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University of Aberdeen 1876



# REMINISCENCES OF A POLICE OFFICER



IN THE  
GRANITE CITY.



REMINISCENCES  
OF A  
POLICE OFFICER  
IN  
THE GRANITE CITY,  
THIRTY YEARS SINCE.

BY  
ALEXANDER CLARK,  
FORMERLY OF THE CITY POLICE.

"A chiel's amang you takin' notes,  
An' faith he'll print it."  
—BURNS.

ABERDEEN:  
LEWIS SMITH.  
1873.

REMINISCENCES

POLICE OFFICER

THE GRANITE CITY

PRINTED AT THE FREE PRESS OFFICE, BROAD STREET, ABERDEEN.

ALEXANDER CLARK

PRINTED BY THE FREE PRESS OFFICE, BROAD STREET, ABERDEEN.

THE GRANITE CITY

ABERDEEN

1871



## PREFACE.



I SUPPOSE there are few who have become authors who have not had some particular end in view. Either profit, or fame, or philanthropy, has generally prompted the task. In my own case, the first has had little influence—although it is just possible something may be realised, as my publisher has dealt with me on liberal terms;—the second, I had never thought of, as I do not really imagine there is anything in the following sketches likely to render their author famous; the third, I must confess, has in some measure influenced me in giving the little book publicity. I have known so many worthy men in the rank and file of the constabulary unfairly treated, that as I proceeded with the narrative of my own experiences, I fully resolved to state my convictions, and thereby seek to influence public opinion.

First, and chiefly, I hold it is both impolitic and unjust for commissioners to delegate to a chief constable, the power of dismissing men without assigning a sufficient reason. “Irresponsible power always leads to injustice.” And there is no reason why a chief of

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police should wield a power which is not delegated to any commanding officer of the most distinguished corps in Her Majesty's service. Of one thing the public may rest assured, viz., were "security of tenure" to deserving men the rule, while there might be less toadying, the public interest would not suffer. What I would propose is that after a police officer has been appointed, the superintendent's powers should be limited to suspending, and reporting to a committee of not fewer than five. This would effectually prevent caprice on the part of the *chief*. It would also render nugatory attempts to use *influence*, on the part of consequential magnates, as these would hardly bear the public investigation of a quorum specially appointed. Moreover, such a proceeding would have the effect of strengthening, rather than weakening, the position of a chief constable. I have known some cases in which the Head has felt compelled to do what he did not himself approve, just because his importuner could allege, "You have the power, and I ask it as a personal favour." I write for the public, not for the supporters of oligarchical or feudal power; but it is strange how tenaciously these sentiments cling to our institutions, even with all our boasted love of liberty. It occurs to me to remark too, that those in the management of police affairs, especially in counties, have always, or very generally, taken good care to have men as

chief constables *en-rapport* with their own ideas. Of the fact just stated, one would not have far to travel for illustrations ; but I merely desire to state my objection to the principle, and therefore wish to avoid anything like personal references on such a point. As regards the city of Aberdeen, while I admit that in it one worthy man once held the appointment of superintendent, I also happen to know that in this matter his views entirely agreed with what I have above indicated. A young man joining a police establishment must bring with him undoubted testimonials ; and it is very cavalier treatment to place him in the power of a man who *may* from sheer caprice dismiss him, and thereby render him ineligible for any similar situation.

On this subject, " I could a round unvarnished tale deliver." The Government is pledged to bring in a measure during the present session which will have the effect of giving to the electors in counties the right of choosing their representatives for local purposes, the principle of which, it is to be hoped, will be extended to Scotland. It is also expected that the franchise in counties will soon be extended to all paying poor rates, as it has been in cities. A majority of electors, from whose families the rank and file of the constabulary are recruited, will then possess the power of carrying their own measures ; and if they do not see that justice is done to their own interests, they

do not deserve the influence which it appears the present Liberal Government wishes to confer upon them. Since the MS. was written, a change has occurred in the appointment of a Governmental Inspector for Scotland, and I observe *he* is *not* a military officer. Does this indicate that the "powers that be" are of opinion that civil matters are best administered by civilians? It is my belief, however, that local government for local purposes is the true spirit of the British Constitution. Should public opinion be directed to the suggestions here thrown out, it will more than compensate the writer for any thought or labour the following sheets have cost him. In their production, he has been led, as it were, to live over again the times to which they refer: in many cases, not an unpleasant task. That he has not drawn on his imagination in stating incidents, he is certain, and the subjoined letter from an eye-witness, who is also a most valued friend, will bear him out in this assertion.

A. CLARK.

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MR. ALEXANDER CLARK,  
ABERDEEN.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your "Reminiscences," part of the MS. of which was submitted to my inspection some months ago, brought vividly to my recollection, many scenes in connection with the Aberdeen Police and Police

Court, in the years 1840 and 1841, with not a few of which, I was myself connected, being then sergeant in the force. I have no hesitation in adding my humble testimony to the general truthfulness and accuracy of the scenes and actings which you describe so graphically.

Most of those who then figured in the Police Court and Police Office, have been called from this earthly scene,—magistrates, officials, accusers, and accused. The Magisterial Chair is still filled—and no doubt ably—but in these days of “progress” the citizens seem to have lost the personal confidence and respect for those in power, which the magistrates of former days undoubtedly and deservedly enjoyed. The present cry—not confined to Aberdeen alone—for a Stipendiary to supersede the Baillie, in the disposal of police cases, was never thought of in the times of which you write, when the magisterial functions were discharged by Provost Blaikie, and Baillies Simpson, Forbes, Urquhart, and Clark, each of whom in his own way, showed an aptness for the duties entrusted to him, and a faithfulness in discharging these duties, which amply justified the confidence which they all enjoyed.

In Aberdeen, as in other places, the police arrangements are now much more complete than in our day. In numbers, discipline and equipment, a great improvement has been effected, while the hours of duty have been reduced to reasonable limits. Whether this has had the effect of reducing the list of crimes, or of increasing the number of detections for crime, I am unable to say, but it cannot fail of giving increased security to the citizens.

The only objection I have to your "Reminiscences" is of a personal nature—that your frequent references to myself are often expressed in too flattering terms, dictated, no doubt, by the friendly feeling which subsisted between us, while we were colleagues in the Aberdeen force.

To those who take an interest in the departments of municipal and police administration, your "Reminiscences" will, I have no doubt, be duly appreciated, and eagerly sought for; and I sincerely hope that your publication will meet with such a favourable reception from the public as shall induce you to continue your literary labours in some other equally interesting field.

I am,

My dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

ALEX. WEIR,

*Chief Constable of Kincardineshire.*

STONEHAVEN, 26th October, 1872.

