be outs and ins in the track of his walk. I muckle fear his gifts will get the heels of his grace. He has ower muckle human wit and learning, and thinks as muckle about the form of the bicker as he does about the healsomeness of the food—he maun broider the marriage garment with lace and passments, or it's no gude enough for him. And it's like he's something proud o' his human gifts and learning, whilk enables him to dress up his doctrine in that fine airy dress. But," added Deans, on seeing the old woman's uneasiness at his discourse, "affliction may gie him a jag, and let the wind out o' him, as out o' a cow that's eaten wet clover, and the lad may do weel, and be a burning and a shining light; and I trust it will be yours to see and his to feel it, and that soon."

But a greater St. Andrews student than Reuben Butler is here. After completing his course of study, Thomas Chalmers applied to the Presbytery of that ilk to be admitted to examination preparatory to his obtaining license as a preacher. Some difficulties were raised against the application on the ground that the student had not completed his nineteenth year, whereas twenty-one was the regulation age. Under cover, however, of an old statute which provides an exception in favour of youths of unusual promise, a friend pleaded for the applicant as "a lad o' pregnant pairts." The plea was admitted, and Thomas Chalmers, was licensed as a preacher of the Gospel on the 31st July, 1799.

## THE STICKIT MINISTER.

A MOMENTOUS affair this license to wag the paw in a pulpit! It was, and still is, of course, the outcome of much preparation on the part of the preacher, and yet more anxiety on the part of parents. One of the present writer's earliest recollections is that of his father having been called upon one Sunday morning by a neighbour whose only son had just completed his theological course, who had been duly licensed, and who was, on the morning in question, appointed to conduct public worship for the first time. "I'm awfully nervous about his first public appearance and his first sermon. Will you go, my friend, and tell me in the afternoon how he got on?"

The commission was cordially accepted, and

when the afternoon came, the two fathers met. The suspense was soon over, for the report submitted was gratifying in the extreme. The young preacher had acquitted himself most admirably, whereupon, at the news, his father's excitement and gratitude found relief in tears. "I consecrated him to the service of the Church while he was yet a child, and now that he has occupied the pulpit of his native parish at last, I feel as if life were worth the living after all." This incident forms a striking illustration of the truth enunciated by Shakespeare when he says "spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues;" for this appearance of the young man in the pulpit was the consummation of all the old man's hopes and wishes; the one thing he had desired, the one issue he had prayed for as the outcome of his life.

Anything but finely touched was the man in the next story, when his son, and his son's fellow licentiate, occupied the pulpit for the first time. For the sake of comparison, the father attended both services, and when asked his opinion as to the respective merits of the two preachers, he

replied, "He's really a nice young lad that preached in the forenoon—a nice lad and some spunk in him. But he hasna *the waap o' the arm* that ma son has. I bred him, ye see, to be a tailor—ma ain profession. Ye should make a' students tailors first." The recommendation stated in the closing sentence of this deliverance does not seem to have commended itself to ecclesiastical authorities, as we hear nothing whatever of "*the waap o' the arm*," whatever that may mean, being considered as an accomplishment in the pulpit.

Great as must be the joy of parents in hearing that their son has satisfactorily acquitted himself in the pulpit, we may form some faint idea of the grief and disappointment that are caused when he breaks down, and "sticks" in the delivery of his first discourse. And yet such a trial many an anxious parent has had to endure. Witness the case of Dominie Sampson already introduced to the reader. Poor man, the Dominie's first appearance in the pulpit was also his last. His biographer describes the scene, and the description, though coloured with a little exaggeration, is graphic in the extreme.

"Partly from the Dominie's own bashfulness, partly owing to a strong and obvious disposition to risibility which pervaded the congregation upon his first attempt, he became totally incapable of proceeding in his intended discourse—gasped, grinned hideously, rolled his eyes till the congregation thought them flying out of his head, shut the Bible, stumbled down the pulpit stair, trampling upon the old women who generally take their station there, and was ever afterwards designated as *the stickit minister*."

Few expressions have come to carry more opprobrium and disgrace than this one of "*the stickit minister*." The general idea associated with it is that the young preacher who "*stuck*" in the pulpit is henceforth to be regarded as a cipher in society and a failure in life. There is no reason, however, for regarding the preacher in this light. Very often the failure in the pulpit prepares the way for success in some more congenial profession. There is an incident from the Border country which may, perhaps, illustrate the truth of this remark.

A divinity student nearing the end of his



course of study used to wander among the green hills of his native Liddesdale during the summer vacation. When beyond the reach of every mortal ear, and standing on some hill-top where it would take at least an hour for any human being to approach within speaking distance, the young student took to practising the delivery of the sermon that was to make of him a great preacher. Every day, when alone, and standing on a hill-top, he rehearsed the carefully-prepared discourse, until he had got it so thoroughly "committed" that he thought he "could manage it."

At length the eventful Sunday came when, after being licensed, the preacher was engaged to conduct public worship in the Church of his native parish. His father had died many years before this auspicious day, but his mother was "still to the fore," and a proud woman she was on the morning of the memorable Sunday morning when her only son was at length to wag his pow in the pulpit.

The service began, all went well until the sermon came. The finely rounded sentences that

had rolled so grandly off the young preacher's tongue on the lonely hill-tops somehow wanted to be back on the hill-tops once more, for they refused to be delivered in the little parish church, and the dreaded dead-lock came. Countless mountains seemed to be whirling round the preacher's head, each one of them banteringly asking which of them he wanted as a pulpit. A total collapse followed, and as "the stickit minister" descended the pulpit stair he said within himself, "It's all up with me as a preacher; my mother—oh my mother."

There is no use in prolonging the agony of that dreadful Sunday morning; never again did the young man enter a pulpit; but he took to politics and literature, and afterwards distinguished himself in the editorial chair of one of the most influential of Scottish provincial newspapers.

Sir David Brewster was educated for the Church, but though licensed to preach he never made a public appearance without suffering much from constitutional nervousness. At a large dinner party he was asked to say grace,

and as he proceeded to do so, the words stuck in his throat and he utterly broke down. Clearly the young licentiate was not meant to be a preacher, so he wisely betook himself to other studies, and ultimately made for himself a name that will always be associated with optical science and philosophical literature.

On several occasions, while speaking in public, Professor John Stuart Blackie has stated that he is "a stickit minister." So far as we know, he has not mentioned the circumstances which entitle him to that distinction; for distinction it is in his case, since the genial Professor's brilliant career has taken away the reproach, if there be any reproach, which we doubt, that is apt to be associated with the failure to wag one's pow in a pulpit. There may be no philosophy to account for this failure. A little bit of human weakness at a very critical moment may produce the much-dreaded mischief. Narrating the story of his affection for Margaret, the Dominie, in Mr. Barrie's story, remarks that during the time he remained in her presence something came over him—a kind of dryness in

the throat that made him speechless. And then the Dominie adds—"I have known divinity students stricken in the same way just as they were giving out their first text. It is no aid in getting a kirk or wooing a woman." No aid whatever.

## THE PROBATIONER.

LEAVING to novelists and romancers the congenial task of telling us how to "woo a woman," we proceed with the work laid to our hand of relating how the divinity student becomes a minister and "gets a kirk." After passing all his examinations and delivering his trial sermons, he at last is duly licensed by the Presbytery. His student days are over; he enters upon a period of probation, and patiently waits the development of events that may call him to occupy a distinguished place in the ecclesiastical history of his country. As the politician may aspire to the premier seat in the Cabinet, so the young Scottish preacher may carry in the lining of his sermon-case a possible commission to fill,

by and by, the Moderator's chair in the Supreme Court of his Church.

Dr. James Brown, in his "Life of a Scottish Probationer," gives an interesting account of the hopes and fears of the young minister waiting for the "call" that sometimes, as in Thomas Davidson's case, never comes at all. The period of probation seems to vary in almost every individual case. Thomas Guthrie waited so long that he began to give up hopes of the ministry and betake himself to banking. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, on the other hand, had no sooner obtained license as a preacher than he received several applications from ministers who wished to secure his services as assistant. Choosing Larbert, he remained there for a year only, when he was finally called to St. Peter's, Dundee.

Occasionally the licentiate or probationer was engaged to undertake the duties of parochial work during the absence or illness of the resident clergyman; but until his ordination he was, of course, not qualified to occupy the full status of a settled minister. This status an auld wife in

Gourock could not comprehend, as she saw a young preacher set aside by a "placed" clergyman who had come to administer the ordinance of baptism. "What's the matter wi' our ain Mr. Turner, worthy man, that he canna bapteeze and marry folk when they come to him?" "Oh, Janet," replied the officiating minister, "you know Mr. Turner is not yet ordained." "I ken naething about your ordeenin'; but can ye tell me if there's anything wrang wi' his license?"

In this time of probation, suspense, and waiting for the call that may come with any post, the young preacher gets a variety of experiences that may stand him in good stead if he has any "grit" about him at all. The author of "Recollections of a Speyside Parish" relates the story of a probationer who had gone to preach one Sunday in that district. As the resident minister, for whom he officiated, was uncertain whether the preacher would stay to dinner or not, the former had a conference with his housekeeper on the subject, and they arrived at this arrangement: if the preacher stayed, two cock-chickens were to be cooked: if he did not stay, one would do as usual.

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"Ye'll bide an' tak' a bite o' dinner after the kirk's out," said the minister to the preacher in a half-hearted kind of fashion that lacked the ring of genuine hospitality. The preacher could not say, as he had arranged to preach at Rothies in the evening. On further consideration, however, he consented when he saw that the minister appeared to press his hospitality the more warmly as the preacher seemed anxious to decline it, whereupon the minister rose, walked to the passage which communicated with the kitchen, and called out to the housekeeper, "Annie, are ye there, woman? Put on the other cock. *He's bidin' yet.*"

There is much matter wrapped up in the minister's waefu' intimation to the housekeeper that his guest had actually agreed to remain to dinner. In relating the incident at this time of day, we love to indulge the wish that the keen Highland air so whetted the appetite of the young probationer as to make him attack and punish the extra cock-chicken so severely, that only the bones were left on the plate to serve as a testimony against the inhospitality of the



Speyside manse. As the probationer walked on to Rothes in the evening, we can imagine him laughing quietly over the incident, and storing it away among the personal reminiscences to be afterwards related when he was subsequently settled in a manse of his own.

But inhospitality was only one of the trials which the probationer had to face. We read of one ambitious young gentleman who had prepared a great sermon, and was only waiting the favour of being allowed to deliver it in the church of his native parish. The wished-for opportunity came at last. The preliminary part of the service having been disposed of, the probationer announced his text, stated his subject, warmed to his work, and wakened up the congregation as they had never been wakened up before. The pulpit in which he was declaiming so eloquently, was so infirm from age that there was danger in much gesticulation, and he had previously been warned by one of the heritors to "ca' canny." But the preacher forgot these trifles as he rose to the height of his great argument, and enforced it with consummate eloquence and skill.

Sitting in a square table-seat below was an old laird, one of the heritors of the parish, and the one already referred to. He was getting more alarmed about the personal safety of the pulpit than the rising fame of the probationer who was thundering onward in increasing vehemence, piling his periods, and demolishing argument after argument of the adversary. Just as he was gathering himself up to deliver the final burst, the warning voice of the auld laird rose above the tempest, and brought matters to a different culmination than the probationer had expected—"Noo, ma man, gin ye break that pu'pit, ye'll pay for't."

Of a totally different character was the next culmination. A probationer had made what he considered an excellent impression in the pulpit—so excellent, indeed, that as he descended to the level of the ordinary mortals who had listened to him, he was met by the minister for whom he had officiated. Expecting high praise, the probationer modestly remarked, "No compliments, Doctor—no compliments, mind." "Na, na," replied the Doctor, "noo-a-days, I'm glad to get onybody."

Such were some of the trials in the life and experience of a probationer in former times, and may be still for aught we know. The cock-chicken, the crazy pulpit, and the unexpected compliment may have been bitter morsels to swallow, but they were probably needed to strengthen the character of the young preacher, and brace him up for the battle of life in which he was now to be engaged in all earnestness.

## ORDINATION AND SETTLEMENT.

IN the old days of church patronage in Scotland, the young licentiate who had any influence in the proper quarter received the presentation to a parish from the patron, and knew none of the trials of anxious probation or weary waiting. In his "Annals of the Parish," Galt gives us a series of graphic pictures in the life and experience of an auld Scotch minister of his day. Perhaps the most graphic of them all is the "placing" or settlement of the subject of his sketches—the Rev. Micah Balwhidder, minister of the parish of Dalmailing.

This placing is described as by the minister himself. "It was," says he, "a great affair, for I was put in by the patron, and the people knew

nothing whatsoever of me, and their hearts were stirred into strife on the occasion, and they did all that lay within the compass of their power to keep me out, insomuch that there was obliged to be a guard of soldiers to protect the Presbytery; and it was a thing that made my heart grieve when I heard the drum beating and the fife playing as we were going to the kirk. The people were really mad and vicious, and flung dirt on us as we passed, and reviled us all, and held out the finger of scorn at me; but I endured it with a resigned spirit, compassionating their wilfulness and blindness.

“When we got to the kirk door it was found to be nailed up so as by no possibility to be opened. The sergeant of the soldiers wanted to break it, but I was afraid that the heritors would grudge and complain of the expense of a new door, and I supplicated him to let it be as it was. We were, therefore, obligated to go in by a window, and the crowd followed us in the most unreverent manner, making the Lord’s house like an inn on a Fair day.”

After devotional exercises and the sermon

usual on such occasions, the ordination service followed, when the clamour of the discontented parishioners was renewed. In the midst of it all, however, the humour that almost always crops up wherever and whenever a body of Scotchmen meet, was not wanting on the occasion. Mr. Given, the minister of Lugton, and a member of the Presbytery, was a jocose man, and would have his joke even at the solemn meeting. "When the laying of the hands upon me was adoining," continues the minister, "Mr. Given could not get near enough to put on his, but he stretched out his staff and touched my head, and said, to the great diversion of the rest—*This will do well enough—timber to timber.* But it was an unkindly saying of Mr. Given, considering the time and the place and temper of the people."

Sometimes the humour comes out in the person of the presentee himself. There is a story told of one who was settled in a charge near Glasgow, and who was very unpopular in the parish solely on account of his personal appearance, poor man. This was owing to a protuberance between the

shoulders, arising from a diseased spine, and a corresponding protrusion of the chest. Regretting his continued unpopularity, the minister called a meeting of the principal objectors. "I have heard," said the presentee, "that my settlement among you is not likely to prove agreeable. Now, as I am not aware of any objection to my opinions or practice, I should like to hear you state *your objections*."

