

Fræ Scotland.

(Contributed.)

ALL SCOTTISH BEADLES
CHARACTER AND HUMOUR.

Several capital examples of our country's power of withering sarcasm have been already quoted, but the following would be difficult to rival: "Gin ye mention our local Magistrate in yer prayers, sir," said the beadle of a small burgh town to a stranger who had come from a distant place to officiate for a day: "gin ye mention our local Magistrate in yer prayers, dinna ask that they may be a terror to evil-doers, because the beadle o' the matter is, sir, the putr, wastu' bodies could be naggerin' to anybody."

An infidel citizen of an Ayrshire burgh built a handsome manse for himself and family in the local manse. He spared no expense, and was rather proud of his family burgh place. Indeed, he closely supervised the operations of the workmen, and noted their progress. As he was going to the place one day, he met the beadle of the Secession Kirk, and asked him if he had seen the new manse. "Ou, ay?" was all the answer. "Nothing daunted, he proceeded to expatiate on the theme, and concluded by saying, "Yon's a gey fine place. It'll tak' us a' oor' time to get out o' yonder at the last day." "My man," said the beadle, dinna yerseel' ony trouble about risin', but they'll maybe just ding the beadle an' let ye gang down instead."

One of the beadle's weaknesses is his "jean"—as he has been already here, and as this must be done on the sly, his defence must be even though unscrupulous. Alexander McLaughlan, a Blairgowrie beadle, had contracted a habit of tipping, and entering the session-house morning with the evidence of it in his breath, the minister asked the occasion a fitting one on which to administer a reproof and tell—

"Sanders, I much fear that the beadle has become—"

"Aye, sir," interrupted the minister, "I was just about to remark that there was surely a smell o' drink masin'!"

In another case of the same kind, the defence was less equivocal. "You have been drink again, John," said the minister. "Why, John, you would really become a teetotaler."

"The you never tak' a drop yerseel'," inquired John. "I do," said the minister, "but, John, you must consider the difference between your circumstances and mine."

"Very true, sir," said John, "but do ken hoo the streets o' Jerusalem were kept clean?"

"No, I am not sure that I do, John."

"Weel, then, I'll tell ye. It was just like bodie keepin' their ain doors soopit, and mindin' their ain business."

The argument, doubtless, was not further continued on that occasion.

The minister of one of the Dundee burgh churches had a beadle called Donald, who was a worthy and useful man. No fault could be found with him except his being too fond of a dram, for as he used to call himself "jist a wee hauf o' whisky" at a meeting of the session and the Burgh Court, one night Donald was so unsteady in his gait that, to prevent an accident, one of the elders had to go to his assistance in lighting the gas, which could only be reached by a chair or steps. The habit had become so marked of late that it was decided to have Donald "up." On his appearing, the minister, in his most impressive manner, said, "Donald, the Session has asked me to remonstrate with you on your intemperate habits, which seem to have become worse recently. Donald, with as great a look of offended dignity as in the circumstances he could assume, replied, "I never tak' more than what's due for me. Shirl' did ye ever see the beadle—hic—worse of drink?" "And why a time I've had a dram bathin' members o' ye're Session and the Burgh Court. Yes, many a time, an' ye'll tell ye that they never saw ye for no more than themselves."

The session was not a little amused, but the minister still kept his gravity and said, "Donald, ye have pretty plain evidence o' drink, and not very long and I saw ye clingin' to a railway in the burgh, and, so that you might ken, I saw you. I crossed to the other side of the street."

Drawing himself up to his full height, the beadle replied, "Weel, ye wans—sir—very far awa' from yer duty, sir, to have stopped and admonished me."

The minister was pleased enough to see Donald back, as by this time it was very apparent the sympathies of the Session were with Donald.

It is rarely that the beadle at large meets with the minister, however, rather inclines to regard the minister and his own interests as confidential, and is disposed to be friendly and confidential. So confidential,

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indeed, that it is recorded of one that, when the minister was in a state of exasperation about something or other, John looked sympathetically towards him and said: "Gin ye think that an' aith wad relieve ye, sir, dinna mind me."