## REMINISCENCES OF A POLICE OFFICER.

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THIRTY years since, Louis Philippe was the citizen king of the French, apparently as firmly seated in the Tuileries as Queen Victoria in Windsor Palace. Thirty years since, Louis Kossuth was little known, and now he seems to be forgotten. Thirty years since, Cobden and Bright were only beginning the agitation which led to the repeal of the Corn Laws; and less than thirty years since the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel declared, as Prime Minister, that while he held that position, the British farmer should never have less protection than he then enjoyed; while an obscure League lecturer asserted that the Premier's declaration could no more impede the certain approach of Free Trade than the bellowing of a Tamworth bull could retard the approach of spring, the abundance of summer, or the rich fruits

of autumn. Thirty years since, Mr. Thomas Blaikie was Provost of Aberdeen ; Messrs. Simpson, Clark, Forbes, and Crombie, were the Baillies ; Messrs. Alexander and John Cadenhead were City Fiscals ; Mr. Robert Barclay was Superintendent of Police ; Mr. Alexander Weir was Sergeant ; and I, gentle reader, was one of eight who formed, what was called at that time, the "Day Patrol."

I have often thought of committing to writing some incidents which occurred during the period—about eighteen months—over which my police experience extended. Various motives have prompted this desire. One is that, in my opinion, the inhabitants of this, as well as many other cities, pay far too little attention to the selection, organization, or treatment of such a numerous and important body of men as is now required to "watch and ward"—leaving these to be overlooked by the Magistrates, Commissioners, and other public officials ; and specially is this the case since the police force has been largely subsidized, if not almost governed by a functionary who is deputed by the Government, and who has always been a military officer. It is part of my experience that a military man has much to unlearn before he can be either safe or efficient as a police officer. The whole



training and ideas impressed upon the recruit, either in the higher or subordinate ranks of the army, is implicit, unquestioning obedience to his superiors, and while he carries this out, he is always sure of protection. Now, while this is necessary to ensure discipline, its invariable tendency is towards despotism; and there could be no surer method of making a police officer callous to the true instincts of civil, social, and individual liberty, than that our Magistrates and Commissioners should adopt the plan so earnestly and repeatedly urged upon them by the Government Inspector, of building barracks for the police force, thus separating them from the population, and creating a semi-military constabulary. In my humble opinion, the more police officers mix among their fellow-citizens, ay, and the more they understand and appreciate the blessings of equal laws, and respect individual, social, and political liberty, the better are they fitted to fill their office and perform their duties. Subordination and discipline are certainly indispensable; but let every constable well understand that in trampling upon the rights of the humblest of the community, he is undoubtedly injuring his own.

The incidents about to be related either occurred

under my observation, or were so well known at the time, that I have no hesitation in asserting their truth; and there are those living who can attest their truthfulness, amongst whom I may take the liberty of mentioning Mr. Alexander Weir, already referred to, now Chief Constable of Kincardineshire, one of the ablest and worthiest men it has been my fortune to claim as a friend, and Mr. Peter Johnston, the long-tried and faithful servant of the Gas Company. One thing deserves remark and apology at the outset, viz., the necessity for often using the first person singular in the course of my narrative; but as the incidents related were mostly personal experiences, I trust my readers will make the necessary allowance for the repetition of the little pronoun.

It was sometime early in March, 1841, that I entered the City Force. I had previously served in the County Constabulary as a mounted dragoon, which *cheap* and effective corps was the project of the General Superintendent, Captain Anderson, than whom I never met an official, either in civil or military life, more thoroughly unintelligible to others in his conduct and motives. I was under his orders for six months, being stationed in

Tarland; and although my visiting book was filled with eulogiums from justices, clergymen, and respectable farmers, the Captain, from some inexplicable reason, deemed me unfit to be longer in the force. Upon coming into the city, and there learning from observation at Police, Sheriff, and Justiciary Courts what a constable's duty really was, I was both surprised and delighted that I had managed to carry out so well, in the wild district in which I was located, the instructions which I had received. I had another revelation, a few years after. Having perused with some care the works of Gall, Spurzheim, and Combe, and studied the configuration of cerebral development, in which, to a certain extent, I could not help believing, I had an opportunity one day, at a County Licensing Court, of seeing the General Superintendent uncovered, and my mind was satisfied. A more insignificant intellectual and moral configuration of brain, to use no harsher term, could scarcely be imagined; in fact, sympathy for the possessor took the place of the contempt and scorn with which I had formerly regarded him.

The first night or two I was put on duty in Marischal Street, Weigh-House Square, and

Shiprow—not a pleasant spot to tramp round from 9 P.M. till 6 A.M. Mr. Barclay took a round with me the first night, and desired me to attend the Police Court, as he intended to put me on day-duty soon, and in the course of a week, I had the satisfaction of donning the blue cloth and clear buttons, as old Provost Milne used to term them.

I shall never forget one incident in connection with my first day's attendance. When the Court had been constituted, the clerk rose to read an indictment. The prisoner was a stout elderly woman, dressed in a worn wincey gown, small, faded, dark tartan shawl, with a bonnet, which smart young misses would have compared to a coalscoop. This was hung with crape round the edges, so that it was not easy to get a look of her face. She was accused of theft. Now, I had never before seen a real *thief*, and my curiosity was wrought up to a great pitch. I even thought the Fiscal must be a very daring man, to make such a charge against any one in public. The woman pled "not guilty," and proof was adduced. She had up to this time concealed her features, but when the first witness was called, and stood with uplifted hand to be sworn, the prisoner looked

round, and I thus had an opportunity of getting a full view of her. She was past middle-age: a face of the real Scotch type, high cheek bones, grey sunken eyes, and these had that peculiar, sly, rat-like expression, which I afterwards found to be characteristic of the class. That one glance was sufficient to photograph so indelibly the facial picture on my memory, that I verily believe, were I now to meet her, I should recognise her at once. The case was completely proven, and as it was not her first appearance, she was sent to prison for 60 days.

The pay of the Day Patrol was then 13s. a week, and the time on duty was from 6 A.M. until 9 P.M., being 15 hours, with the exception of two for meals, and one in the office; when it was rare to obtain rest, as when anything occurred the officer nearest was sure to be sent for. I have often walked the streets of Aberdeen when I could scarcely say whether I was asleep or awake, so overpowering was the feeling of fatigue; nor was this effectually remedied, until the experience of the present Superintendent enabled him to detect it, and provide a better distribution of time. Another grievance was that, with the exception of two hours, we were on duty every Sunday. I tried to improve

this by going to Church, but the moment the sermon began sleep overpowered me, and I had to give it up. The late Fiscal Simpson, who was a Commissioner of Police, and with whom I had come into contact when on the rural force, one day asked me to step into his office, and examined me regarding our length of hours, when I had an opportunity of pointing out to him specially the Sunday grievance, and of suggesting to him that were the one-half relieved on that day from duty the other half would be doubly diligent. At the next meeting of the Police Board, we had the satisfaction of seeing the Fiscal's motion to that effect carried.