The objectors looked one to another, but none of them seemed to have the courage of stating their opinions. "Speak out," said the minister, "don't be afraid. I am not ready to take offence." Then one stammered out—"Sir, ye see—sir, I maun speak for my brethren; but the fac' is, nane o' us like your bodily appearance." "Neither do I," was the ready reply, "but if ye can help me to get it repaired, I'll be half the expense myself."

The presentation to a charge in unpopular circumstances does not seem to have been a very enviable lot. In the course of his parochial visitation the minister had many a curt reply to some of the questions he asked in the way

of family catechising. "Who made Paul a preacher?" an unpopular presentee asked of the head of a household, expecting, of course, the orthodox reply. But the reply came, snell and sharp, "It wasna the Duke of Queensberry at ony rate."

Mr. Balwhidder himself tells us with reference to his parochial visitation that it was a steep brae he had to climb, and that it needed a stout heart to face it. In some cases he found the door barred against his entrance, in others, when he did effect an entrance, he was asked in a bantering, satirical kind of way, "Weel, honest man, what's your pleasure here?"

Of a very different character was the reception given to another presentee, showing, of course, that patronage had its popular, as well as its unpopular, phase. In his delightful "Reminiscences of Yarrow," Dr. Russell tells us that his father was presented by Francis, Lord Napier, to the parish of Ettrick, and that the ordination took place on the 6th May, 1790. Mr. Russell's fine personal appearance, his gentle and genial manners, and, above all, his evangelical doctrine,



ingratiated him at once with the people, and he received a most cordial welcome from all classes. An old man, alluding to the high respect in which the new minister was held, said, "Mr. Russell was just a goddess among us"—a compliment not a bit the less deserved though there was a slight confusion of the genders. But perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Mr. Russell, on his settlement, was the voluntary offer of a loan of money from one of the heritors of the parish who remembered that the young minister might have many expenses to meet—the furnishing of the manse, a double rate to the Widows' Fund, and other thoughtful considerations. But though this offer was not accepted, Mr. Russell never ceased gratefully and publicly to acknowledge the considerate kindness which prompted it.

This "placing" or settling a minister in a country parish long ago created considerable excitement in the interested locality. Sometimes there was a good deal of humour on the occasion, as we have seen in the case of Mr. Given and his staff, and through these gleams of humour we

get an inkling of the character of the minister who was being ordained or inducted. An auld wife in Fife, observing a great throng of people one day passing her cottage, asked one of the crowd what was "a' the steer."

"We're gaun to see Mr. Wilson *settled*," was the reply.

"Aweel, I wat, ye may see him *placed*, but it's no this Presbytery, nor any other in Scotland, that'll ever see Mr. Wilson *settled*." The reference here was to the new minister's lively temperament, and the little likelihood of seeing him settled anywhere.

In former times, as well as our own, the choice of a minister was sometimes determined by the voice of the congregation instead of by the will of the patron. In the interesting volumes of Mr. Ramsay, of Ochtertyre, already quoted from, there is a story of the curious choice of a minister. In a parish in Clydesdale a number of candidates had preached in a vacant congregation without any one of them making much impression. At last a young preacher appeared, of whom the beadle formed so high an opinion that he let him up to this wrinkle.

"Sir," said the beadle, "there are two nails in our pulpit, on one of which our late worthy minister used to hang his hat. None of the rest have hit on it. If you put your hat on the right nail it will please."

The hint was taken, and that candidate was chosen.

Mr. Ramsay tells another story of a candidate who, while preaching in a parish near Glasgow, was labouring under the disadvantage of a severe cold. Having forgotten his handkerchief, the young preacher was obliged to nurse his nose with his hand. So gracefully did he perform this delicate operation, that the sympathetic congregation fixed on the homely lad and chose him for their minister.

But there were many disappointed ones among the candidates then as well as now. Dr. M'Pherson, in his "New Scotch Anecdotes," tells the story of a young minister, Mr. Brown, who went one Sunday to preach as a candidate for the chapel of Blairduff, near Aberdeen. The rain came down handsomely all morning, and the preacher got wet to the skin. On such a

day there was but a poor congregation, and, consequently, the candidate's chance of success was gone. After the service, one of the elders bestowed on him this left-handed compliment at parting, "Guid day, than; if ye havena gotten the kirk, ye've gotten the steepin'." Poor fellow, we can easily imagine how the candidate would not enter into the joy of that joke.

While enforced settlements were frequently the source of much dissatisfaction in a parish, it was by no means the case that the minister, who was elected by the voice of the congregation, entered his earthly paradise on the day of his ordination, and was happy ever afterwards. There are numerous cases in which the non-conforming portion of the Scottish clergy had to face what seemed only fractionous opposition for the sake of opposition. After the ordination at Haddington of a young preacher, afterwards well known as Dr. John Brown, a solitary dissentient called at the manse and intimated his intention to "lift his lines."

"Why do you think of leaving us?" the minister asked.

"Because I don't think you are a good preacher."

"Oh," replied Mr. Brown, "that is quite my own opinion too. The great majority of the congregation think differently, however, and it would ill become you and me to set up our individual opinions against theirs. I have given in to them, and I would suggest that you, my friend, should do the same."

"Well, well," replied the grumbler, struck by the art of putting things, "I think you're right, and I'll e'en follow your example."

Mr. Lawson, of Selkirk, too, had an almost similar experience. After his ordination, one member of his congregation who had opposed the settlement took every opportunity of annoying the young minister. All that Mr. Lawson could do or say in the way of soothing matters or making peace was only met with contradiction and fault-finding.

While engaged in pastoral visitation, Mr. Lawson came to this untoward member's house, and being still desirous of conciliating him if possible, the minister entered into conversation

with him in a frank and friendly spirit. But it was of no use. The more that conciliation was offered the more it was rejected. "Sir," said the unreasonable gentleman, "since you came into this house you've *actually tell'd a lee!*"

"Ah," replied the minister, "that's a serious business. But I'm not aware of having committed so grave a misdemeanour as that since coming here."

"Oh yes, but ye *have* tell'd a lee; for when I asked ye to stay and take tea with us, ye said ye would not, and yet ye've done baith. Isn't that tellin' a lee?"

Such absurdity in reasoning was easily disposed of. The dissentient was at once floored, silenced, and restored to his right mind. No further trouble does he seem to have given either to the minister or himself, which was a great achievement.

## PREPARATION AND PRAYER.

Now that we have followed the career of the preacher, in a general sort of way, from his devotion to the ministry until the time of his ordination and settlement, we shall henceforth know him in these pages as The Minister, not the minister of to-day, however, but THE AULD SCOTCH MINISTER of a former day and generation, with all the simplicities about him which mark him off as one of the outstanding figures in the social life of Scotland at the close of last century and the first half of the present.

There does not seem to have been much sustained or consecutive study in the preparation of the average sermon long ago; but there was a great deal of common sense that perhaps made

up for any other deficiency. Thus we read of one minister asking another what was considered to be the best preparation for effective work in the pulpit. The questioner himself suggested the stereotyped and orthodox preliminaries of study and prayer—whereupon the other added, "And a good sleep." But there seems to have been very little of any of these preliminaries in the experience of a Perth minister, whose great hobby was early rising and the advantages to be derived from the practice. Expatiating upon these advantages the minister stated that he had one morning lately, not only written a sermon but killed a salmon.

"Weel, sir," said the friend who had been advised to try early rising, and who placed no great value on the discourse that had been knocked off in such a short space, "weel, sir, I would rather hae your salmon than your sermon." Still less study does one of the ministers of Penicuik seem to have indulged in when he was complimented by a friend on the trouble and the time he must have spent in the preparation of a sermon that had that morning been delivered.



Trouble, sir," replied Mr. Colston, the minister referred to, and thumping with his fist a book which lay on the table, "There lies the Bible! I haven't opened it for three months!"

Before Dr. Chalmers had experienced the change which set the ministry in a new light for him, he bestowed comparatively little time or care on his pulpit preparations. On this matter a friend's letter is quoted in Dr. Hanna's *Memoirs* of the great preacher—"I have known him not begin them (his sermons) till Sabbath morning. He told me that he wrote in shorthand, and when he once began, he kept the pen going till he had finished the discourse . . . But they were written in a fervid strain, and delivered with energetic animation."

So much for the preparation of some sermons. To the sermons themselves, or at least a few criticisms upon them, we shall come by and by. Meantime let us get among the auld Scotch ministers and listen, as through the modern telephone, to the quaint and homely way in which they conducted public worship long ago.

The Rev. Peter Glass flourished in Crail about

the close of last century. Invariably he used the simplest terms in the pulpit both in prayer and sermon, and these were all the more acceptable to his congregation, as they were mostly composed of plain fisher folk. One morning he prayed that the men's boats might be filled with herring "up to the very tow-holes." "Na, na, minister; no sae far as that," called out some one interested in the petition. "Man, she would sink if the herrin' filled her to the tow-holes."

Direct and simple such prayers must have been. Homely as the following illustration is, we can easily imagine how forcibly it would strike a country congregation:—"Thou, O Lord," said a minister in the West of Scotland, addressing the Hearer of Prayer, "art like a mouse in a dry-stane dyke—aye keekin' out at us frae holes an' crannies, but we canna see Thee."

Touching on matters engaging public attention at the time, a minister of the Barony Church in Glasgow prayed that the insatiable ambition of Louis XIV. of France might be curbed, and that the King himself might be shaken over the

mouth of the bottomless pit. "But," added the minister, "dinna let him fa' in; just gi'e him a gude fricht." Some one hearing of this quaint petition related the matter to Louis, who was greatly amused. As a dinner toast he frequently thereafter gave "The Good Scotch Parson," and it was always duly honoured.

If such homely illustrations and unorthodox petitions were frequently employed in the ordinary prayers of a former time, it is only natural to expect something even more noteworthy when we come among the special prayers. Asked specially to return thanks for an excellent harvest and its safe ingathering, a minister in the North of Scotland did so; but, desirous of being perfectly truthful, he conscientiously added—"Safely ingathered, a' except a few fields between this and Stonehaven no worth mentionin'."

After a long season of drought, the minister of a rural parish was reminded by some of his congregation, specially interested in agricultural matters, that he had omitted to ask for some refreshing rain. In reply, the minister explained

the cause of the omission, but he added, "I'll pray for rain to please ye. Feint a drop, however, ye'll get till the mune changes."

A city minister, preaching in the Carse of Gowrie, was approached by some members of the congregation, and desired to remember in prayer the ripening crops, and to supplicate for them a few gentle showers. Petitioning for more than he was instructed to ask, he prayed that "the windows of Heaven might be opened to cheer the thirsty ground, and fulfil the earnest hopes of the husbandman."

As if in answer, the windows of Heaven were opened, the thunder rolled and growled, and there followed such a downpour of rain that much of the standing corn in the Carse was broken and ruined. Ascribing this unfortunate state of matters to the minister's prayer, one of the farmers affected by the disaster remarked—"That puir body may do well eneuch in the toon; but Lord keep us a', the suner he's out o' the country the better for a' pairties."

There seems to be no satisfying agricultural people in regard to the weather. As we have

just seen, one minister was asked to pray for some refreshing rain, and another for a few gentle showers, so we came to a third who had a deputation at the manse one Saturday evening to warn him to be very cautious as to the way in which he should frame his petition next day in church. "The last time ye prayed for rain," said one of the deputation, "the weather broke down a' thegither, and the thing turned out perfectly redeeklus."

"Trust me, gentlemen," said the minister in reply. "Attend the kirk the morn an' ye'll hear what I hae to ask." Acting up to the instructions received, the minister is reported to have prayed, "An' noo, Lord, I hae a petition to present, but I maun be unco wary in the wordin' o't. Thou kenst the kittle state the crops are in, therefore just send us a soughin', southron, dreein' breeze, as it'll save the strae an' winna harm the heid. For if Thou send a tearin', reevin', thunderin' storm, as Thou didst the last time I prayed for gude weather, Thou't play the mischief wi' the aits, an' fairly spoil a'."

Straightforward but simple and forcible as

these prayers are, there is yet a reality about them which commands our attention and respect. In the light of the present day they may probably only be laughed at, but that is not the way to treat the past, for the times are changed, and we are changed with them. Backward glances are more profitably employed in making contrasts than in instituting comparisons. Those who listened to such prayers in church believed in their reality; but even out of church these prayers seemed to retain their reality and their efficacy, for the memory of their earnestness acted as a help and a stay in the time of danger. Dr. Paul, in his interesting "Past and Present of Aberdeenshire," tells us how much one of the ministers of that county endeared himself to his parishioners by the special notice he took of them in his prayers in times of peril and stormy weather at sea. Once, when some fishermen were speaking of their minister, one of them said—"I wat Maister Law tak's terrible gweed notice of his (us) in's prayers, and o' onything that happens till's whan we're at the sea." "Aye," said another, who had been nearly

blown off the coast by a hurricane—"True's the word that ye say, man, for I wat he took gweed notice last Sabbath o' our blaw"—remembered us in prayer in the time of storm and tempest.

But enough about prayers for the weather. The incidents of every-day life were not forgotten, nor were farmers and fishermen the only persons prayed for. Here is the way in which a preacher at Lochmaben interceded for the authorities of that burgh:—"We would remember in prayer the magistrates of this town——." But not knowing apparently how or what more to ask in this connection, the minister suddenly stopped, and then, when enlightenment came, he added, "such as they are."

An auld Fife minister went further a-field than farmers, fishermen, and magistrates, for at the end of a long prayer one Sunday morning, in which he had not failed to remember all sorts and conditions of men, he extended his sympathies even beyond the human family. Half apologetically, he is said to have invited the congregation to join with him in praying for "the Deil, as nobody remembers *him* in prayer now."

This was sympathy of no common order—a sympathy akin to that expressed by Burns in his famous address to the personage under reference—

“But fare you weel, Auld Nickie-ben !  
O wad ye tak a thought and men’ !  
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—  
Still hae a stake !  
I’m wae to think upon yon den,  
Even for your sake !”



## A SELECTION OF TEXTS.

OUR ancestors in church-going Scotland delighted in a well-chosen text—short, direct, and to the point. In their estimation the text seemed to be almost of as much importance as the sermon itself. It is recorded of an auld wife that she had “nae great brew o’ the minister wha had a lang screed o’ the Bible for a text.” And this was the reason annexed—“I hae aye noticed that ae man’s work is but little seen on a big job.” Quite right, dear old lady; thine observation is philosophically correct, and is as applicable to the case in point, and to other cases too, as it was when expressed at the close of last century.