"Drunk again, John," said a North County minister one day to his beadle, meaning, of course, that John was the worse for liquor. "Don't mention't," replied John, with a bleary wink, "I'm geyan weel on myself, sir."

When the Rev. Mr. Mitchell had been transferred from a country parish to a church in Glasgow, a friend of his, visiting the old parish, asked the beadle how he liked the new minister.

"Oh," said the beadle, "he is a very good man, but I would rather hae Mr. Mitchell."

"Indeed," said the visitor, "I suppose the former was a better preacher."

"No, we've a good enough preacher now."

"Was it the prayer of Mr. Mitchell,

or his reading, or what was it you preferred him for?"

"Well, sir," said the beadle, "if you maun ken the reason, Mr. Mitchell's auld claes fitted me best."

Of a Dundee beadle it is told that having received from the minister—a comparative new-comer—the gift of a half worn coat, he sidled to the door, and turning round gave him a lesson in the traditions of his office by explaining, "Mr. Johnston used, to gie me the waistcoat too."

The greatly esteemed Principal Caird was minister of Errol before he was appointed Professor of Divinity in Glasgow. While there the Doctor discovered the acoustic properties of the church to be by no means of the best, and his congregation being scanty, he suggested to the beadle that an improvement might be effected by boarding up one of the side aisles.

"That may do very weel for you," replied the shrewd old Scotchman, "but what will we do for room if we

should get a popular preacher to follow you?"

Robert Burns tells us that "The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip. To hard the wretch in order," and the asseveration of the bard received favourable commentary at the instance of a sage country beadle not very long ago. The minister had for some time previously been favouring the free and easy theology which excludes belief in eternal punishment. He had, indeed, told his people from the pulpit that such an arrangement was not in his opinion, consistent with the character and being of the creator of the universe. From this point there was a marked falling off in the attendance at church on the Sabbath and the preacher was, naturally, concerned.

"John," he said to the beadle one day between the preachings, "the people are not turning out to public worship nearly so well as they used to do."

"I dinna blame them for't," was John's dry reply.

"You what, John?"

"I dinna blame them for't, I'm sayin'."

"You do not blame the people for absenting themselves from divine service."

"Do you mean to insinuate, John, that my preaching is less able, less adequate to their needs, and

"Yes preachin' may be a ye wad claim for't, sir, an' I'll no argue wi' ye about it; but I say this, an' I'll stick till't, a Kirk without a hell's jist no worth a d—dooken."

"Was coarse, but strong and true."

In a Forfarshire parish, a number of years ago, the old beadle was an outstanding character even among his kind. The minister, a recent appointment—entered the church yard one day accompanied by a gentleman friend—also a recent importation into the district—and approaching the beadle the following colloquy ensued: Minister—"This is Mr. So and So," he wishes to purchase a lair."

Beadle—"Imphee! Ou, ay, jist that. Is it for himself?"

Gentleman—"No. It's for my brother. He died last night."

Beadle—"Ou, ay, weel it's a' the same to me, of course, ye ken; but d'ye ken hoo he wad like to lie?"

Minister—"What do you mean, John?"

Beadle—"Weel, ye see, there's some wi' their feet to the West. There, jist for instance, about ye lies the auld minister an' his wife; him wi' his feet to the East, an' her wi' her feet to the West. They were contrair to their days, an' they're contrair yet."

In a short time a lair was selected, after which the minister enquired of John how long he had been about the place.

Beadle—"I've been howkin' awa' in this corner for mair than fifty year, sir."

Minister—"And I suppose you have buried one or more out of every house in the parish, John?"

Beadle—"Na, sir, na. These folk o' Todhills there have run nearly two tacks o' their farm, an' they havena' broken ground ye."

Minister—"Indeed, that's very remarkable, John, and old Todhills him-

self looks wonderfully hale and hearty still."

Beadle—"Hale an' hearty, ay hale an' hearty enough, an' 'tichtenin' his grip on the world every day. But folk sud live an' lat live, sir, I say, folk sud live an' lat live."

The Minister and his friend thought John should take the same advice to himself, but preferred not to say so, and the interview terminated.

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