Before proceeding farther, I shall take the liberty of sketching the baillies who then acted as police judges. I do so solely in reference to their idiosyncrasies in that capacity.—Baillie Simpson was only a few months on the bench during my time. He must have then been about 70 years of age: a tall portly man, with a very benevolent countenance, quiet and unassuming, he always leant to mercy in his judgments, and was not easily satisfied with evidence. He seemed to have little favour for police regulations, and would scarcely convict for contraventions of statute,

unless these were aggravated. Baillie Clark was as good a representative of a Scotch municipal magistrate as was to be met with in his day. Possessing a clear intellect, a large amount of common sense, a fund of humour, and an appearance which on the judgment seat well became its dignity, he could be, and sometimes was, severe in his judgments, especially in cases of wife-beating. His deliverances in these were a good deal in the Scotch dialect, and in giving them forth the feelings of the father and husband, in both of which relations he was exemplary, found full vent. "You, sir," he would say, "took that woman by the han', promising, afore God an' man, to love, protect, an' provide for her. Instead o' that, you go an' spen' what should have been brocht hame for that purpose, to gratify your own abominable appetites; an' then, when she complains, as she has a good right to do, because ye are the strongest party, losing a' sense o' manliness, ye even kick an' abuse her to the bargain. Such conduct deserves the severest punishment it's in my power to gie, an' I therefore sentence you, sir, to sixty days in jail." Baillie Forbes, then a comparatively young man, quick, clear-headed, and most pains-taking; his only drawback appeared to me to

be his over-estimate of the reverence due to the position he occupied, and occasionally manifesting a bit of temper, when such was not accorded. Of his ability in sifting a case thoroughly no one could entertain any doubt. I have seen him in a lengthened case where a lawyer was counsel for the accused, take notes of the evidence on both sides, and sum up with a clearness and impartiality little inferior to a judge in gown, wig, and ermine. One class of recusants who sometimes came before him, viz., brokers who had committed a contravention of the statute in not entering goods bought, were not likely to appear a second time for the same offence.

Baillie Lewis Crombie, a merry "cock-eyed sprite," shrewd, decided, and, being a lawyer, was the terror and vexation of worthy John Cadenhead, the Fiscal. No slight or doubtful cases durst appear during his month of judgment, and even in some which appeared to be well sustained by evidence, the Baillie would address the Court somewhat in the following manner:—"I must say that I am astonished to hear such an argument from the Public Prosecutor, in which he declares this case to be fully proven, when there is not a tittle of testimony to bear out his contention. No two wit-



nesses adduced corroborated each other. In fact, in the first place, the indictment appears to me trivial; and, in the next place, it is not supported by the proof brought forward. I therefore, dismiss the panel." John would scratch his head, and give a look of "fearful meaning" towards Mr. Barclay, whose eyes never met those of his silent accuser. I don't mean to say that the worthy Baillie would, or ever did, indulge in any freak of magisterial spleen; but we often thought him fastidious in regard to the evidence necessary to ensure a conviction. In cases of furious riding or driving within the city, he was severe in his penalties, and yet on one occasion he went up Crown Street, with a goodly number of his own family on horseback, at a pace, which had it been indulged in by another, would, if tried before his honour, have been certain of incurring a heavy fine. To be sure there was no person in the way, and the party with the Baillie in front reined up in Union Street. Still Crown Street was within the boundary, and another policeman and myself witnessed the display. I wanted to report it, but my neighbour being senior, and perhaps more cautious, sternly refused.

Baillie, afterwards Provost, Henry, came in

room of Simpson—few dwellers in Bon-Accord need that his appearance be recalled. As a police judge he was the least self-reliant of any who occupied the seat. His month of duty might have been a solatium to the Fiscal's feelings for any ruffling received at the hands of Baillie Crombie. Mr. Cadenhead seldom essayed a speech in moving for judgment during the month of the worthy Baillie's administration, contenting himself with the short sentence at the close of the examination—"That's my case, Baillie;" and then John sat down with an apparent sense of importance. The Baillie would seem to consult with his own mind for a few minutes, and then, leaning forward, would draw the feathery end of the quill with which he had been taking notes across the top of the Fiscal's head, upon which the latter would start up, and after a short inaudible confab, the magistrate would proceed to give judgment. Really, though not nominally, the Fiscal was both prosecutor and judge. I am bound to admit, however, that during Baillie Henry's occupancy of the bench, the sentences were lenient.

There was sometimes a scene in the Police Court of those days worthy the pencil of a Hogarth, or a Wilkie, when Greek met Greek in the persons

of Messrs. John Cadenhead and Ewen—the former neither very fluent nor logical ; the latter personal and pertinacious. Both were often on their legs at once—there being but one really sound limb between them—appealing to the bench, vociferating and gesticulating in such a manner as made us thankful that the table was between them.

Having given these hints regarding Mr. John Cadenhead, I may be allowed to say something of Mr. Alexander Cadenhead, who had all the most trying and delicate part of the duties to perform as Public Prosecutor for the burgh. Who, that ever came before him to be precognosed, could forget that cool, cautious, enquiring eye ? Sometimes, in serious cases, he would appear as prosecutor in the Police Court, and woe betide the witness who attempted to prevaricate ; he would pursue them from point to point, and in the way he put his questions, as well as in their tone and manner, scathe and scarify the motives of the insincere testifier. He was a most zealous defender of municipal and political liberty ; and any of the police force who, in their officiousness, infringed on these sacred institutions, need not expect much favour at his hands ; in fact, we sometimes imagined his severity in such cases was prompted by

a wish to conciliate the lieges for having so often to prosecute them at our instance—our judgment in such cases being no doubt considerably swayed by our feelings.

Mr. Robert Barclay, our Superintendent, was a firm, well set, wiry man—not deficient in personal courage but woefully so in a moral point of view. True, he had many masters, but never man more truly realized the point of the fable than did he—trying to please everybody he pleased few or none. He could neither defend himself nor his officers in court, and made the worst possible appearance in the witness box. He also had favourites and tale-bearers among the men, who continually kept him in hot water; in fact, during his whole *regimé* the police force was to a great extent demoralized, until Mr. John Watson, during the failing years of Mr. Barclay's health, began to make his influence felt, which was exerted in a much more beneficial way than that of his chief. I have said that Mr. B. was not deficient in physical courage; neither was he in endurance or strength. There was, and is still, a carter in Aberdeen known then by the cognomen of the "Tearer;" but James is like more of us, docile enough now. At the time I refer to he well

deserved the distinctive appellation. He had more than once severely punished and broken away from two or three night watchmen, and was heard often to boast that he could thrash the whole police establishment. One night a tremendous disturbance arose in a public-house in the Nether-kirkgate. A messenger arrived at the Watch-house with intimation that the "Tearer" was there destroying everything. Mr. Barclay, taking Robert Mackenzie, another officer, and the writer, as an escort, posted down. All had fled but the victor, who was terrifying the inmates, and demanding supplies. Our *chief* instructed us to wait outside and keep back the crowd while he held a parley. Mr. Barclay stepped into the room where the "Tearer" reigned supreme, announced his authority, and demanded peace. Jamie sprang on him like a tiger, but was no match for his wiry, cool antagonist, who tript him up and sent him at full length on his back more than half-a-dozen times ere he would give in. When James was at last compelled to own his defeat, Mr. B. told him to go home as soon as his wind was recovered, and next time when he boasted of beating the whole police establishment to except their Superintendent. James was quiet for a considerable time after.