In connection with this important matter of the text, we came across the following incident

in the history of another lady, as related in Nestor's "Rambling Recollections of Old Glasgow." For many years the lady referred to attended the Sabbath evening services in the Tron Church, and when she died there was found among her papers a note-book, in which she had carefully recorded an outline of many of the sermons she had heard. Among the preachers who had taken part in these services was Dr. Lockhart, of the College or Blackfriars Church, but there was no note or outline of his sermon. The text seems to have been enough for the old lady, for all that she writes in her little book about Dr. Lockhart is the simple and sublime intimation that he had "a beautiful text."

Here is another story of a beautiful text from the same authority. The Town Council, who had the patronage of the City churches, wisely exercised a wholesome discretion in the matter of appointment when any vacancy occurred. On such occasions they used to send a deputation of their number to hear the candidates preach, with instructions to report upon the matter at the next meeting of Council.

In the performance of such a duty it once fell to the lot of the Provost and one of the Bailies to submit their report regarding the preachers whom they had heard on the previous Sunday. Having spoken in very glowing terms of one of the candidates, a Councillor at the foot of the table inquired of the Provost what had been the text of the sermon which he and the Bailie had eulogised so highly.

"The text!" replied the Provost. "The text—the text; Bailie, what was it, again?"

But the Bailie was caught floundering too, and for the life of him could not recollect the text. Amidst the rippling laughter of the Council the Provost suddenly and proudly exclaimed, "I have it now, gentlemen; I have it now—a beautiful text indeed—it was *Now's the day and now's the hour!*"

To add to the hilarity of the Council the Bailie chimed in—"Yes, that's it," and so greatly relieved did he seem to be by the supposed solution of the difficulty that he began to supplement what the Provost had been saying about the sermon. The increased hilarity of the Council,

however, only showed how much more the deputation was at home in "Scots Wha Hae," than in the Scriptural text—"Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

We can scarcely afford to be hard upon the worthy Provost and the Bailie in the matter of forgetting the text when we find that even a minister on one occasion got into the same scrape. The incident is recorded by Dr. Charles Rogers in his "Century of Scottish Life." Preaching in the Parish Church of Dunino on the evening of a Communion Sunday, Dr. James Hunter failed to find the text he had selected for the sermon he was just about to deliver. After a pause he exclaimed—"This is extraordinary; I cannot find my text. I marked it on the top of my sermon last night, and I thought it was in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 13th chapter and 22nd verse; but that's a mistake. The text is, 'Suffer the word of exhortation,' but where these words are I can't tell you." Your minister, however, has a good knowledge of passages. "Ho!" exclaimed Dr. Hunter, looking towards the minister, who was seated in the family pew, "Can you tell me where the text is?"

"You are quite right," replied the minister (Dr. Rogers' father); "look at the passage you have named." But, through some nervous flurry or other cause, the preacher could not find the text, and he had to go on without one. After service, he was informed that the text was in the middle clause of the verse which he had at first named, whereupon he called aloud in the churchyard to the retiring congregation, "Hilloa, my friends, the text is in the Hebrews after all. You'll find it when you get home."

There seems to be more trouble about the text and its selection than we in the pew are aware of. While one minister loses his text, another finds it, but can get nothing out of it. So, at all events, was the predicament in which Mr. Shanks of Jedburgh was placed one morning. Fairly perplexed and getting "deeper and deeper still," the minister resolved to ride over to Selkirk and consult Dr. Lawson on the matter.

Practising the virtue of early rising, Mr. Shanks arrived at Selkirk but found the Doctor still in bed. Knocking him up, and getting access to the bedside, Mr. Shanks stated his difficulty, and

in a few minutes more got the whole affair made plain, but with the surprise expressed that anyone so long in the ministry, as Mr. Shanks had been, should be troubled by any such difficulty.

Dr. Lawson rose, dressed, and hurried down to breakfast, there expecting to find Mr. Shanks, but the latter had gone, and was by that time far on his way to Jedburgh. Remarking that he was "a fiery bit body," one of Mr. Shanks' elders gave it as his opinion that his minister had been so nettled by Dr. Lawson's remark about the failure to understand the text, that he had gone off on the huff and wanted none of the Selkirk breakfast.

One of the most amusing incidents in Mr. Barrie's story of "The Little Minister" is the scene in the kirk where Mr. Dishart announces that his text will be found in the eighth chapter of "Ezra."

"Ezra" being a difficult book to find, the little minister looked round the kirk to see if he had puzzled anybody; and he seemed to have done so, for there was a general competition among the congregation who should lay hand on "Ezra"

first. While the search was going on, the minister suddenly intimated a change of text by saying—"You will find it in Genesis, chapter three, verse six."

The fact of first giving out one text and then intimating a different one altogether was the most amazing thing, to the mind of Elspeth who relates the incident, that ever happened in the town of Thrums. "I wouldna hae missed it for a pound note."

"Nor me," said Waster Lunny. . . "Onybody can turn up Genesis, but it needs an able-bodied man to find Ezra."

If provosts, bailies, parish ministers, and Auld Licht ministers can get into such difficulties about the text, there need be no surprise expressed over the matter of a simple farm servant being taken across the coals by his master one Sunday afternoon.

"Where was the text the day, John?"

"I dinna ken; I was owre late in gaun in."

"What was the end o't, then?"

"I dinna ken; I came out before it was dune."

"What did the minister say about the middle o't, then?"

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"I dinna ken, for I sleepit a' the time."

Long ago there seemed to be about as much criticism on the text of a sermon as on the sermon itself. Shortly after Dr. Lawson's settlement at Selkirk, he was told by one of his hearers that the congregation were very well pleased with his sermon, but by no means with his texts.

"Ah," replied the minister, "I could understand what you say had you told me that the congregation were dissatisfied with my sermons. But the texts! What is wrong with them?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the reply, "but that's what they say, and I like to speak my mind."

"Just so; and do you know what Solomon says of you and the like of you?"

"No; what does Solomon say?"

"He says that a fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards"—a text which would probably do that man more good than any of the sermons to which he would afterwards have the privilege of listening.

Another minister had his text criticised, but in a very different fashion from the last instance.



Preaching in the Church of Portsoy from the text, "In my Father's house are many mansions," he was interrupted by a poor insane woman in the congregation who knew both the preacher and the farm where he had been brought up. "Many mansions! Auld Bankies! I kent it weel—a but an' a ben', an' e'en that was but ill redd up."

Writing of texts, how would church-goers of the present day like to hear sermon after sermon on the same text for several Sundays in succession? In the "Records of the Parish of Ellon," Mr. Mair informs us that it was the custom to do so in that district at least, and he relates how a Mr. Fraser preached from Romans viii. and 28, "for eleven Sabbaths, and, including the afternoons, the sermon was delivered *no fewer than eighteen times* until a change came."

Describing the rise and progress of the smuggling trade, and the evil effects it had upon the population of his parish, the minister of Dalmailing says he did all in his power to check the evil by *preaching sixteen times* from the text

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." That was not all, however, for he proceeds, "I visited and I exhorted; I warned and I prophesied; I told them that although money came in like slate stanes, it would go like snow off the dyke."

On the death of William III., a minister in Aberdeenshire preached eight or nine times, if not from the same text, at least from the frequent repetition of the same words—"The King is dead"—a repetition so wearisome that, as Dr. Paul remarks, "The people reckoned their time and pains lost."

Dr. Lawson, of Selkirk, had a marvellous facility in selecting a text to suit a sermon on any subject that happened to come suddenly before the public. The news of Napoleon's banishment to St. Helena, for example, reached the Doctor when on a visit to Annan. Next day he preached from the text from Jeremiah l. 23, "The hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken." And when the startling news of Mr. Percival's assassination in the lobby of the House of Commons came to Selkirk one Saturday

evening, Dr. Lawson preached from the text in Job xxxiv. 20, "In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight and pass away; and the mighty shall be taken away without hand."

Of anecdotes and stories about oddly-selected texts there is no end. In his "Twenty-five Years of St. Andrews," Dr. A. K. H. Boyd states that he once heard a remarkably eloquent and pathetic sermon from the text, "A colt the foal of an ass." Not only heard it, but remembered it vividly after the lapse of more than forty years.

A preacher once chose for his text the single word "Follow," and pegged away at great length on four different kinds of people who follow—to wit, "followers ahint, followers afore, followers cheek by jowl, and followers that stand still:" not much edification in that style of treatment, we should fancy.

Occasionally in the minister's choice of a text we come across some bits of humour, genuine in their way, and perfectly excusable in the circumstances. Here is a story about two candidates

and the texts they selected. Their names, Adam and Low respectively, seem to have been at the bottom of the humour, for Mr. Low officiated in the forenoon and took for his text "*Adam*, where art thou?" Adam, being equal to the occasion, selected for his text, "*Lo*, here am I," and acquitted himself so well that he afterwards received the appointment.

The Rev. Mr. Paul was famous for the humour he showed in the selection of his texts. When he left Ayr, where he had been a great favourite with the ladies, or "the fair sex," as they used to be called long ago, Mr. Paul preached his valedictory discourse from the text, "And they all fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." On another occasion, when called upon to preach before a military audience, the prevailing colour of whose uniform was *green*, he selected as his text, "I see men as *trees* walking."

One scarcely knows what to make of the minister who preached on the Sunday morning previous to his marriage from the text, "He went on his way rejoicing." That was intelligible enough, but what could be inferred from the

text which he selected on his next appearance—"O, wretched man that I am!" Had the honeymoon been too much for him? Not one of the books we have consulted furnishes the slightest information or enlightenment on the point, so that we are left to speculation, pure and simple, as to the motives for selection.

This end of the chapter takes us back to the beginning where the observation was hazarded that the people of church-going Scotland long ago delighted in a well-chosen text, and that the text seemed almost of as much importance as the sermon itself. Of so much importance, indeed, that when a Scotchman, even of the present day, once hears a sermon on some particular text, he can never afterwards dissociate that text from the sermon, or the sermon from the text. In a little book full of the choicest stories of auld Scotch clergymen—Mr. Walker's "Craigdam and its Ministers"—we have an illustration of the remark that has just been stated. The Rev. Mr. Angus, of Aberdeen, having been asked to preach at Craigdam, consented; but when he arrived at the village he

recollected that the sermon he had brought with him had been preached there not very long before. Mr. Angus thought that by changing the text he might get out of the difficulty, as no one would recognise or remember it under the altered conditions. He was mistaken, however; for on asking one of the elders how he liked the sermon, the latter replied—"Oh, very well, but I liket it better wi' its ain text."

There is, as will be gathered from the foregoing incidents, a good deal to be said about the text that introduces the sermon. While one minister may select what is considered a beautiful text, or another an odd text, or still another a humorous text, there yet remains the minister who makes an independent selection for himself. It was to him probably that an auld wife referred when she declared—"If there is an ill text in a' the Bible that cratur's sure to take it."

## CRITICISING THE SERMON.

THIS is obviously not the place in which to reproduce some of the sermons whose texts we had under review in the preceding chapter. A single sermon would be sufficient to swamp the whole of the present undertaking, and send these light and fragile chapters to the bottom. We shall accordingly content ourselves with taking on board, as freight, only a few good-natured criticisms, and these are to be had in any quantity, since nothing in literature seems to stand so much criticism as the sermon. This may be accounted for by the fact that it is not permitted to criticise the sermon in church, so that human nature revenges itself by flying to criticism out of church in every conceivable kind of situation and circumstance.

There are, however, instances in which this unwritten law as to non-permission or prohibition has been set aside, but these instances are rare—so rare, indeed, that during the whole course of our present inquiry we have only come across two or three isolated cases. These cases we propose to reproduce here not only for the sake of variety, but for the purpose of affording one more illustration of the oft-repeated axiom that it is the part of the exception to prove the truth of the rule. In his "Twenty-Five Years of St. Andrews," Dr. A. K. H. Boyd refers to the story of King James VI.'s visit to the ancient city by the sea, and his occupying the magistrates' seat during public worship in the parish church. While listening to the sermon His Majesty is said to have lost patience and called out to the preacher either to stop talking nonsense or to come down from the pulpit. The preacher, however, replied that he would neither stop talking nonsense nor would he come down from the pulpit. Not much chance of that minister being appointed one of His Majesty's chaplains; and yet who knows what promotion



was in store for one who defied the King and kept possession of the pulpit—the undisputed throne of every minister whether he talks sense or nonsense.

In Dr. Donald Macleod's memoir of his brother, we have a modern instance of criticising the minister in church. One of Norman Macleod's parishioners in Campsie was an original—Old Bell, as he was called, author of "Bell's Geography," and editor of "Rollin's Ancient History." During public worship Bell used to utter aloud his dissent to any doctrine he disliked. On one occasion a young preacher having chosen for his text "There shall be no more sea," proceeded to argue that such a change would have many advantages over the present arrangement of land and water. This argument, however, found no support from Old Bell, who had his own ideas on physical geography. Bringing his staff down on the floor with an emphatic "thud," he characterised the preacher in this pregnant utterance, "Bah, the fule!"

After such a criticism uttered aloud in church, the mind of the reader of this incident is apt to

speculate as to what effect it would have upon the young preacher—whether it would spoil his dinner at the manse, or whether it would go even further down, and set him to study afresh the science of geography according to Bell's system. But there exists no record of how the preacher relished the criticism, and the matter rests in the region of speculation only.

The point that seems to come out most prominently in our present study of the sermon question is its length, and the weariness of body and the irritation of mind which that length produced. A sore point was this of the long sermon: sorer far than the nonsense King James had to listen to at St. Andrews, or the argument for no more sea by the preacher at Campsie. The aggravation of the case was that the long sermon affected the hearer only, while the preacher pegged away, all unconscious of the mischief that might be brewing among the silent but suffering congregation. If anything were needed to justify our assertion of this unconsciousness on the part of the auld Scotch minister, it is the curious fact that consciousness is only beginning to dawn

now, and that the hymn generally given out to sing after an extra long sermon is almost always the one which innocently asks,

Art thou weary, are thou languid,  
Art thou sore distressed?

But a glimmering sense of this consciousness on the part of the minister appears to have manifested itself even in by-gone days, as may be gathered from the following incident. After a very long discourse one day, a preacher was asked if he did not feel exhausted by such a lengthened effort. "Na, na," said he; "but, losh me, how wearied the congregation seemed to be!"

