

Samuel Bradburn was one of the earlier Methodist ministers in England. He had risen from the cobbler's bench to the presidency of a conference. An old minister at Plymouth, who had the best evidence of its authenticity, describes an incident in one of his journeys. The narrative shows that his wit could be merciless when saucily provoked. He had come to a roadside inn to wait for the stage coach. While waiting, another passenger arrived—a young lord, attended by his valet. The young gentleman was lively, but stammered slightly in conversation. On seeing Bradburn, whose personal appearance would attract attention, the gay young fellow, speaking aside to the landlady, said: Y-a-you h-have a parson here."

"He's a Methodist preacher, my lord," said she.

"Oh, then, I-I'll have a-a bit of fun with him."

Approaching Bradburn, he said: "P-a-pray, sir, c-a-can you t-tell me h-how it was that B-a-laam's ass spoke?"

Bradburn, who knew that if you look full at a stammerer you increase his difficulty, replied: "What do you say, sir?"

"P-p-p-pray, sir, c-c-can you tell me h-h-how it was that Ba-a-laam's ass spoke?"

"What do you say, sir?" cried Bradburn, looking sternly into his face, putting his hand to his ear.

"P-pa-pa-pa," stuttered the poor fun-maker, and stood with distorted face unable to put his question.

His valet came to his master's rescue, and bowing to Bradburn, said: "My lord wishes to know, sir, whether you can inform him how it was that Balaam's ass spoke."

"I don't know, sir," was Bradburn's answer, "unless it was that Balaam stammered so badly himself that he hired his ass to speak for him."

Both master and man had found fun enough for that time.

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