Mr. Barclay was a good rider, and very fond of sport. This may, indeed, be said to have been the cause of his death, for having been thrown heavily at a steeple chase, he never had the same appearance after, and in a few years went the way of all living. In relating incidents, I may have occasion to recall his mode and manner of ruling and directing the police force; and while doing so truthfully, have no wish to be unjust or harsh. I always believed him to be kindly in disposition, and anxious to do his best; but that there was a sad want of moral firmness in his character appeared evident. Mr. Alexander Weir, the present Chief Constable of Kincardineshire, an office which he has held for nearly thirty years, was then Sergeant of the Aberdeen Police. Considering the public position which he holds, it may be thought superfluous for me to describe him; yet as he has had so little to do in criminal cases in the quiet *city* of Stonehaven, I may be pardoned in recalling some traits of his character and appearance at the time to which I refer. In person, he was tall, thin, and of gentlemanly appearance, either in uniform or plain clothes, but especially so in the latter; with a fine cluster of brown curly hair, which has now become white; well-cut mouth; clear sharp

eye, which, when roused by opposition, or sparkling with humour, told you at once that you were in contact with one of more than ordinary mental energy. His colloquies with some of the many termagants who called at the office to lodge complaints against their neighbours were highly amusing. After waiting patiently to hear their story, he would rejoin—"Well, mistress, I believe you have been sadly annoyed, and that person you complain of, I have no doubt, is a bad one; but the case does not come under our jurisdiction, and we really cannot interfere. You should go to a sheriff-officer, and have her summoned for defamation of character, and no doubt you'll get a proper amends of her before the Sheriff. That's my advice in the matter." When a case was reported, he could see through it in a twinkling; and in dictating a complaint to the clerk, could go over the legal phraseology as well as if he had been an inmate of the Temple. No officer could be at a loss when he had him to apply to, especially as his knowledge of important criminal law cases often prevented the men from committing themselves when too eager to capture without warrant. A case happened one morning in Mrs. Walker's, top of Queen Street, in connection with

which I could not help admiring his promptitude and decision.

One night after the Theatre had closed, on whose boards Tom Ryder had strode as Dandie Dinmont, with top-boots and knee-breeches—a character in which Tom excelled—he and a few more had “fore-gathered” in Mrs. Walker’s, and held revel till an early hour next morning (there being no “Forbes M’Kenzie” then), when a “row” had arisen, and the watchman had been called in. The whole party had marched, or been marched, to the Watch-house; and just as we came on duty there was a scene the like of which I never witnessed. Both the night clerk and his *chef* had been tasting, and were totally incapable, while a dozen or more of stalwart young fellows were having it out in the muster-room, accusing and threatening each other; Tom Ryder particularly seemed to be enjoying the fun, strutting from side to side of the apartment, making jokes and repartees at the expense of all. The watchman, Bruce, a Shetlander, who had been first called, maintained that every one at first accused a certain party present of assault, and that *Mester* Ryder had done so specially. It was evident, however, that Tom did not want to be in the mess at all, and on being appealed to by Bruce,



he cross-questioned his interrogator by asking him if he had ever been at school, and then finished by asking still more particularly what he thought of Cornelius Nepos. When things were at this pass, Mr. Weir made his appearance, and seeing at a glance how matters stood, he dismissed the night-guardians, and in a few minutes unravelled the whole case, fixing a charge of assault upon one of the party, whom he was to detain if bail was not forthcoming. The other gents, who were all allied to the "upper ten," were rather unwilling to leave without airing their mischievous propensities by interfering with the "Charlies," as they called them. Mr. Weir opened the passage door into the cells, and pointing them forward, said, "Now, gentlemen, you are at present free to leave this place quietly; if you remain here five minutes longer, I shall accommodate every one of you with a separate lodging; and recollect, if I do so, I'll bring you before the sitting magistrate." We soon had a clear house.

A case in which Mr. Weir played the chief part deserves to be recorded, as it was the means of ridding the city of one of its most dangerous and despicable characters — Annie Macdonald, who dwelt in a hovel in Peacock's Close, or some close

adjoining. Annie kept a troop of boys, of which she was directress—not in “virtue’s ways, I ween,”—for, in fact, she trained them as thieves; but so well was she posted in avoiding all chance of detection as a receiver, that no evidence could be obtained against her. We caught, and could have easily convicted, the boys; but as they were mere tools, Mr. Weir was anxious to convict the arch-trainer herself. There is an old statute in the criminal code with which he was conversant, which helped materially in the prosecution. There were no fewer than five by whose pilfering Annie lived, who were all taken as witnesses; and although none of them could prove that Annie ever received any of the proceeds of the stolen goods, it was clearly proven that she housed, fed, and instructed them how to act. The trial, before Lords Moncrieff and Cockburn, occupied a whole day, Annie being ably defended. Mr. Weir stood in the witness-box upwards of an hour, and was subjected to a most searching cross-examination. He was highly complimented by Lord Moncrieff; and Lord Cockburn summed up, setting forth in the most lucid manner the bearing of the statute as well as the common law. The jury, by an unanimous verdict, found the panel guilty, and she was sentenced to seven

years' transportation. When the carriages which were to convey the convicts on board the steamer drew up in the jail-yard to receive the prisoners, Annie caught sight of Mr. Weir, and, with terrible emphasis, and an expression of countenance almost fiendish, called out, "I hope, Sergeant Weir, you'll be in h—l before next Circuit." "Ay, Annie!" he replied; "and where do you expect to be by that time?"

In those days, Sheriff Watson was only cogitating his plans for the Female Industrial School, and there was no Reformatory for boys. In passing along the streets about the outskirts, ragged urchins of both sexes would start out of doors and entries, and run like rabbits on the approach of a ferret, as we took our rounds. The first case of importance I saw tried in the Police Court made a deep impression on my mind, and I will endeavour to relate it. Two young lads quarrelled near Gilcomston Steps; both were partially intoxicated; they fought, and a large crowd was collected. Two officers interfered, and, as they could not separate the combatants without apprehending them, they did so; but the prisoners resisted, and the crowd having interfered, rescued one (who was subsequently apprehended,

however), but the officers kept the other. In bringing their prisoner along, the officers were again assaulted, and assistance had to be sent for. The "New Times," as the boys christened the police barrow, was put in requisition, and, with more assistance, the culprit was strapped in. Three of the interferers were captured, one of them a female. Next day, the two who had quarrelled were put on their trial before Baillie Simpson. A number of exculpatory witnesses were examined by their agent, Mr. Winchester, who made a most effective speech in defence; and the Baillie found the case not proven. The interferers were then charged with assaulting the officers. Baillie Simpson vacated the bench (in consequence, it was said, of one of the accused being a worker in the Trapping Factory of which he was, in whole or in part, proprietor), and his place was taken by Baillie Forbes. After a lengthened trial, the whole were sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment, without the option of paying a fine. When the sentence was pronounced, a well-dressed young girl of prepossessing appearance uttered a shriek so thrilling that it went to the heart of every one present, exclaiming, "Oh, my father! my dear father! let me near him!" He was a worker at Broadford, and the leading partner

there, it was said, took a lively interest in the case. At any rate, he was bailed, and his case appealed to Edinburgh, where the Baillie's judgment and sentence were affirmed; and the accused, on his return, went himself and knocked at the prison door for admittance. I always knew him after, and have often, when meeting him, turned a corner rather than encounter the melancholy look of his sunken eyes after his release.