"Ye have need of patience," was the text from which a minister once preached to the Commissioners of Assembly in St. Giles' Cathedral. It was impossible, says Dr. Boyd in relating the incident, to describe how heartily the whole congregation agreed with the preacher that they had indeed need of patience long before the sermon was half done.

A memorable case of patience under a sermon occurs in the famous scene where Captain Dugald

Dalgetty, in the "Legend of Montrose," listens to the preacher in the private chapel of Inveraray Castle. "Never," says Sir Walter, "was a sermon listened to with more impatience, and less edification, on the part of one at least of the audience. The captain heard *sixteenthly*—*seventeenthly*—*eighteenthly*—and *to conclude*—with a sort of feeling like distracted despair."

When Mr. Russell, afterwards of Yarrow, was settled in Ettrick, he received this piece of advice from one of the heritors of the parish—an advice which not only touched upon the sore point of long sermons, but which also showed the self-consequence of the individual who volunteered it. "When I," said the laird, "or Lord Napier is there (in church), I hope you will be somewhat moderate in length; when we are not present you can take your swing."

The length of a sermon in the auld days, and in modern days as well, seemed to bear some proportion to its weakness. Probably its very weakness was the cause of its excessive length. On going into the vestry after service one Sunday in the Lothians, one of the elders remarked to

the preacher, "Ye've gi'en us an extra lang sermon the day, sir." "Yes," replied the minister, "as I know that you East Lothian farmers like good measure." "We do," replied the farmer, "but we like it weel dichted."

Here is a story illustrating the transition period between the old-fashioned long sermon and the modern short one. An old parishioner describes the difference. "Wi' the auld minister we got first the text, syne the heads, and maybe part o' the sermon, an' we could aye tak' a sleep an' wak' up in plenty o' time for *the practical*. But the new minister gi'es the text, an' heads or no heads, an' just fan we're beginnin' tae hae a nap, the minister's up an' ruslin' amang the Psalms."

But we are glad to turn from these instances of long sermons and listen to criticisms less caustic in their nature. A favourite time for overhauling the sermon was, and still is, we daresay, while walking homeward from church under the free expanse of heaven, beneath the umbrageous trees, or along the sandy seashore. Under such conditions the Scottish heart loves

to tackle the sermon, and even the minister's personal appearance, should be "an exchange" for the day: Let us join some home-returning group and hear what is the opinion of the sermon that has just been preached. We shall simply report what we overhear, setting down all in good nature, nothing in ill nature, and the whole in the hope that it will be received in the same spirit.

The sermon of a preacher in St. Michael's, Dumfries, on the text, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," is under discussion by a party of auld wives on their way home. One who had not yet spoken was asked to state her opinion. Glad of the opportunity, she opened her lips and said, not in the language of the schools, but in that of the farm yard:—"Leeze me abune them a' for yon auld, beld, clear-headed, man that spoke sae bonnie on the angels when he said—'Raphel sings, an' Gabrel tunes his gouden harp, an' a' the rest clap their wings wi' joy.' Oh, but it was graun'! It just put me in mind—" and here the old lady soars away into the region of

natural and untutored eloquence—"just put me in mind o' our geese at Dunjarg, as they turn their nebs to the south an' clap their wings when they scent the comin' rain after a lang drouth."

Greater praise than this could scarcely be given, and we love to indulge the thought that the preacher lived to hear it. Since we are among the auld wives on their way home, we may join another group and listen to another criticism on a sermon that had just been delivered on the subject of covetousness and the love of money being at the root of all evil.

"Wasna the minister gran' the day about the siller, Mrs. Johnston?"

"Aye, he was gran'," was the reply, in a tone, however, that harboured a doubt; "but, eh woman, isn't it nice to hae a pickle siller in the pouch when ye gang to the toon an' see the shops?"

After Dr. Thomson, of Markinch, had delivered an impressive discourse on the text "Look not on the wine when it is red in the cup," two drouthy chieles, on the way home,

G

overhauled the sermon. "What thocht ye o't?" asked one, by way of introducing the subject.

"Deed, Davie," said the other, "I'm mair inclined to criticeese the minister than the sermon."

"Aye, an' what do ye make o' the minister?"

"Oh, just this: I think he's been a gey lad in his day, or he couldna say sae muckle about the bit dram. Davie, my man, take the word o' an auld man; he's a slee hand, the minister!"

There is a great deal of human nature in the inductive process of reasoning here employed, for it served to cover the retreat of the two worthies from themselves over to the minister, and rendered them impervious to the personal application of the sermon, "Thou art the man?" The next preacher seems to have been more successful in his attempt at pointing the moral and driving home the application. Dr. Kidston, the minister referred to, enjoyed the reputation of being "a hard hitter," and he was worthy of the reputation, as may be gathered from the following dialogue:—

"How did he get on the day?" an auld wife



was asked on her way home by one who had not been able to be at church that morning.

"How did he get on? He just stood and threw stanes at us, an' never missed wi' ane o' them. My certie, but yon *was* preachin'!"

Here seems to have been another instance of something like preaching—only, the points missed fire, and all that was brought away was a lot of vain regrets of what might have been. "Man, John"—another home-going group—"yon was something for a body to bring away: nine heads, an' twenty particulars to ilka head! An' sic mouthfu's o' gran' words! Oh man, John, but it was gran', and would do us a' muckle guid if we could mind anything o't."

Sometimes the sermon was discussed and criticised from the professional point of view occupied by the critics. This was almost always dangerous ground for the minister, as it was not desirable to find him tripping. Dr. Guthrie, in his autobiography, tells a story in this connection. A reverend doctor of his acquaintance once went to preach in Glenisla for Mr. Martin, the parish minister. The doctor thought that

Glenisla, being a pastoral district, the 23rd Psalm would form a peculiarly suitable subject, and from that, as he was capable of doing, he delivered an admirable discourse.

But there was a "dead fly" in the ointment that marred the sermon and lowered the minister in the eyes of the congregation. Ignorant of the fact that the sheep, in our moist climate and amongst the dew-covered and green succulent herbage, are independent of streams, and indeed seldom drink water but when they are sick, he expatiated, as he spoke of "the still waters," on the importance of water to the flocks—a blunder and display of ignorance that were soon noticed by his hearers. As some of them lingered to light their pipes by the church door after the service, the Doctor had the mortification of hearing himself and his sermon treated with undisguised contempt—one shepherd saying to another, "Puir bodie! Heard ye ever the like o' yon about the sheep drinkin'?"

One likes to read about these homely criticisms, as they argue on the part of the hearers that they had been listening to the sermon and managed to

pick up, in some degree, at least, the drift of the discourse. There have been instances, however, when the minister seems to have got beyond the reach or the depth of his audience, as in the case of a lady, who declared to her friend that she could make nothing of the minister she had heard that morning. This friend suggested that probably the preacher was too deep. "No, no," said the other, "not deep, but drumly."

Occasionally, however, the preacher got into water that was both deep and drumly. "I canna say"—said an auld man to his minister one day when the latter called—"I canna say that I followed ye on Sabbath last when ye spoke o' sirkumlycution, or some sic word."

"Oh," said the minister, "you did very well if you followed me up to that point. The apostle, as I tried to show, was only employing a periphrastic mode of diction in his statement of the argument." "Quite so," was the reply; but it did not seem to be a "quite so" that brought enlightenment or carried conviction.

To closer quarters came the minister and a party of his hearers, as related in the next

incident. Dr. Risk, of Dalsersf, had a deputation from the evangelical portion of his congregation calling at the manse one night, and on asking what they might be wanting with him, the spokesman replied that they had come to converse with him.

"Upon what subject?" asked the doctor, who belonged to the old moderate party in the church.

"About your preaching, doctor."

"About my preaching! What have you to say about that?"

"Weel, we dinna think ye tell us eneuch about renouncing our ain righteousness."

"Renouncing your ain righteousness!" exclaimed the minister in astonishment. "I never knew that ye had any righteousness to renounce!"

## HUMOUR IN THE PULPIT.

HAVING referred to the prayers, selected a few texts, and listened to the criticisms of some of the sermons on the way home, it may be worth while, in the present chapter, to return to church for the purpose of getting a taste of the humour of the Scottish pulpit in bygone days. And by humour in the pulpit we mean no irreverence for sacred things or solemn services—none whatever. The spirit in which these sketches are written is, we trust, above even the faintest suspicion of anything in the direction of irreverence. What we propose to do, after a few introductory remarks, is simply to collect some of the *sayings used by the ministers themselves*, so as to get in these sayings the enjoyment that comes, not so much from any wit, or point, or

brilliancy they may contain, as from the intensely human feelings that they invariably express and often very ludicrously illustrate.

Scottish literature is full of stories and anecdotes of the once popular pastime of sleeping in the church. In Christopher North's "*Noctes Ambrosianæ*" there are many amusing passages on this subject; so many, indeed, that from them we might almost construct a system of philosophy of the pastime. But we are not in the philosophical vein at present, and therefore pass on to more congenial employment.

Dr. Guthrie having stated on a public occasion that he once saw six hundred persons sleeping in church at Thurso, a Carnoustie poet, Andrew Scott, was so much exercised by the doctor's statement that he set to work and composed, not a poem, but a parody to commemorate the event. We quote a stanza or two as specimens of "*The Sleep of the Heavy Brigade*":—

Half a nod, half a nod,  
Half a nod downward,  
All through the house of God  
Nod the Six Hundred.

Down went the hoary head,  
So the great Guthrie said ;  
Soundly all through the kirk  
Slept the Six Hundred.

. . . . .  
Vainly the preacher roared,  
Snugly they slept and snored,  
Into the crowded pew ;  
Heads on the Bible board,  
Dosed the Six Hundred.

. . . . .  
Then the precentor rose,  
Right through the line he goes ;  
Sleeper and slumberer,  
Roused by old Bangor's notes,  
Looked up dumbfounded,  
All that awoke—but not,  
Not the Six Hundred.

It must have been of this sleepy period in the church that the story is told of a minister who stopped in the middle of his sermon and, addressing personally one of his hearers, asked—  
“Are ye hearin', John.”

“Aye, I'm hearin', minister, but to very little purpose,” was the unexpected reply.

Different ministers had different ways of tackling this sore subject. Dr. Lawson tried mild remonstrance, and found it wonderfully effective. No angry rebuke did he administer; he simply ceased speaking for a minute, and when the bowed heads were raised and the wondering eyes were "at attention," the Doctor quietly asked, "Are you not a strange people? When I speak, ye sleep, and when I cease to speak, ye waken up!"

Mr. Bonar, of Auchtermuchty, tried a different method. Preaching one day at Kettle, Fife, he observed that a great many of the congregation were sleeping while he was speaking. Unable to endure the trial any longer, Mr. Bonar paused, and then said, "My friends, some of you may probably not understand the word *hyperbole*, which I have had occasion to use more than once in my discourse. Let me explain its meaning before I go any further. Suppose I were to say that this congregation were *all* asleep at the present moment, I would be using a *hyperbole*, or speaking hyperbolically, because, on looking round, I don't believe that *more than the one-half of you are sleeping.*"



That was pretty heavy, but the effect was eminently satisfactory. Those who had been nodding not only recovered self-consciousness, but they received strength and courage to nudge up their sleeping neighbours, and the minister proceeded with his discourse as if nothing had happened.

A third minister did not get on so well, owing to a lamentable defect in his knowledge of human nature. In Udney Church one Sunday, probably owing to the soporific nature of the sermon, or from some cause or causes not yet made known, the disposition to sleep on the part of the congregation was unusually great. There was only one member who seemed to be listening to the minister, and that was Jamie Fleeman, the reputed fool of the parish.

Stopping his sermon, the minister exclaimed, "This sleeping's perfectly dreadful! There's only one man awake, and that man's a fool!" "Aye, aye, minister, ye're richt there," said Fleeman, in reply. "But gin I hadna been a feel, I wad been sleepin' tee."

Sleeping in church, however, was only one of

the trials with which the auld Scotch minister had to contend. He had many others to face, and the conflict occasionally brought out some fine strokes of quiet humour. In a Paisley Church the minister used to be sorely tried by many of the congregation making a bad habit of coming late—so late that one Sunday he was reading the chapter after the preliminary exercises of praise and prayer. Stopping in his reading, the minister remarked—"Look on your books, my friends; dinna distract me, an' dinna distract yoursel's. I'll tell ye wha comes in late next Sabbath."

When next Sunday came, the minister kept his word. As the first of the late comers appeared, the minister stopped the chapter. "That," said he, "is Mr A——; ye a' ken him. Here's another—Mr. B——. He lives down the street a few doors, an', therefore, has no excuse for being late. An' while I'm speakin', here's a third. He's a wee man wi' a white hat and a drab coat. Take a look at him, if ye like, for I dinna ken him."

Extravagance in dress was another matter

which had a disturbing effect on the minister—and no wonder. It was distracting enough in ordinary circumstances, but when the wearer of some gaudy attire added to that distraction the bad habit of coming late to church, the minister frequently lost patience and “named” the offender. One Sunday morning, a member of the Parish Church of Dunse, or Duns, as it is now called, transgressed in the twofold manner just indicated. Stopping his reading of the chapter, and looking across to the late comer—a plain-looking woman, but very “loudly” dressed—the minister thus addressed her—“Oh, Betty, Betty, wha would hae thought o’ *you* lingerin’ ower the glass sae lang!” We can imagine Betty slipping quietly into her seat and remembering that Sunday during the remainder of her pilgrimage.

When there was no distracting agency at work, the auld Scotch minister rarely got through his chapter without giving expression to some remark which was considered commentary then, but which we call humour now. A minister at Stirling one Sunday morning had for his subject the narrative of the Siege of

Samaria. On reading the passage about the price given for the head of an ass, the preacher paused, looked up and remarked, "And for a' they paid for't, they would have but puir pickin' at it, after a'."

The country minister had generally his eyes and ears open for the sights and sounds of nature, and borrowed, indeed, more from her open book, than from the bound volumes in his library. While reading the apostolic exhortations in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, a preacher paused after he finished the verses—"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

"Ay, friends," said the minister, "you have all seen a cat walking along a garden wall among pieces of broken glass. See at him! See how carefully he picks his steps and looks round about him. Not even a fricht, or a stane frae an ill-deedy laddie, will make him forget where he is, or forget to wale his steps. That, my friends, is walking circumspectly."

The chapter read, we come to the sermon.