My instalment on day duty took place on a Saturday. On the following Monday morning, just as we were going out on our "beats," a carpenter lad called, and reported that a number of his tools had been stolen out of a house in course of erection at the top of Crown Street; and among the lot, a cross-cut saw, on which there was a particular mark. Mr. Weir gave us instructions. Going home to breakfast at eight A.M., I called at a broker's shop kept by one Williams, a Welshman, in Woolman Hill, where I found the identical tool. It had been left late on Saturday night, and for which a boy was to call after nine A.M. to see what the broker would give for it. Returning before that hour, I stationed myself in the back-shop, out of sight; and about a quarter past nine I heard a footstep. Williams had gone out, but his wife

officiated. "Weel, laddie," she said, "what was ye needin'?" "Oh! I've come to see what ye wis gaen to gie me for the saw." I bolted right out, but the loon, who was barefooted, and about sixteen years of age, was too quick for me. He sped down the Mutton Brae like a hare, and I only ran him down below Union Bridge. When fairly caught, he confessed the crime, and going back, I secured the saw, and took both to the Watch-house. He had an accomplice at that moment tolling "Hadden's bell." Another officer and myself went down, and apprehended the latter just as ten struck. He was a genteel, pretty boy, and begged us not to take hold of him; then he conducted us to Marine Terrace, where the whole of the rest of the tools were hid among the sand. The case was tried that day—Mr. Weir complimenting me highly on the completeness and speediness of the capture. I was considerably elated, and supposed myself the rival of Simon Grant, or even Charles Dawson. Both lads pled guilty, and were sentenced to ten days. On hearing the sentence pronounced I looked round, being attracted by sobbing at a little distance; and there stood the two mothers, clasping each others hands, and with such an expression of sympathetic despair in their countenances that I

could have wished from my heart I had had no hand in causing their misery. They looked like, and I found out afterwards, that they were decent, honest women. I never knew the lads as criminals afterwards.

It has often been discussed, whether an officer acting as detective, can keep his own moral nature free from pollution. I pronounce no opinion, but must admit that it appeared to me impossible to circumvent professionals, except by using their own weapons, so that the old proverb, "Set a thief to catch a thief," may have originated in the law of *necessity*. At any rate, what I am about to relate will show that I found it expedient to dissimulate. A girl, calling herself Annie Davidson, and sometimes Low, hailing from Montrose, had been convicted of the theft of wearing apparel, and sent for twenty days to jail. After her release she was sent home, but finding a better field for her propensities here, than in the city of timber and shavings, she soon returned. Her system was to find out some respectable house, where two or three girls of the family wrought at the Banner-mill, Broadford, or the Green. She then introduced herself as just arrived, and that she had got work in the same mill, but had failed to get

lodgings. This was always on a Saturday night, and the good folks, sympathising with the stranger, took her in till Monday. Annie took good care to be ill that morning, and when the girls left for their work, she slyly slipt out before breakfast, taking care to have a large parcel under her cloak of the best apparel she could lay her hands on. She then slipped out of town, after pawning the goods, and only visited it late at night, never appearing through the day at all, so that we could get no trace of her. Mr. Barclay, who was receiving daily complaints of her thefts, used to come to the door of his office nightly, as we were about to be dismissed, reproaching us for inactivity. "It is strange," he would say, "that none of you men can get hold of that girl Davidson or Low. She's stealing in every direction." "Gilbert," he would say, "you know her; it's really too bad." At length, I got a hint that she lived during the day at a certain house in Canal Road, with two sisters who kept house for their father. I communicated with Mr. Barclay, and got liberty to take my own way. Going home, I doffed the uniform, dressing in a smartish style, with a Glengarry bonnet and long, flowing ribbon. I took care, before reaching the house, to be well splashed, as it was winter,



and the roads were bad. I also appeared worn out, and quite downcast about Annie. I enquired for her by the name of Davidson, but they knew no one of that name ; but, said I, she sometimes calls herself Low.

“ Ou ay ; Annie Low. Oh, we ken her brawlie ; but she hasna been here this while.”

I saw suspicion was aroused, and that to carry my point, I must allay it. Setting myself down on a stool, I began recounting all I had suffered since leaving Montrose in search of her, and said I had promised to her mother not to come home without her.

“ Oh, are ye ony frien’ o’ her’s, nae ? ”

“ I wonder you would ask that question. Do you not see a family likeness ? I ’m her cousin.”

“ Ay ! weel now, there is a resemblance. Ye’ve been a gentleman’s servant, I warrant.”

“ ’Deed have I, an’ I ’m going back to Edinburgh to join my master as soon as I get Annie hame wi’ me.”

“ Weel now, I think I could maybe find her for you, if you would call back at four o’clock.”

I was to the minute this time, as clean as a new pin, and one of the *maidens*, who was buxomly dressed, was waiting. I took her on my arm down

the Gallowgate. She was expatiating largely on my benevolence, and hoping we would be successful in finding the strayed one. We visited several well-known haunts without success. As a *dernier resort*, my conductress said she would try the Canteen. It was nearly roll-call, so we had no time to lose. On entering, I suggested that my cicerone should reconnoitre, while I waited near the door. After passing several boxes, she stopped short, exclaiming—"There she is! O Annie! there's yer kisin a' the wye frae Montrose tae tak' ye hame."

Annie came to the passage immediately, saying—"My kisin! my kisin! What dae ye mean, lassie? I hae ne'er a kisin in Montrose."

"Then you don't know me?"

"No!"

"Well, but never mind; I happen to know you."

I then told her who I was, and what I apprehended her for. My "pal" gave a scream and fled. Annie managed, however, to hand the pawntickets which were in her possession to a corporal, who, on thinking over the matter, deemed it safest to come down to the Watch-house and deliver them up. Going to MacSween's, I lifted a hurley-load of pledges.

I was in luck that night for cases, and observed that it roused the envy of some of the old hands. While I was busy withdrawing the goods, Mr. B——, who was then clerk to MacSween, called my attention to a woman offering two morning-gowns scarcely dry. Both were of the same pattern, but one wanted the band. I asked him to call her in, and seizing the gowns, demanded where she got them. From her appearance I had no doubt of her guilt, and bundling them up, I made her carry them to the Watch-house, where the owner, with her father, was standing at the desk reporting the theft, and showing the band, which had been torn away when the theft was committed. Both father and daughter seemed petrified with astonishment, and, I believe, supposed the police to be ubiquitous.

The enthusiastic angler has a pleasure in seeing the spotted trout leaving its native element at the bend of his rod, all the more enhanced if, by his patience, dexterity, and skill, he has lured it from a sly nook or swirl, where a less skilful disciple of Walton would not have suspected its presence. The deer-stalker also delights in the labour and privation he has to undergo in order to get close to his antlered object. I have spent many a beau-

tiful morning in summer, from grey dawn until six A.M., among the woods of Arnage, where the roe-deer were in herds, the foxes in dozens, and the rabbits in thousands. With the first-named species I had become so familiar that I knew every one of them as a shepherd knows the individuals of his flock; the second and self used sometimes to come in contact while both were watching and waylaying the third, and the mental excitement was both intense and pleasing. Neither, however, partakes of the same intensity of feeling which a detective experiences in following up a criminal action, especially one of theft. To my mind, the difference seems to lie in the fact that, in compassing the irrational, you have an inferior adversary to deal with, while in hunting the human, you are coping with your equal. The value of the article stolen does not always influence the anxiety to trace and recover; and it may be that criminal officers, like others, have even a desire to ply their vocation where their moral feelings, by the report of the crime, have been outraged. One such case came under my notice. A kindly little woman came in one night, and, laughing, said—

“ Weel, Serjin', it's hardly worth the pains, but

I'm so mad at the heartless rogue, whoever he was, that took my bairn's basket."

"What basket, my good woman?" asked Mr. Weir.

"Oh! this boy," said she, "was going down Queen Street wi' his father's tea—he is a journeyman tailor, an' works in a shop there—when a man came up an' asked to carry his basket. The bairn gied it till 'im, when he cut roun' the corner; an' when I went oot tae see if my boy was returnin', there he was stan'in' cryin' like to break his heart. It's hardly worth the pains," she repeated; "it was only a reticule basket, wi' a decanter an' a cup, an' some bread an' butter. But the basket would be easy kent, for there was some mustard spilt in the bottom, an' wasna washed oot. The man," she added, "hadna on a coat, but a spotted Guernsey frock, the great rascal!"

"Now," said Mr. Weir, "there's a chance for you. Off and search the brokers', and warn those you think you can depend on. This is Saturday night too!"—(It was betwixt eight and nine o'clock.)

The very first broker's I went into had bought a reticule about an hour previous.

"Let me look at it."

There, to be sure, was the splash of mustard.

"Now, who did you buy this from?"

"Weel, she'll be easily kent. She lives in Rettie's Court, West North Street; an' there is only ane or twa houses in it. Besides, she's squint-eyed, but a bonnie body."

Having labelled and secured the basket, and warned the broker, whom I knew I could depend on, I left; and as I had been on the street from six A.M., I did nothing more that night. Next day being Sunday, I counselled with Mr. Weir what had best be done, when he advised that, as it was almost certain the woman described would not be at church, I should take a step in casually, as it were, and have a look at her. Acting upon his advice, I called at the salubrious locality, and there was the very woman unmistakably, in a nice, clean room, herself as spruce and tidy as was her habitation.

Here I must make a digression. I was so much struck with the appearance of this party, and her whole behaviour in the matter, that I took some pains to ascertain her history. She was then living with William Nicol, a hard-working man, a cooper by trade. He was much older than she; and although not married by the usual formula, I

believe they were so by Scottish law and custom. She had been on the street, but coming in contact with Nicol, she had given entirely up her loose practices, and was as faithful a hard working wife as was in the city. The cleanliness and comfort of the domicile were proofs of her thrift, and her appearance was enough to prove that orderly habits had again resumed sway in her life. She looked surprised as I entered, but there was no apparent nervousness, and nothing in the eye that told of conscious guilt.

"What did I want—take a chair and sit down."

I did so. Fixing my eyes on hers, I said "You sold a reticule last night to Mrs. McFarlane."

"I did so," was the answer, "is there anything wrong with it?"

"Where did you get it?" She stopt short. "Now, mind, it was stolen, and a most heartless theft it was. I have all the particulars, and I don't believe you would have been an accessory, but you may be brought in. Tell me the truth, and fear nothing."

"Weel, I'll wager," she said, "it's been Pharaoh—Pharaoh Nicol," she added.

Now, I knew him only by report. He had been repeatedly convicted of theft; but for a good many

months had steered clear of actual legal crime, though in a moral aspect he had been busy with tricks which none but a designing villain would have attempted. These were generally perpetrated on country people on market days ; and Pharaoh took care if he came to the line not to overstep it. In fact, when some of the cases were reported to Fiscal Cadenhead, he acknowledged he had never met such adroitness. John was his real name, but he was best known by the other. When I heard it mentioned, I felt sure he was in the toils. " And where does Pharaoh live ? "

" Just above this. There he is past the window this minute, and a yellow decanter in his hand." (There was such an article in the basket when stolen.) He had gone to look for some milk, for breakfast, at the corner of Mealmarket Street. Coming cautiously down the court, I came out as if nothing had happened ; but seeing my man with the *Guernsey frock*, and the very decanter stolen, I dare say my eye rested with a particular steadiness on the objects. At any rate, ere I got half across the street, Pharaoh set off with a bound, and I followed. There is a house at the foot of Cameron's Court, leading from West North Street to Mealmarket Street, up which there was then a stair



for foot passengers. My quarry knew of this, and took advantage of it. Suspecting he had run into the house for shelter, I dashed in, where the folks were dressing for church. They saw in a moment I was at fault. "Down the stair, man, and up the close." I leapt from the top to the bottom at a bound, and was just in time to see the decanter fly on the left-hand side ere the carrier left the court! Up West North Street, down Chronicle Lane, across King Street, down Princes Street—Pharaoh was *nickit*, as the boys used to call it, at the bottom of Constitution Street. I believe I should have been baffled but for the assistance rendered by a lad Murray, who was on the Night Watch, and who joined the pursuit somewhere in Princes Street. Both myself and Pharaoh fell, and I was unable to rise, I recollect of tumbling to get hold of my man. Taking him to the Watch-house, I found about a dozen foreign sailors there, all in Guernsey frocks not unlike his own. A thought struck me, and giving him in charge to another, I hurried for the boy and his mother. When we arrived, I took the boy's hand (he was about six years of age), and asked him to point out the man who took the basket from him. The child at once pointed to Pharaoh. It was intended

to try the case before the Circuit, but, upon pre-cognition, Mr. Cadenhead thought there was a link deficient in the evidence, and it was brought before the Police, when the culprit pled guilty, and was sentenced to forty days' imprisonment.

Going up Union Street, just at the Bridge, one day, a person gave me a familiar slap on the shoulder, and, looking round, who should it be but Pharaoh. I dare say I did not look very pleasant on recognising who it was that had taken such a liberty, for he begged my pardon, but added "Weel, min, I just thoct I would like to speak tae ye. I didna think that there was a man in Aberdeen wid 'a taen me, fin I was fairly out. But, faith, ye did it." I replied I did not think I would have done so only for assistance. I then warned him seriously of the necessity of his endeavouring to break off his bad habits, as if ever a similar charge could be proved against him, he must go before a higher Court, and would certainly be transported. He seemed much affected, and promised to take my advice; but his old propensities were too strong for him, for about two years after he was tried before the Circuit Court for stealing a basket, with eggs and butter, out of a country cart at Flour Mill Brae, and had to leave his country for its good.