Here, as in the chapter, the preacher frequently received some new inspiration that sent him off at a tangent to give expression to that inspiration. Dr. Paul, in his "Past and Present of Aberdeenshire," tells us of a minister who, while preaching on the subject of the wiles and crafts of Satan, suddenly paused, and then exclaimed—"See him sittin' there in the crap o' the wa'. What shall we do wi' him, my brethren? He winna hang, for he's as licht's a feather; neither will he droon, my brethren, for he can soom like a cork; but we'll shoot him wi' the gun o' the gospel." Then putting himself in the position of one aiming at an object, and imitating the noise of a shot, the minister called out exultingly, "He's doon like a dead crow!"

This incident would have greatly delighted the man who thus described the kind of minister he was in search of:—"Nane o' your guid-warks men, or preachers o' cauld morality for me! Gie me a speerit-rousin' preacher that'll hold the deil under the noses of the congregation and make their flesh creep!" Not much sleeping in such circumstances; for when the flesh creeps the nerves are all up.

No; the sleeping period seemed past under such sermons as these and others to be noticed presently. The Rev. Mr. Glass, already quoted, was preaching once on the subject of the Early Christians, and the inhuman cruelties to which they were subjected in the reign of Nero. "The persecutor," Mr. Glass proceeded to state, "would tear the very flesh from the bones with red-hot—red—red——." Here the preacher paused, as if at a loss for the name of the instrument of torture that was employed.

"Pinchers, Mr. Glass; red-hot pinchers, ye ken," called out a voice from the gallery.

"Thank ye, James; thank ye kindly. You're quite right; it was jist red-hot pinchers."

In the next story the minister showed little gratitude under somewhat similar circumstances. The subject was Jonah, and as the peroration was being reached, the minister looked round the congregation inquiringly, and asked—"What sort of fish had been sent to swallow the prophet, think ye? was it a shark, my brethren? No, it was not a shark, for the Lord would never permit his servant to get among the teeth of

such a terrible brute. Was it a salmon, my friends? No, it was not a salmon, for the biggest salmon in the river couldna gie Jonah lodgings an' it had been willing. Was it a sea-horse, or a sea-lion, or what was it, my friends if ye can tell me?"

Here an auld wife sitting on the pulpit stair, thinking that her minister had got into a serious difficulty, gallantly came to his rescue by calling out, "It was a whale, minister."

But the assistance was scornfully rejected with the basest ingratitude by the minister, who called out, "Hout, tout, ye graceless woman; how daur ye take the word out o' your minister's mouth in that way?"

And so the peroration was lost to the whale, or the whale to the peroration, and an auld wife was grievously offended into the bargain. It's not likely she would try her hand at helping her minister out of another supposed difficulty.

In "Craigdam and its Ministers" we have much interesting information about the Rev. Patrick Robertson. "His plain speaking," says Mr. Walker, the author, "his broad vernacular

Scotch, his quaint, forcible, yet often ludicrous illustrations, were novelties in the city (Aberdeen), and were highly relished by multitudes not only of the common class, but by critics, literary men, and all lovers of originality."

After this whetstone, our readers may probably wish to have one or two specimens of Mr. Robertson's preaching, and these we give from Mr. Walker's entertaining little book. Preaching on the condition of the Israelites in Egypt, and the call of Moses, Mr. Robertson said—"Weel, sirs, an' far div ye think he fan God's chosen people? He fan them in the land of Goshen, wi' their sark sleeves rowed up to the oxters, busy kirnin' amon' clay, an' makin' bricks."

Lecturing at Burghead on the call of David, Mr. Robertson described it in vivid dramatic language. The seven sons having been all introduced to Samuel, the prophet asked—"Ha'e ye nae ither bairns, Jesse?" "O ay, there is anither bit callant awa' out owre at the hirdin'." "Lat's see him, man; lat's see him." So Jesse gaed to the door, and Mr. Robertson, as if putting himself in Jesse's place, waved his



hand and shouted out, "Dauvid, my mannie, Dauvid, come awa' hame; there's somebody here wantin to see ye."

If our readers should imagine from these extracts that Mr. Robertson's preaching savoured of levity in the pulpit, his biographer assures us that of levity Mr. Robertson was entirely free. He and his hearers were intimately acquainted with each other, and there was no fear of his being misunderstood or harshly judged in any of his utterances.

In a local volume of much interest—"Inverness before Railways," by Isabel H. Anderson—we are introduced to another minister of bygone times. Mr. Cook, the minister referred to, was a man of genuine piety and devoted zeal, but his sayings in the pulpit were frequently of an extraordinary nature, though at the same time perfectly sincere. "I wouldna be a king," said Mr. Cook on one occasion. "I wouldna be a queen. No, no, my friends, I would rather be a wo-rum. I would rather be a puddock: for its easier for a cow to climb a tree wi' her tail and hind legs foremost, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

This illustration of the cow seems to have been a favourite with auld Scotch ministers. In lecturing on that question in the Shorter Catechism, "Is any man in this life able perfectly to keep the commandments?" Mr. Robertson, of Craigdam, gravely and solemnly informed his audience, "ye can nae mair dee't, ma freens, than a coo can clim' up a tree." He may probably have been the first to employ the illustration; but as it passed from pulpit to pulpit, it gathered a little here and there in force and humour. To climb the tree at all was a great feat for the cow, even in imagination, but to think of her doing so with her tail and her hind legs foremost, and, in addition, whistling like a blackbird, was a performance of which any cow might be justly proud.

## THE MAN READS!

AFTER the display of humour in the pulpit as reported in the preceding chapter, one can easily imagine what a commotion would be caused in those congregations where the ministers dropped their homely and unconventional style of preaching and took to reading carefully prepared sermons. In bygone days churchgoing people had to endure long sermons, and some have to endure them even yet, but the former drew the limit of endurance at *preaching*, and would on no account listen to *reading*. In their eyes the reading was not the preaching of the Word, and this had been "rubbed into" them from their earliest years by the teaching of the Shorter Catechism. However well such a great preacher

as Dr. Chalmers may have read his sermons, and that he did read them very well we shall see presently, the fact remains that he gave great offence by using "the paper," and reading his sermon off that paper like any ordinary individual not consecrated to the ministry. Shortly before the doctor's death, he was conducting public worship at Cappercleuch, near St. Mary's Loch, and among his hearers was an old Seceder, Jenny Biggar of Eldinhope, who regretted having gone so far to hear a man read a sermon! So sorely, indeed, did Jenny feel upon the point that she characterised the action of the great Scottish preacher as "*a perfect intake.*"

There was also the minister of action in the pulpit, who "thumped the Bible an' made a'thing flee aboot." What would be thought of him when he sobered down, took out his paper, and began to read? Imagine such touches of humour as the following being committed to writing and read in cold ink! After describing the catastrophe that overtook Lot's wife, Mr. Munro, of Westray, broke out upon some weak place in the character of his people and exclaimed, "Oh, ye

folk o' Westray, if ye had had the saut wife but a day amang ye, ye wad hae broken her in pieces and putten her in your parritch pat!" Or this from another minister in preaching on repentance. While about to bring down his uplifted hand on a fly which had alighted on the open Bible before him, he suddenly stopped the action as the fly flew off, whereupon the minister exclaimed, by way of improving the incident, "There's a chance for ye yet, my friends—flee from the wrath to come." Such comments as these were begotten of the inspiration that came in the pulpit, and had no connection with the careful preparation of the sermon in the study, or its deliberate delivery before an assembled congregation.

Charles Young, in his diary, describes the commotion which he witnessed while attending the Parish Church of Cults one Sunday morning. A "stranger" was preaching for the resident minister, and scarcely had he proceeded five minutes with his discourse when first one and then another of the congregation rose and left the church. "The exodus at last became so

serious," writes Mr. Young, "that conceiving something to be wrong, probably a fire in the manse, I caught the infection, and eagerly inquired of the first person I encountered in the churchyard what was the matter, and was told with an expression of sovereign scorn and disgust, "Losh keep me, young man, have ye eyes and see ye not? Have ye ears and hear ye not? *The man reads.*"

This reading business was no trifle. It stirred the people of Scotland as few events had stirred them in the history of their country—perhaps not quite so much as the Reformation in 1560, but apparently greater than the Reform Bill of 1832. Many lost their heads over the matter, and even women spake unadvisedly with their lips. When Dr. Blacklock, the blind preacher, was delivering his first discourse after being presented to the parish of Kirkcudbright, an auld wife asked another if she thought the new minister was a *reader*? "He canna be a reader, woman, for he's blind." "I'm glad to hear't," replied the other; "I wish they were a' blind!"

A trying time for ministers as well as for

people was this paper business. The minister of Innerleithen, at the commencement of the sermon-reading movement, seems to have come through great tribulation ere light dawned upon him as to how best to avoid giving offence to his people. After enlightenment came, he wrote his sermons out on long slips like newspaper proofs, and had them all carefully arranged in their proper order. When he had delivered the contents of slip number one, he let it slide quietly to the bottom of the pulpit, and then went ahead with number two. While practising this ingenious manœuvre, he was under the impression that no one would discover that he was a reader. But this impression was only an innocent delusion, as the sequel will show. Something having gone wrong with the machinery for disposing of the slips as delivered, the worthy minister kept hammering away at "Thirdly," but all the while rummaging about for the slip containing this particular and very much wanted head. It was found at last by an auld wife on the pulpit stair, who handed it up to the minister, with the perfectly natural observation, "Here's

thirdly, Mr. Pate." From this incident, the minister was ever afterwards known as "Paper Pate."

We have already pointed out the primary cause of this popular aversion to reading sermons; another or secondary cause may be found in the reason stated in the following incident. In that amusing work, "Stronbuy," Peter expresses this opinion of the ministers in his locality — "There's some," he says, "uses the paper terrible, and I canna thole them at a'."

Pressed to state his reasons, Peter replies — "Och, if the meenisters canna remember their ain sermons, how can they expect us to remember them?"

The same thought seems to have been in the head of a woman who applied to Sir Henry Moncrieff for admission to the Lord's table. Finding her very defective in her religious knowledge, he dismissed her with instructions to learn the questions connected with the holy ordinance, and call on him again. A week afterwards she appeared in the minister's study and, to his great gratification, was quite ready



with her answers. Happening to look up, however, the minister found that the woman quietly read the answers off the Shorter Catechism. Stopping her, he remarked that she ought to have learned them by heart: on which she made the unanswerable rejoinder, "Oh, Sir Harry, you that reads your sermon every Sabbath, winna ye let a puir body read her Carritcher?"

Rab Hamilton, a staunch seceder in Ayr, having gone to a parish church where the sermon was read, took his seat in an inside stair that had what was called a "wooden ravel"—whatever that may mean. In his anxiety to listen to the sermon, read though it was, Rab put his head through the railing, but he could not get it back when the sermon was concluded. Struggling to get his head returned to its orthodox position he was caught by the ears, and all his efforts only resulted in failure. To the great amusement of the congregation the poor fellow called out, in all earnestness, "It's a judgment; it's a judgment on me for leavin' my ain godly meetin'-house and comin' here to listen to a paper minister!"

It must have been while the storm was at its greatest height that the minister in the next story resolved to avoid the very appearance of evil, for before beginning his sermon he closed the Bible, preached from a closed book, and covered up all paper, or papers, that might be within its boards. The little we know of this minister is contained in the pungent quotation from his epitaph, which bears internal evidence of having caused its composer not a little trouble in the production. One stanza will suffice—

He preached off book to shun offence,  
And what was still more rare,  
He never spoke one word of sense—  
So preached Tammy Blair.

After this we can imagine that the worst was past, and that sermon-reading was beginning to lose its terrors. People came to look it calmly in the face, and discover that, after all, there was nothing to be alarmed about. It left the atmosphere of the church, and gradually sought entrance into the social circle. It formed the subject of conversation at dinner parties in the city, and it came to be regarded as one of the

winter evening amusements in the village. There is a story told of a "character" who created much amusement one evening among the servants of a country manse by his imitations of the ministers in the locality. Wondering what was the cause of all the merriment in the kitchen, the mistress went downstairs, and in her turn, was greatly amused by the farce that was going on. After listening awhile, she requested the favour of an imitation of her own husband's manner in the pulpit. "With pleasure, ma'am," said the humorist, "I can do him best of a'. Bring in a wee bit paper, an' I'll let ye see *how weel he reads his sermons.*"

At a dinner party in Edinburgh the subject of reading sermons came up as usual. One of the company remarked that if ministers who *read* would do it with more life and animation, the popular prejudice, which was beginning to give way, would soon give way altogether. The speaker added that he knew a country wife who, in spite of her dislike to the *paper*, was much attached to the preaching of a reading minister. On this seeming inconsistency being pointed out,

she replied in her own defence, "Ah, very true ; but then he has *pith* with his paper."

"That reminds me," said Dr. Chalmers, who was one of the dinner party, "of an old anecdote of myself. A friend of mine, expressing his surprise to a country woman in Fife that she, who hated reading, should yet be so fond of Mr. Chalmers, she replied, with a serious shake of the head 'Nae doubt, but it's *fell* readin' thon.'"

Of Dr. Norman Macleod a story is told much to the same effect. After service on one occasion in the country, two neighbours on the way home were engaged in discussing the sermon. "Did ever ye hear onything sae grand ; wasna *that* a sermon ?" asked one, full of admiration, and expecting a reply in the same strain. But the reply came only in the shape of a stolid stare. "Speak, woman : wisna that a sermon ?" "Oh, aye," said the demure one, "*but he read it.*" "Read it !" cried the other ; "I widna care if *he had whustled it !*"

Thus the practice of reading sermons was fairly setting in, and the popular prejudice was rapidly going out. All that we afterwards hear

about it relates only to some adventure of the minister with his "paper"—how he lost it and how he recovered it after it had been lost or forgotten. In Mrs. Oliphant's "Life of Edward Irving" we have an interesting account of his first service in Annan. The "haill toun," profoundly critical and much interested, turned out to hear him. When the sermon was in full current, some incautious movement of the preacher tilted over the great Bible and *the manuscript of the sermon which he was reading fell out*. Down the paper dropped, fluttering, and landing on the precentor's desk beneath. Here was an altogether unexpected incident. Every eye was fastened upon the young preacher to see how he would act in the crisis.

But Irving was equal to the occasion. Calmly stopping his discourse for a moment, he leant over the pulpit, grasped the manuscript as it lay before the precentor, crumpled it up in his great hand, thrust it into a pocket, resumed his sermon, and went on as fluently as before. That incident rendered Edward Irving's success as a preacher complete; to criticise a man so little put out by

the loss of his "paper" would have been presumption indeed.

In the next story the minister forgot his manuscript, but recovered it under different circumstances from those just related. A clergyman in Fife who had taken to "reading," found he could not proceed with his sermon one Sunday morning, as he had left the manuscript on his study table at the manse. Explaining the matter to the congregation he added—"Just open your Psalm Books, take the 119th, and the precentor will lead the singing till I come back from the manse. I'll not be five minutes."

In certain conditions of our existence, five minutes don't seem a very long space of time, and many of us could furnish instances in which the five minutes fled all too fast. There are other cases, however, in which these five minutes seem hours, as when Sister Ann is being anxiously asked again to climb the watch-tower and scan the horizon for a sight of the anxiously-expected horsemen at Blue Beard's castle. So it was with the congregation who had commenced the 119th Psalm—the minister's five minutes were gone,

and there was no appearance of his return. The precentor, poor man, was "about by w'it," as he afterwards confessed. The beadle, too, was becoming alarmed about his master's detention. Having had enough of the 119th, he left the church, took his station at the vestry door to look for the minister and "that fashious paper." At last! "Come away, sir, come away," called the overjoyed official to the approaching minister, "for we're at the last gasp, an' cheepin' like a wheen deein' mice."

The author of "Rambling Recollections of Old Glasgow" tells a curious incident in connection with Dr. Muir, of St. James's Parish Church, who used neither "paper" nor notes of any kind in the pulpit. It was said, however, that he wrote the heads of his discourse in shorthand on his finger nails. "At all events," says Nestor, "he certainly had the custom of looking intensely at his hands, which led to the joke that he had his sermon at his finger ends!"

## FAMILY CATECHISINGS.

IMPORTANT as are the public duties of a Scotch minister, auld or modern, they yet cannot be considered as completing the circle of his professional work from week to week. No doubt the preparation for the pulpit, and the outcome of that preparation, occupy a very large proportion of his time and thoughts. There are other duties, however, which, though they do not bulk so largely in the public eye, frequently take up more of the minister's time than even his pulpit work. To a large extent, the time privately occupied in preparation, affects every profession; the greatest speech of the statesman has been elaborated in his library; the finest production of the novelist has cost him a world of pains at his desk. Regarding one of Charles Dickens's



most popular Christmas stories, the author has recorded that he shut himself up in his own room during its composition, and after undergoing mental tear and wear of no common kind, emerged from his confinement as haggard as a murderer.

The minister has all this private study and more. He is not only a preacher, but he is a pastor, and has plenty of pastoral work to do. A visit from him in the cottage sometimes goes farther down than the most eloquent sermon in the pulpit. A special duty of the minister of a bygone day was the family visitation and catechising—a duty which has largely fallen into disuse in our day. As it was full of incident and humour, a notice of it here is well worth a chapter. Anything, indeed, about the auld Scotch minister that left out an account of his family catechising, would be an incomplete sketch of his life and work, so we are bound to say something on that head.

At stated periods the minister arranged a systematic and thorough visitation of his parish, and sent round his beadle to notify where and

when the catechising would take place. At these "diets of examination" a considerable deal of humour cropped up, and as it is this humour we are mainly in search of, we will endeavour to relate as much as may serve to give our readers a fair idea of what took place on such occasions. Let it be always understood, however, that if these catechisings had been confined to orthodox routine, and correct replies to the minister's questions, any account of them would have been out of place here. It is precisely in the unorthodox routine and the amusing replies where the humour comes in, and accordingly they are recorded in these pages.

Some ministers, as may easily be imagined, rendered the duty of catechising a much less formidable one than others. Dr. Russell, of Yarrow, tells us that his father before him never sought to puzzle his hearers. When Dr. Chalmers failed in getting a reply to any of his questions, he hastened to take all the blame upon himself, and then changed the form of the question so as to present what he wanted in a clearer light. Dr. Paul tells us of a friend who met an old

servant while on a visit to the country, and on asking where she had been, she replied, "At ane o' Maister Morrison's exaamins." Asked what kind of examiner he was, Janet replied, "O a terrible fine exaemer: spiars a hantle o' questions, an' answers them a' himsel'."

Sometimes the catechising took place in a single out-of-the-way cottage—a lonely shieling on the edge of the moorland, with nobody but the forester, or the gamekeeper, and his family. At other times it was in a farm steading, with its kitchen filled for the great occasion—master, mistress, children, guests, servants, shepherds, ploughmen all assembled for "the catecheesin'."

The catechising began by the minister tackling the head of the household on the Shorter Catechism. "What is the chief end of man, Maister Wilson?"

Not up to the mark in his "Carritch," Mr. Wilson skilfully parried the blow, and remarked with much humility, "Deed sir, its no for me to presume to answer sic a question as that. I fain would hear't frae yersel'."

A warm-hearted and obliging man, the minister

explained "the chief end of man," and passed on to the rest of the family, who seemed better up in their Catechism than "the maister." Taking up the Scripture history next, the minister yokes a ploughman and inquires, in a general sort of way, "What kind of a man was Adam?"

"Ou, just like ither folk."

This reply, however, was not specific enough, and the minister intimated that he would like something more definite regarding the father of the human family.

"Weel, sir," said the ploughman, venturing on ground not very firm beneath his heavy tread, "Weel, sir, Adam was geyan like Joe Simpson, the horse-couper."

"In what respect, James?"

"In this way; ye see, naebody got onything by him, an' mony lost."

Not a bad commentary. There is indeed nothing of the teaching of the Church in it; but it contains, instead, a distinct foretaste of modern criticism in its subjection of Scripture to the test of every-day life and literature. Adam and Joe Simpson the horse-couper have

not been bracketed as yet, but things are tending in that direction.

Sitting by the fireside is a shepherd, and to him the minister applies for any remark he may have to make upon the Book of Job and its profoundly interesting problems of human life and suffering. "Job, I'm told, is your favourite study, William."

"Oh yes," replies the shepherd—a reflective man like the majority of his profession—"I've read, an' read, and better read, the Book o' Job through dizzen o' times, I may say. There's nae doubt mony strange questions in't that no mortal man can fathom. Still an' on, there's some that are yet sae simple that the least bit laddie here could answer them."

"Ah!" replies the minister, delighted in having discovered one who had read, studied, and had something to say about the Patriarch of Uz. "I should like you to mention one of the questions to which you refer, William?"

"Weel, minister, Job asks—Is there ony taste in the white o' an egg? There's little defeek-wulty in answerin' that question, for of a' the

wairsh things in nature, it would kittle me to ken what is wairsher than the white o' an egg when there's nae saut on the table."

"The least bit laddie" referred to by the ploughman comes in for his share of the minister's attention. After some remarks on the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity for experiencing the new birth, the minister, believing that he had made the matter perfectly clear, turns to the little fellow and asks, "Now, Johnnie, would you like to be born again?"

"No," was the ready reply. "And why not?" asked the minister.

"Because I'm feared I would be born a lassie!"

Probably Johnnie's reply suggested the next recipient of the minister's attention; for, turning to one of the maid-servants, he asked, in the Scriptural sense of course, "What is love, Marget?"

Marget, however, took it up, not in that sense at all, but in the one more familiar to her. "Hout, minister," she said, "I wonder at ye spearin' sic a question as that. I'm sure ye ken as weel as me that love's just an unco fykinness o'

the mind. What mair can onybody say about it than that?"

Quite true, Marget. Your definition of the passion that moves humanity to its profoundest depth is nothing more or less than "just an unco fykiness o' the mind." No doubt the metaphysician would clothe his definition of the passion in terms more subtle and abstruse; but, after all, it would simply revert to this business of the "fykiness" at last, and leave you, Marget, the better metaphysician of the two.

Having made no impression on the boy with regard to the doctrine of regeneration, and seeing Marget hopeless in regard to fuller information on the subject of love, the minister sees another boy in the company. Him he tackles on the Fifth Commandment and its practical issue on the subject of obedience to parents. "Now, do you always do what your father bids you?" asks the minister.

"Yes."

"That's a good boy. And your mother?"

"No."

"No!" asks the minister in astonishment. "How's that?"

"Because if I were to do a' she bids me, gor, she would keep me carryin' water a' day!"

Thus it was not all plain sailing for the minister. Frequently the tables were turned upon him, and he was subjected to an examination on his own ground. While visiting at a cottage in his parish of Loudon, Dr. Norman Macleod was desired by an auld wife to "gang owre the fundamentals," and satisfy her that he himself was all safe and sound. Not always did the minister come off successfully when he was the examined instead of the examiner. The Rev. Ralph Erskine on one occasion paid a visit to his brother Ebenezer at Abernethy.

"Oh, man," said the latter, "ye couldna hae come at a better time. I hae a diet o' examination this day, an' ye maun tak' it, as I hae matters o' life and death to settle at Perth."

"With all my heart," replied Ralph.

"Noo," said Ebenezer, "ye'll find a' my folk easy to examine but ane, an' him, I reckon, ye had better no meddle wi'. He has an auld-fashioned way o' answerin' a question by puttin' another, an' maybe he'll affront ye."



"Affront me!" cried the indignant theologian, "do you think he can foil me wi' my ain natural tools?"

"I'm only gie'n ye fair warnin'. Ye'd better no' ca' him up in yer catecheesin."

The recusant referred to was one Walter Simpson, the parish blacksmith. When the parties were all assembled and the examination had begun, the minister resolved to tackle the blacksmith first.

"Tell me," said Mr. Erskine, "how lang Adam remained in a state of innocence."

"Just till he got a wife, sir," answered Walter. "But can ye tell me, minister, how lang he stood after that?"

Mr. Erskine could not reply, and Walter Simpson was asked to sit down.

The minister of St. Vigeans also met with a "closer" in one of his examinations at a fishing village while asking a question which no one seemed able to answer. Repeating the question, he paused for a reply, but all that he elicited was this from an old fisherman—"Weel, I canna exactly say; but can ye tell me, minister, how

mony hooks it taks to bait a fifteen score haddie line?"

There lives no record of reply: minister and fisherman had neutralised each other.

Always ready with an answer as Dr. Lawson was, he was yet on one occasion let gently down by a farmer at whose house he was catechising.

"Where is your other son?" asked the doctor.

"He's out shootin' craws."

"And why does he shoot the crows?"

"Because they destroy the grain."

"But the crows have as good a right to the grain as you."

"Ay, doctor, but they pay nae rent."

One is very apt to imagine from these pastoral visitations that the Scotch people of a generation or two ago were well read in the Scriptures, and possessed of at least an average share of intelligence from general reading and edifying conversation. "Most families," says Mr. Tait in his "Two Centuries of Border Church Life," "had a few good books which were carefully and thoughtfully studied." At a diet of examination a woman once answered a question in a way

that surprised the minister and when asked, "How do you know that?" her reply was, "Ralph says sae"—meaning that she had been reading, and reading to some purpose, the works of Ralph Erskine.

There is, however, another side of this story. Many ministers had a constant battle with ignorance, prejudice, and immorality. The only heartening that was got, now and again, was the consciousness that the battle was being fought in a good cause, and that the combatant on the right side would ultimately prevail. Before such a consummation was reached, however, we frequently find that the minister ran the risk of personal danger while seeking to carry out his plans of pastoral visitation. We have an illustration of this in the experience of the late Rev. Donald Sage, A.M., minister of Resolis, as narrated in the "*Memorabilia Domestica*," edited by his son.

Mr. Sage was a man of great personal strength, and on more than one occasion he was compelled to use it against that opposition which the people presented in the face of ministerial efforts to

benefit and reclaim them. "There was," says the editor of this interesting volume descriptive of social life in the North of Scotland, "a small proprietor in the parish who was known to be a libertine. Very much to the astonishment of his hearers, on one particular Sabbath, Mr. Sage, after divine service, intimated his intention to hold a diet of catechising at this man's house. His friends remonstrated with him. The man was, they said, such a desperate character, that it would neither be decent nor safe to hold any intercourse with him, and they evinced surprise that he should propose, even for the discharge of pastoral duties, to enter his house. The minister would go, however."

When he arrived at the house on the day appointed, the owner met him at the door, and with a menacing scowl asked what brought him there.

"I come to discharge my duty to God, to your conscience, and to my own," was the answer.

"I care nothing for any of the three," said the man. "Out of my house or—I'll turn you out."

"Easier said than done," replied the minister; "but turn me out if you can."

"This pithy colloquy brought matters to an issue," continues the editor; "they were both powerful men, and neither of them hesitated to put forth upon the other his ponderous strength. After a short, but fierce struggle, the minister became the victor, and the landlord, prostrate upon his own floor, was, with a rope coiled round his arms and feet, bound over to keep the peace. The people of the district were then called in, and the minister proceeded seriously to discharge the duty of catechising them. When that was finished, he set himself to deal with the delinquents present. The man was solemnly rebuked, and the minister so moved his conscience that an arrangement was entered into, by which he and the woman with whom he cohabited should be duly and regularly married. The man afterwards became a decided Christian."

Such were some of the incidents and humours of the auld Scotch minister's family catechisings. Generally speaking, these were as acceptable to the people, as they were educative and instructive in their character. Dr. Russell, of Yarrow, tells us that the Ettrick Shepherd was frequently

among the catechised, and that Sir Walter Scott, though an Episcopalian, liked nothing better than these recurring services. Both were well up in their Scripture History, and it is probably owing to this fact, as explained in the beginning of the present chapter, that we have come across neither anecdote nor incident in connection with the diet of examination held at Blackhouse and Ashiestiel, at that time the respective residences of the two distinguished Scotsmen.

## PASTORAL VISITS.

THE family catechisings sketched in the preceding chapter, were never regarded in the light of a private or personal visit from the minister; they were looked upon rather as a supplementary portion of his pulpit work, and as an effort to apply to family life the teaching of his public ministry.

The quiet friendly visit was something to look forward to before the minister came, and a something to remember after he had gone. Sometimes it was announced from the pulpit that such and such a district would be visited during the week. Sometimes it was not. But expected or not expected, the minister's visit, in the country at least, was generally regarded as a

sort of standard date, round which, or from which, men and women calculated the outstanding events in their daily surroundings. At a farm in Dumfriesshire, on one occasion, the red cow calved on the day that the minister called, and the age of that calf was always reckoned from the date of the ministerial visit. Not only so, but when the calf attained to the dignity of cowhood, she was known in the herd as "the minister's coo."

Births (of a nobler nature than the one just intimated), marriages, partings, re-unions, times of sorrow and bereavement were all associated with the pastoral visit. There was no family "function" of any importance considered complete without the presence of the minister. When sickness or accident visited the household, the doctor was sent for, but his visit never seemed complete without the minister supplementing it. When health was restored, the doctor said good-bye, but then came the time when the minister was more welcome than ever—for if he had come to mourn with those who mourned, he did not forget to call and rejoice with those who rejoiced.