A case happened about this time, which made a little stir in the city, as it touched the feelings and finances of some of the more respectable citizens. For a fortnight complaints came in almost every night of windows being broken in various localities in Union Street, Castle Street, King Street, and Mitchell Place. Missiles, principally pebbles, would come smash through the windows, and even do considerable damage inside. Parties were sent to watch, but all to no purpose. At length, Mr. Webster, the Treasurer's, windows were smashed. He was Chairman of the Watching Committee, and gave us a call just as we were about to be dismissed. "I wonder," he broke out, "what ye're paid for, Mr. Barclay, and a' that big men claithed and fed tee at the toun's expense, an' folk canna sit safely at their ain fireside. I'll hae the last ane o' ye dismist; ay, dismist—payt aff. Ye're for no use—not a bit. It's only an hour since, an' hardly that, that a stane came through my window an' ca'd the very glasses off my dining-room table. Bonny police ye are!" We were mute; Mr. B. remarking that it was astonishing none of us could find out the matter. At that time there was a boy with Reid & Son, chemists, in Union Street, who was rather eccentric. He

was a stout, healthy, big-headed loon, and had a special anxiety to learn something of how we police got on. He used to accompany me round every dinner hour, enquiring all about how we knew thieves and bad characters. I took care to give him only as much information as to keep alive his interest in our supposed talent for discovery. The day after old Sandy Webster's philippic, I had my usual confab with the inquisitive youngster, when he asked me if I had heard anything of boys breaking windows. My pulse flew off at a gallop, but checking my excitement, I said that I had heard something of it. "Were you among them?" I asked. "Oh! no, I was not; but I ken some o' them, and, if you'll promise nae to tell, I'll tell you who they are." Of course I promised solemnly, and I kept it too. "Well, then, there's so-and-so." The very first was the son of a Commissioner. In a short time I had no fewer than fourteen lads, from ten to fourteen years, all in the office; and after a lengthened precognition, we accused seven, taking the other seven as witnesses—these last had been least mischievous. The case came before Baillie Crombie. The boys were asked what motive they had for committing the crime, when one answered in an artless way,

“ Oh ! we likit to hear the glass crackin’, and see the folkies rinnin’.” Mr. A. Henderson defended them, and made an earnest appeal to the Bench. The Baillie said he would pass such a sentence as should mark his sense of the heinousness of the crime, and its injury to the community, while at the same time, he hoped it would teach parents their responsibility. They were fined two guineas each, being the largest amount brought into the police funds at one sentence since Aberdeen had a police establishment. Many wondered that Mr. B. did not recommend me to a small gratuity ; but I knew well the reason, and shall explain it ere concluding. Of one thing I felt certain, had I been a favourite it would have been forthcoming. I often enquired about my informant ; but, as he went to sea, I never again heard of him.

In the winter season of '41, there were a great many fires in Aberdeen—Blaikie & Sons', in Littlejohn Street ; Barry, Henry, & Co.'s, in Loch Street ; George Duncan & Son's house in Guestrow. A “ cooper mannie ” set fire to his shop in close proximity to Zion Chapel, and old Hugh Hart was there before the fire engine. It was said Zion was not insured ; at any rate, Hugh's face was the

picture of despair as long as the fire seemed to endanger the sacred edifice. Another attempt at conflagration occurred a little before this, in shop 104 Union Street, then tenanted by a furrier of the name of Rosenberg, which led to one of the most lengthened and interesting trials that ever was before the Circuit in Aberdeen. There was little harm done, but it was clearly evident that the tenant had been guilty of a wilful act of fire-raising; and as his premises were in the very centre of the city, and his act endangered a large amount of life and property, he was apprehended and charged with what was and still is, a capital offence. It so happened, that nearly the whole of the magistracy were on that night enjoying the hospitality of old Provost Milne's festive board, and when the alarm was raised the party were attracted to the scene. Sandy Mellis always averred that there was not a thoroughly sober person, either master or man, among them, but nevertheless the evidence was well taken up, and proved sufficient to convict both Rosenberg and his partner; the latter, however, was only charged with aiding and abetting her husband.

The hubbub was nearly over ere I got to the

scene, but I saw enough to convince me that a most determined and diabolical act had nearly succeeded. There had been fire put into several of the empty paper boxes on the shelves, and in a pilaster which ran up at the back of the door in the inner shop; the gas-pipe had been cut, and the gas ignited, which would, in a very short time, have set the whole block of building in a blaze. I was not a witness at the trial, but having been employed to hold up part of the burned pilaster on the large table in front of the Judges, around which the Bar ranged themselves, I had a capital opportunity of seeing and hearing the proceedings. If I mistake not, the late Lord Robertson was Rosenberg's leading counsel, assisted by a junior. There were two gentlemen acting as Crown counsel. Our friend Robert Bruce, the Shetlander, was among the first witnesses examined.

"On such a night were you sent to alarm Mr. Rosenberg at his lodgings, by telling him his shop was on fire?"

"Yes."

"Where did he lodge?"

"In the Union Hotel."

"Did you get instant admittance to his room?"

"No."

"What o'clock was it?"

"About half-past eleven at night."

"Did you ask for him at the landlord?"

"I did."

"What did he say?"

"He showed me his rooms."

"Were the doors of these locked?"

"They were."

"Was it some time before they were opened?"

"Nearly fifteen minutes."

"Did you threaten to break in?"

"I did."

"For what purpose?"

"To get the keys of the shop."

"Did Rosenberg say he was in bed and must have time to dress?"

"Yes."

"Did you see his boots handed in to him?"

"I did."

"Now, what like were they?"

"Blucher boots, with cloth tops."

"Did they button at the side?"

"Yes."

"How long was it after the boots were handed in ere Rosenberg came?"

"Nearly ten minutes."



"Did you make any remark about his being so long in dressing?"

"I said it was strange he should be so long in coming with the keys when his shop was on fire."

"Did you observe whether his boots were buttoned when he came out at last?"

"I did."

"Were they all buttoned?"

"Every button."

The opposing counsel tried hard to damage this witness's evidence, but Bruce, in his quaint Shetland dialect, retorted humorously to some of his queries and came out of the box with great *eclat*.

Mr. Barclay was next examined, having received from the prisoner his policy of insurance, along with a receipt for a quarterly premium paid to the Northern Assurance Company; the production of this document led to one of the most interesting legal scimmages I ever had the opportunity of listening to. It was conducted with great tact and ability on both sides; their Lordships and the whole Bar appeared in an intense state of excitement during the whole time. The Public Prosecutor desired the witness to unroll the policy and see what was inside, but, when the receipt appeared,

the panels' leading counsel objected, and the witness was ordered to withdraw. "I am rather surprised," said he, "my Lords, at the position the Public Prosecutor appears to assume in this trial. He indicts the panel for wilful fire-raising, and it would now appear he is about to finish by proving a case of imposition upon the Northern Assurance Company; and upon this line of argument, he has no *locus standi*. I am prepared to prove that the policy of assurance, upon which he builds, has no legal obligation whatever, it being issued upon shop 78 Union Street, and the act, even if it is proved, took place in shop 104 of that street. Now, although my learned friend may argue that the Assurance Company endorsed the policy as binding on shop 104, it was *ultra vires* of their legal power, and, consequently, without the issuing of a new policy, although there might be a moral, yet there was, in fact, no legal obligation resting against them, as to any risk in the last-named premises. As to the receipt about to be produced, it was never libelled upon as an article to be produced upon this trial, and I, as panels' counsel, deny the right of the Public Prosecutor to produce it." There was a dead pause for a few minutes.