And yet the minister, like other folk, had to



put up with "little bits o' touts an' tiffs now an' again." Calling one day at a cottage, the minister observed that the head of the family had aged very much since his last visit, and that he was hearing very imperfectly. After sitting a while chatting with the auld wife, whose ears were all right, the minister rose to go and promised that he would call again.

Now here comes in one of the failings of the minister, and makes him an ordinary human being like the rest of us; he forgot all about his promise to call again. His failing found him out, however, for meeting with the auld wife in the village one day, he stopped to enquire how Thomas was getting on.

"Nane the better o' you, Mr. Brown," was the snell and unexpected reply.

"How is that?" he asked.

"Oh, just this—ye promised to ca' an' see Tammas very sune, an' ye'll ken whether or no ye've keepit your promise."

"Yes, I'm sorry that I have been a little neglectful in this respect—very sorry, indeed; but I heard now and again that Thomas was

getting worse and worse in his hearing, until he is nearly deaf altogether, and, I daresay, that put me off calling, since he could not hear anything that I might have to say."

"Just so, Mr. Brown; *but the Lord's no deaf,* an' can aye hear a bit prayer when it's offered."

Little rebuffs of this kind came occasionally in the minister's way. No doubt they were hard to bear, but, in the long run, they did him good by putting experience into his life, and substance into his sermon. Into troubles of another kind he was often getting, just to keep him human. Sometimes he gave offence by declining proffered hospitality and taking nothing; at other times he got into hot water by taking too much. While visiting in the country one day, Dr. Lawson called upon a worthy woman, who invited him to taste "a thimblefu' o' unco guid whisky." He declined, however, and learned afterwards that he had given great offence by doing so, for on hearing that her minister was likely to call soon, she had sent expressly for the whisky. "An' after a'," as she remarked to a neighbour, "the doctor never sae muckle as put it to his lips!"

Another minister in the country got to the other extreme of hospitality. Arriving at a farmhouse, he was invited to partake of some refreshment, and as he had had a long walk, he gladly accepted the invitation. With great relish and appetite, he "walked into" the oat-cakes, butter, cheese, and milk which the farmer's wife set before him. As he pegged away at the refreshments, the auld wife kept moving about at her household duties, but did not forget her guest while doing so. "Help yoursel', now. Pit out your han'. It maun be a long time syne ye had breakfast at the manse, and ye've had a lang walk. Pit out your han', now, and dinna be blate."

What hungry mortal could withstand such pressing work as that! The minister helped himself so liberally that the auld wife's countenance began to fall as she cast a sidelong glance, now and again, at the lessening bulk of farm produce before the starving minister. But she was Spartan enough to let the fox rug away at her stomach without betraying the slightest emotion. Nay, she rose to the height of her

great argument on hospitality, and invited the minister still more warmly to make himself "at hame."

Poor man! Relying on the sincerity of the invitation, and judging that he was correctly interpreting human nature, he once more attacked the "farrells" of oat-cakes, cheese, and milk in no half-hearted fashion. When the vacuum was squared and nature appeased, the minister gave himself a slap over the region lately occupied by the vacuum, and exclaimed heartily, "Really, I must stop now. I've done exceedingly well."

"Na, na," cried the auld wife under emotion too deep for tears. "Tak' another farrell, *an' that'll be four!*"

The emphasis thrown on the words which we have taken the liberty of italicising, gave unmistakable evidence that the fox was still rugging away, and that it had, at last, got a firm grip of the vitals.

Such incidents as these were not bad lessons in the school of human nature. To a large-hearted man the lessons were invaluable, for

they opened his eyes, quickened his sympathies, and kept him in touch with all that was going on in the world outside the walls of the manse and behind the pulpit.

Everywhere in his visits, the minister was brought face to face with human nature in her various moods. Many a story he had to tell of temper and passion in their contrasts to patience and resignation. When old Nelly of the Fannis, a shrewd woman of the world, was laid aside by sickness, she received a visit from her minister, Dr. Russell, of Yarrow, who was cordially enough received. When, however, Mr. Gibson, a neighbouring clergyman, called, the reception was of a much colder cast. On announcing his arrival, the servant was dryly asked, "What has brought him here?" But he gained admission to the patient, and when he had spoken a few words of exhortation he proposed that they should join in prayer. To the vexation of the old lady's son, and to the minister too, no doubt, she interposed by saying, "*I canna do wi' ony din!*"

Strange death-beds the auld Scotch minister used to see sometimes—strange in this respect,

that all his preaching and teaching seemed to have gone for nothing in cases here and there. Called to the bedside of one of his parishioners, the minister of Dalmailing found the patient more like a heathen than a Christian. After sincere and earnest prayer for the welfare of the dying man's soul, the minister sat down beside the patient and waited anxiously to see what turn matters might take bodily or spiritually.

"That last clause of your petition, doctor, was well put, and I think, too, it has been granted, for I am easier." Gratified to hear even this, the minister listened to what the patient was proceeding to say further. "I have no doubt, doctor," he said, "I have no doubt given much offence in the world, and oftenest when I meant to do good; but I have wilfully injured no man, and as God is my judge, and his goodness, you say, is so great, He may perhaps take my soul into His holy keeping."

Saying these words, and breathing this spirit, the patient dropped his head upon his breast, "and he was wafted away out of this world with as little trouble as a blameless baby."

Far different was the aged saint who had been a great reader in his day. As he lay on his death-bed the minister went regularly to see him, and delighted him much with the recitation of passages from the Paraphrases or some favourite author. At the close of the stanza—

Not in mine innocence I trust;  
I bow before thee in the dust.  
And through my Saviour's blood alone  
I look for mercy at thy throne—

the old man slightly raised his hands, as if in the act of prayer, feebly uttered some words, which were understood to be those of the first line of the quoted stanza, and then gently passed away from earth.

A minister from the North tells the following story:—A notorious “cattle-lifter,” feeling that his “conveyancing” days were nearly over, and that he had only an hour or so to look behind him or before him, sent for the minister. The message left at the manse was—“Come quick, quick, ta Donal’.”

On reaching the shieling where the dying man lay, the minister sat down, and, after a few

words of introductory sympathy, waited to give Donald an opportunity of getting anything off his mind. After an ominous silence, Donald at last opened his lips and said—"Chust say away yersel', sir."

Thus exhorted, and getting, as it were, a free hand, the minister reviewed the past, commented on the life the dying man had lived, and pointed out how pardon and peace might even then be got. But the terrors of judgment had taken hold of Donald.

"Och, sir," he asked, "an' will the sheeps, an' the cows, an' the deers, and ilka thing Donal' has helped himsel' to, be waitin' for me at the Day o' Chudgment?"

"Undoubtedly they will be there in some form or other, unless you get them all removed by sincere repentance even now."

"An' will a' the shentlemans be there that Donal' didna chust ask about the sheeps, an' the cows, an' the deers?"

"Undoubtedly, unless——"

With a strange light flashing out of the dying man's eyes, as if he had seen some other way



than that suggested by the minister, he said, and the saying contained his last words, "Then let ilka shentleman chust take back his ain sheeps, an' cows, an' deers, an' Donal' will be an honest man again."

In an unpretending little book published lately—"Andrew Boyd's Cracks and other Scots Poems," by J. C. C. B.—there is a very touching account of the death of an old toll-keeper. The incident is perhaps the best thing in the volume. Some one runs for the minister, who comes and reads and prays with the patient. Apparently he derives much comfort from the visit, if we may judge from his remark—

"That's guid news, minister."

While more comfort and consolation are being imparted, the old toll-keeper seemed to be wandering in mind, for he began to talk about other things and other scenes. But how he died, with the minister by his bedside, must be told in the poet's own words—

But here

The win' frae far adoun the lanesome road  
Brocht to the house the rumble o' some wheels,  
And the tramp, tramp o' hoofs. At length the soun'

Cam' to the sick man's ears. He ceased his talk,  
Listened awhile, then, rising in the bed  
Wi' eager een, stretched out a wasted arm,  
And slowly said, "Wheesht! Isna that a cairt?  
I maun get up and ope the yett." When thus  
He spak', he fell back deid.

Lest some should think that the auld toll-keeper might have been better employed than dying with such worldly thoughts in his heart and such worldly words upon his lips, the poet teaches us this wholesome lesson:—

My frien', keep a' your pity for yoursel',  
Our brither dee't trying his best to do  
His duty, like a sodger at the post  
Assigned to him. God grant that you and I,  
When death overtakes us, may be foun' the same.

When all was over the auld Scotch minister had aye the kindest sympathy to offer, and the gentlest words to utter, to the sorrowing ones left behind. In "The Antiquary" we have the picture of a minister drawn from the life in such circumstances. "No divine," says Sir Walter, "was more attentive in visiting the sick and afflicted, in catechising the youth, and in

reproving the erring." The minister thus described, the Rev. Mr. Blattergowl, goes to the fisherman's cottage on the day of Steenie Mucklebackit's funeral. What passed there, in his endeavour to convey consolation and sympathy, is about as touching a scene as is to be found between the first and the last pages of the Waverley novels. The bereaved and broken-hearted mother is listening to the minister; at each pause in his expression of sympathy she faintly answers, "Yes, sir, yes! Ye're very gude! Nae doot, nae doot! It's our duty to submit! But, oh dear, my poor Steenie! the pride o' my very heart, that was sae handsome an' comely, and a help to his family, an' a comfort to us a'; and a pleasure to a' that looked on him! Oh, my bairn, my bairn, my bairn. What for is thou lying there, and what for am I left to greet for ye!"

During these pastoral visits the minister was constantly meeting with such incidents as we have just recorded. In one cottage he himself was frequently moved to tears, in another something touched him that dried those tears away

and let him feel that the sorrows of this life are all graciously balanced by its blessings. As he thought over these matters on his way home to the manse, the Psalmist's experience came before him, and under its soothing and comforting influence he crooned over the old familiar stanza—

For but a moment lasts his wrath,  
Life in His favour lies.  
Weeping may for a night endure,  
At morn doth joy arise.

## THE MINISTER AT HOME.

OF all delightful social experiences in the country, one of the most delightful was a visit to the manse in the days to which these anecdotes and stories mainly refer. In saying this we mean neither disparagement of, nor disrespect to, the manse of to-day; neither are we making contrasts nor are we instituting comparisons. It is the auld Scotch minister we began with, and it is with him we intend to close. Instead of expecting the reverend gentleman to call on us in this chapter, let us return the compliment by calling at the manse and seeing him.

His parochial duties discharged, his sick folk visited, and his sermons all prepared, the minister was a man worth going far to see. His

visitors were certain of a warm and cordial reception if he happened to be at home, for the minister was much from home, and was far oftener entertained as a guest than allowed to act as a host. He never knew when he might be asked out to dinner, for the county gentleman riding homeward some afternoon often took a fancy to call at the manse and get the minister home with him to spend the long winter evening together.

An instance of this kind occurred in the case of the Laird of Stronvar calling at the manse of Balquhiddier to ask the minister to dine with him that same evening.

The door was opened by the minister's privileged old housekeeper who was busy preparing dinner, and who saw that it would be "wasted" if her master were allowed to go. So she took the invitation into her own hand and diplomatically replied, "He canna dine wi' ye the day, Laird, as I hae just put his dinner to the fire; but he will be very happy to dine wi' ye *the morn!*"

This frequent dining out kept the minister's

cupboard a little barer than it would otherwise have been. "What's the use o' me laying muckle in," remarked a frugal old housekeeper to a country cadger, "when the minister's sae muckle out?" Quite true. This may perhaps explain the state of the manse larder when Dr. Chalmers one day received a visit from two friends. Shortly after making their appearance, the minister retired to the kitchen to hold a private consultation with his housekeeper on the important article of dinner. To his dismay he found that there was nothing whatever in the manse but two separate parcels of dried fish. Having given directions that a portion of each should be cooked apart from the other, he rejoined his friends and proposed a walk till dinner time.

On returning home with racy appetites, dinner was served—two large and most promising covered dishes flourishing at the head and foot of the table. "And now, gentlemen," said the host, as the covers were removed, "you have variety to choose among. *That* is hard fish from St. Andrews, and *this* is hard fish from Dundee."

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Very different was the hospitality which Dr. Chalmers himself received when he and a friend called at a country manse. In his younger days, while acting as assistant minister at Cavers, he and Mr. Shaw, also assistant in a neighbouring parish, had a long walking excursion in the Border country. After a toilsome and fatiguing journey among the hills, they arrived at the Manse of Ettrick, wet, weary, and hungry. Their arrival could not have been unexpected, for, two days before, they had met the minister of Ettrick, who invited them to return home through his parish, and promised them a cordial welcome at the manse.

Such a welcome! For their refreshment, the housekeeper set before the two famishing young ministers bread, the heel of an old cheese, and some whisky. With difficulty they concealed their indignation, but with the help of a peat fire they contrived to get each a tumbler of toddy, and were just beginning to feel comfortable when a servant appeared upon the scene. Asked what was wanted, she replied that her mistress desired her to clear the table for tea.



"Toddy before tea in the state we're in?" exclaimed Mr. Shaw, jumping up. "I don't know what you are going to do, Chalmers, but I am determined to have one other tumbler at least." Chalmers joined issue with his friend, turned the intruder out of the room, and made themselves at home till the hour arrived for family worship.

It does not appear that the minister himself was in the manse, for Chalmers conducted worship. All the while, however, some of the family were in the kitchen busily engaged in cooking what promised, by its fragrance, to be an excellent supper. But the visitors were again doomed to disappointment, for the heel of the old cheese once more made its appearance upon the table.

Provoked beyond further endurance, Chalmers and Shaw made a descent upon the kitchen, where a regular engagement took place for possession of the frying-pan with its mutton chops. After a short but glorious struggle, the two ministers put the inhospitable family to flight, captured the frying-pan with its chops,

returned in triumph to their apartment, and enjoyed themselves till bed-time.

Sometimes the minister was unable to carry out his ideas of hospitality from want of support on the part of his wife or housekeeper. Whether he was at home or not on the night of the adventure recorded above, the minister of Ettrick was clearly handicapped by an inhospitable housekeeper. In the next story, the minister seems to have had no support from his wife, which was worse—a hundred times worse. Her husband, poor fellow, was enjoying the company of a friend so much that he induced the latter to remain overnight in the manse. But he knew not the time of trial that was coming on him.

After a good supper the lady was asked by her husband to bring in the Family Bible for worship. On her retiring to perform this duty, the guest took the opportunity of slipping out to the lobby for the purpose of leaving his boots there. While stooping to place them below the table, the lady of the manse returned, and mistaking the guest for the husband, she gave the shining bald head of the proprietor of that

article a hearty whack with the sacred volume. Not only so, but she added insult to injury by saying in a matrimonial whisper—"There, take that for garrin' him stay a' nicht!"

But we turn to more congenial scenes than these, for, after all, inhospitality in the manse was only the exception which proved the existence of the rule.

When detained on church business by late meetings, or otherwise, the minister of a former day delighted in taking home one or two friends with whom to enjoy the nice little supper that was certain to be ready at the manse. There he shone in social perfection; all that was worthy in him came out on such occasions, and any little bit failing took the same opportunity. There is a story told of Mr. Colston, of Penicuik, whose failing seems to have been the harmless one of "a gude conceit o' himsel'," and it always came out in this way. After supper, he used to call in his housekeeper and get her to propose a toast, and that toast was always the same—namely, "Here's to the star o' the Dalkeith Presbytery, and that's yersel', Mr. Colston."

The present writer can never forget the hospitality which he experienced in the manse now nearly forty years ago. It was a dreary winter, and professional duty called him to one of the loneliest of villages in the North of Scotland. Fresh from Edinburgh with its news of schools, training colleges, and Government examinations, he was a welcome guest at the manse in the evenings. And the pleasantest evening of the week was always that of Sunday, when the minister's work was done, and the blissful reaction of rest and recreation, in the best sense of the latter word, was just beginning to set in after all the excitement of the preceding week, with its meetings, its catechisings, its visits, its preparation for public worship, and public worship, all over. No wonder that Sunday night was the pearl of nights at the manse; no wonder that the writer remembers to this hour the kind and generous hospitality which he experienced during that long and dreadful winter.

A blazing fire in the parlour, the lamp lit, the shutters closed, the minister in his easy chair

fronting the fire, with his sister as housekeeper on the one side, and his guest on the other. How the wintry wind moaned and whistled outside! Securely and closely as the windows were shut, the ivy could be distinctly heard rustling on the panes outside as if seeking to find an opening through which it might send a few leaves to take shelter from the pitiless blast.

A kind old Scotch heart dwelt in the minister's sister. She laughed at all her brother's jokes and stories, and always finished up by saying, "Oh, John, but you're an unco man." When the storm outside was louder and angrier than usual, she invariably hazarded the prophetic utterance, "Eh, sirs, this nicht will yet be heard tell o'."

Fond of Sir Walter's writings, the minister was often quoting them, or adapting them to circumstances. As the eerie wind was moaning and "soughing" like "no end of ghosts," he used to recite in his full rich voice—

Heap on more coals—the wind is chill;  
But let it whistle as it will,  
We'll keep our Sundays happy still.

"Wherefore, Bessie, my woman, bring in the supper, and thou shalt see how our young friend and the auld minister can do justice to thine excellent housekeeping."

A delightful little supper followed on this quaint but hearty invitation. Oftener than not, the supper consisted of red herrings, mealy potatoes in their brown jackets bursting open, with apples and cheese to follow. After doing full honour to this repast, light in its nature but abundant in its quantity, the minister used to look across the table and say—"Bessie, my woman, its wonderfully dry work this; wherefore I beseech thee to bring in the hot water and thou shalt see what our young friend and the auld minister can do when the steam is up."

"Oh, John, but you're an unco man," replied the good-natured and always pleasant house-keeper, laughing and leaving for the hot water as requested. The servant was out for the night, every Sunday night being her own, unless at Communion seasons, when there were generally guests at the manse.

Supper things removed, the hot water was

brought in and flanked by a tumbler, two glasses, sugar, and a decanter of whisky. With the production of these "materia breweria," as the minister jocularly called them, the house-keeper retired and left her brother and his guest together. Brewing his toddy, the minister used to say—"Now, we'll make a proportionate division of the good things of this night. As you're a young man, and need only a glassful, I'm an auld minister and require a tumblerful, minus your share. Your good health, my dear fellow, and may the mouse never leave your meal-pock wi' a tear in his e'e."

The conversation which followed was wholly unprofessional but cheering, helpful, and never unbecoming either the host or the manse of a Sunday evening. The "higher criticism" had not then been heard of; the ghost of Disestablishment had appeared to neither man nor woman: the Declaratory Act was farther off than the moon or Mars. The minister and people of that upland parish were simple in their faith as little children; believing all that the Scriptures taught, and troubling themselves with little doubt and less fear.

The minister told numberless anecdotes about his own people, and about other people. These anecdotes illustrated almost every phase of a country minister's experience. Speaking of his kirk-session the Doctor—for by that name was the minister always known; the medical man of the village being distinguished as Dr. Smith—used to say that he had the best and most tractable men gathered round him; better than any minister he ever knew. Whenever any discussion got a little heated, the session-clerk, a most worthy man, used to look across the table to the minister and say, "Doctor, gie them the 122nd Psalm, last three verses." Whereupon the minister rose, held up his hand, and recited the verses recommended—

Pray that Jerusalem may have

Peace and felicity;

Let them that love thee and thy peace

Have still prosperity.

Therefore I wish that peace may still

Within thy walls remain,

And ever may thy palaces

Prosperity retain.



Now, for my friends' and brethren's sakes,  
Peace be in thee, I'll say.  
And for the house of God our Lord,  
I'll seek thy good alway.

This prescription had the desired effect in restoring peace and order. Moderators of session should take a note of this.

Of his brother-ministers, both in the local Presbytery and beyond its bounds, the Doctor had many anecdotes to relate. Regarding his neighbour in the adjoining parish he used to quote, with great glee, the answer given by a countryman to a gentleman driving through the village in a gig—"My good man, where does the minister live?"

"In the manse, of coorse."

"Yes, I know; but where is the manse?"

"Among the trees yonder."

"Thanks. Your minister is much respected here, I understand?"

"Oh, ay. Muckle respeckit in the pu'pit, but he's a dour deevil out o't."

Of another minister who had mistaken his profession the Doctor told the following story:—

Having emptied the church to which he had been appointed, this poor fellow applied for the vacant chaplaincy in the prison of Dunfermline. Obtaining the appointment, one of the members of the Prison Board remarked, with reference to the successful candidate—"Well, he managed to preach his kirk empty; let us hope he'll preach the prison empty too."

## FAREWELL TO THE MINISTER.

ALL too soon have we arrived at this last chapter. Much as we have endeavoured to tell of the auld Scotch minister, we find that the half has not been told. Numerous are the stories affecting the minister in his relationship to "calls," removals to new spheres of labour, Presbytery meetings, and Presbytery dinners; still more numerous are the stories associating him with the social life of his people in the matter of baptisms, marriages, family gatherings, and congregational meetings. Our allotted space, however, is just about fully occupied, and beyond that space we must not trespass. Accordingly, the task before us now is how best to gather up and record the remainder of our stories so as to take a respectful and affectionate farewell of the

minister ere he passes away and leaves only memories behind him.

The auld Scotch minister grew old in years like other people, but he didn't seem to like growing old in spirit. The first indication of advancing age or failing strength on his part was noticed, not by himself, but by his kirk-session. Sometimes a deputation was appointed to wait on the minister, and as it was a very delicate errand on which they had come, the members of that deputation were specially instructed to broach the subject as gently and as judiciously as possible. For, long ago, the last idea to enter the minister's head was the idea that he was getting old and needed assistance; consequently, we find numerous instances in which he offered the stoutest opposition to any arrangement by which an assistant or colleague was proposed to be associated with him in carrying on the work which he had always been accustomed to do single-handed and alone.

A story to this effect comes from the South of Scotland, where the kirk-session and the con-

gregation, too, ventured to suggest to their minister that as he had reached the three score years and ten of the Psalmist, he "would be nane the waur o' a helper." But the minister refused to listen to any such suggestion, and though the session did not press the matter any further at the time, they did not altogether lose sight of it.

Time wore on, and though the minister was visibly failing, his resolution to remain unassisted in his pastoral and pulpit duties remained as strong as ever. The session, however, lost patience, and a meeting of the congregation was called to consider what steps to take in the circumstances. The minister could not reasonably object to the meeting being called; but meeting or no meeting, he was resolute in his determination to have no assistant—so resolute, indeed, that though physically unable to proceed to the meeting, he was conveyed thither *on a hand-barrow*. In presence of the assembled congregation, he took them all to witness that while he was not so firm on his legs as he used to be, he was clear as a bell in the head, and needed no assistance in preaching!

The exact locality of this story is not given in the authority from which we quote, but we should imagine it to be somewhere in the Border country.

But the inevitable had to be faced here and there. After an assistant had been arranged for, the next anxiety after that stage had been reached was the choice—the selection of the best man. In the circumstances here mentioned, the congregation of South College Street U.P. Church, Edinburgh, were on the outlook for a colleague to their minister, Dr. French. Some one happening to express the hope that the choice would fall on a popular man, the beadle, James Knox, observed, “We dinna need to care about popularity here, as we’re aye a’ fu!” Lest an erroneous interpretation might be placed on the latter part of James’s observation, we think it right to state here that the worthy beadle’s meaning was simply this—Wanted: not so much a popular minister as one who can retain the popularity which the church already enjoys, and who can continue to keep it well filled. The expression, it may be remarked in passing, is

in pure Scotch, and worth preserving on that account.

The genius of Presbyterianism does not seem to act in harmony with two ministers in one sphere or on one plane. Few "corners of the vineyard" are large enough to hold two ministers. An assistant might do as a temporary expedient, but a "colleague and successor" is a different matter. The auld Scotch minister, if we may judge from the stories illustrating this closing chapter, seldom if ever seems to have taken kindly to his colleague. When Mr. Patrick Booth was appointed colleague to Mr. Pate, of Innerleithen, in 1833, the latter used to take his seat in the pulpit on Sunday behind Mr. Booth, and when anything was said that did not please the auld minister, he entered his dissent by a cough that was meant to be something more than a cough.

When Dr. Mitchell, of Strathmore, got an assistant, or a colleague according to one authority, he seemed to think that the latter spent too much time in the preparation of his lecture for Sunday morning. On one occasion he tendered

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this suggestion—"Put down your heads, and depend upon your readiness to fill in what is needed during delivery. Take Peter's temptation, for example, and note simply these catch-words:—Peter—character—trusting to himself—always dangerous—here the cock crew." We daresay the assistant, or colleague, felt the danger of trusting to himself to be dangerous, indeed, and sought to avoid that danger by careful preparation in preference to expected inspiration.

Perhaps the sorest point in the matter of a colleague was, in many instances at least, the minister's having to give up the manse. How warmly the auld minister's memories clung round the home where he had lived so long; where, perhaps, he had brought his bride; where his children had all been born, and where he had spent the best of his life-time. How he crooned over the tenses of the Latin verb indicating the etymology of the word *manse*: *maneo*, *mansum*; and coupled with them, as an affectionate translation, the familiar words of the Psalmist—

This is my rest, here still I'll stay;  
For I do like it well.



This leaving the manse was sometimes the hardest part of the arrangement. Cases are on record where the minister point blank refused to leave the old home during his life-time. When age unfitted Mr. Comrie, of West Linton, from going in and out among his people as formerly, a colleague was appointed. After the matter of a retiring allowance had been settled, the session intimated to the minister that his successor was to get the manse. With this arrangement, however, Mr. Comrie stoutly refused to comply. "No, no," said he, "it's time enough to skin the auld horse when he's deid."

But the day came when the minister had—assistant or no assistant, colleague or no colleague—to meet his people for the last time and say farewell. In his "Annals of the Parish," from which we have had frequent occasion to quote, Galt describes with much tenderness the farewell sermon of the minister of Dalmailing. "It was a moving discourse," the minister is reported as recording in his Annals. "There were few dry eyes in the kirk that day, for I had been with the aged from the beginning; the

young considered me as their natural pastor, and my bidding them all farewell was as when, of old among the heathen, an idol was taken away by the hands of the enemy."

At the close of the sermon the minister left the pulpit, all the elders standing on the stair and gently assisting his descent. "The tear was in every eye," he continues, "and they helped me into the session-house, but I could not speak to them, nor they to me. In the churchyard all the congregation were assembled, young and old, and they made a lane for me to the back yett that opened into the manse garden. Some of them put out their hands and touched me as I passed, followed by the elders. It was as if I was passing away and to be no more."

As the minister retired into private life, he found that the practical issue of all his teaching was looking him in the face and inquiring how he himself felt in the prospect of an exchange of realities. For the shadows of the unseen were lifting off, and one by one the strings that bound him to earth were being cut away. While a party of friends were visiting Dr. Davidson at

Muirhouse, strolling through the grounds and admiring the beauty of the place, the old divine remarked that it would be a poor portion for one who had nothing else to look forward to when all enjoyment is over here.

Such thoughts seem to have been much in the mind of Dr. Chalmers during his last days. His biographer and son-in-law, Dr. Hanna, tells that, with all his social cheerfulness, there were signs of much mental conflict, and even times of desolation, in the thought that "we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth as all our fathers were." But the shadows passed away, and under the sunshine that cheered him, the famous preacher used to say that disquietude should sit lightly on those who can fix their thoughts and affections on the realities of the future world.

Of these realities we learn sometimes more from a simple remark or observation than from whole pages of recorded experience. When Mr. Kidston, of Stow, died, Dr. Lawson, of Selkirk, was asked to preach the funeral sermon, and he did so from the text:—"Moses, my servant, is dead." Before the funeral, the Doctor expressed

a wish to take a last look at the face of his old friend. As the cloth was removed by one of the family, Dr. Lawson gazed at the well-remembered features for a moment, dried away a falling tear, and then left the room saying:—“*Come away, James, I will see him again.*”

Scarcely less touching was the remark of an elder who, through age and infirmity, was unable to attend the funeral of his minister, Mr. Brown, of Craigdam. As the procession passed the door, the old man looked long and wistfully until it disappeared in the distance. As he re-entered the house he was heard to say:—“He’s awa’ to the muntain o’ spices, *and I shall soon follow him.*”

Full of pathos and full of hope are such expressions as these. Not only are they tender and affectionate tributes to the memory of the departed, but they contain, each in a single sentence, almost everything that has been revealed on the subject of the Great Hereafter. They touch, too, the secret springs in every human heart, and awaken in us all

“this fond desire,  
this longing after immortality.”

Such closing thoughts as these have thrown us into the reflective mood ; wherefore, let us gather up all our untold stories, wish our readers good-bye, and say farewell to

THE AULD SCOTCH MINISTER.