The Public Prosecutor then rose, and with a firm voice said—"My lords and gentlemen of the jury,—My learned friend seems to be deeply versed in civil as well as criminal matters, and is determined to contest every inch of the ground as this trial proceeds, for this I do not blame him; but he is woefully mistaken if he supposes that I intend only to prove that the panel at the bar simply intended to defraud the Assurance Company. I accuse him of a far higher crime than that. I accuse him of wilfully setting fire to the premises occupied by him, in one of the most populous streets in Aberdeen, to the imminent danger of the lives of a large number of Her Majesty's liege subjects, and the destruction of property; but I have a right to shew, as I was endeavouring to do, a probable motive for the act. Now, whether the policy of insurance was issued on shop 78 or shop 104, it makes little difference; it is plain, and has been proved, that the Assurance Company signified by their endorsement of the policy that they acquiesced in the removal, that after it took place the panel, Rosenberg, had no doubt of their liability to him for damage done by fire; and, in proof of this, he paid a premium, for which he received a printed receipt, signed by the manager of the company."

At this stage of the Prosecutor's argument, the one counsel for the panel nudged the other with his elbow, remarking, "We had better let it alone, the jury has heard all."

"Ay," said the other, "and their lordships too."

The receipt was refused production, but the Public Prosecutor had by his skilful fencing, made the matter tell severely against the prisoner.

Next there came an architects' discussion regarding the ignition of the gas pipe behind the pilaster. Messrs. Smith and Simpson were examined for the prosecution, and declared it as their opinion that it must have been the act of an incendiary. Three or four witnesses swore there was no burning or charring on the flooring or skirting board when examined by them immediately after the shop was entered and the fire got under. I wondered why there seemed to be so much positive evidence regarding this point. One of the witnesses, Willie Gardiner, the then "master sweep" of the city, and one of the most skilful and daring directors of a water jet on fires that ever handled one, swore that not only was there no burning nor charring on the floor or skirting board near the pilaster enclosing the gas pipe, but that there was no feeling even of heat, for he had lain down and

applied his tongue to the wood, trying to discover it. The defence then produced a piece of the floor and skirting board, which they alleged was discovered immediately upon examining the premises when they got possession of the keys, and had been overlooked by the officials, which, according to the theories of two architects which they produced, would account for the ignition of the pipe and pilaster. One of these, the late Mr. Knight, better known among Rennie's carpenters as the "Cockney," was exceedingly elaborate and scientific on this point, showing how, if that part of the flooring had been first ignited by accident, a current of air would certainly have carried the flame to the pilaster, up which it would have been drawn as by a funnel. Lord Moncrieff regarded the voluble witness with a stern look, and, addressing him said, "Now, sir, listen to me. Supposing that four credible witnesses had come here before you, and sworn that at the time the fire in the shop and pilaster was discovered and extinguished, there was neither burning nor charring on any part of the flooring or skirting board, where then, sir, would you say the fire had originated?"

"In the pilaster, undoubtedly," was the response.

"Your lordship will no doubt take a note of that," chimed in the Prosecutor.

About this stage of the trial it was 9 P.M. on Saturday. The court adjourned, and the prisoners had to be taken to the jail for refreshment. The shifting panel used for letting them up and down the stair leading from the Court-house was so overlaid with productions it could not be used, and Mr. Cadenhead calling, requested me to take charge of the prisoner, conducting him by another way, and adding the caution, recollect who you have charge of. Poor man, he was in no state to have made any attempt at escape, he was completely prostrated, and trembled like an aspen leaf. In about half an hour, both prisoners were again placed in the dock, and the trial proceeded.

Lord Cockburn had to leave early on Sunday morning for Inverness, and Lord Moncrieff was left with the whole burden of hearing the able speeches of counsel and addressing the jury. The trial lasted until past one P.M. on Sabbath, when the jury brought in both prisoners guilty as libelled, coupling with their verdict a recommendation of mercy towards Mrs. Rosenberg, as being influenced by her husband. Lord Moncrieff certified the case to the High Court of Justiciary in

Edinburgh, reserving some points urged by the panels' counsel, to which both prisoners were sent, when the Aberdeen jury's verdict was carried out. Rosenberg was sentenced to transportation for life, and his wife to three years' imprisonment. The vessel in which he, along with a number of other prisoners, sailed for their destination was wrecked in Table Bay; and just about a year after he made the diabolical attempt to fire one of the most beautiful blocks of buildings in Union Street, he himself perished in another element.

At two of the conflagrations formerly mentioned, it was my lot to play a rather important part, and the first I shall mention was Barry, Henry, and Co.'s; there was an engine stationed at the corner of Innes Street, worked by the Shore Porters, who were always most efficient on such occasions, but here they were often interrupted by parties pressing past them. Being in uniform, I was stationed there, with strict orders from Mr. Barclay to allow no one to pass. A young gent, one of a firm at Footdee, and who lately skedaddled from the Granite City, was then in his *potestatir*, as old people would say, and thinking he had no business to be interfered with,

refused to go round the other side. I acquainted him with my instructions, and the reason of my being placed where I was, but this only riled him, and, dashing forward, he attempted to pass; but being on the vantage of rising ground, he had no chance with me, and was sent reeling back. He demanded my name, which I instantly gave, and next day I was accused of having assaulted Mr. T. It was in vain I urged the peremptory orders I had received. Mr. B. said *I ought to have known who the person was*; and it was only the influence of the gentleman who had recommended me as an officer in the establishment that saved me from dismissal.

At the fire in the Guestrow, when Messrs. Simpson & Son's\* house blazed up with such fierceness, there was a trying hitch in getting water applied—there was no “Firefly” in those days,—and when the first engine arrived, the hose was out of order, and the parties who should have been there to work it were, some of them at least, absent. The house, being old, burned with great brilliancy, and everything seemed to indicate that the conflagration must soon reach all around. The military were marched up

\* Through an inadvertency, in page 47, George Duncan and Son is inserted instead of Simpson & Son.



Broad Street, and halted waiting for orders. Mr. Barclay was in a state of great perturbation, and, calling me, said—"Now, *you* know about how to make use of the soldiers, do try and use them to get things into some order." I recollected in a minute what I had learned of street firing when at drill, and turned it to advantage. Going up to the commanding officer, I requested a sergeant and a dozen men. The request was immediately complied with. I then posted double sentries on all the lanes, taking the sergeant and four to clear the engine, which had not yet got to work. A number of mechanics, chiefly belonging to Edinburgh and Glasgow, but then employed at Foot-dee Iron Works, many of whom were partially intoxicated, had taken possession of the fire-engine, and made confusion worse confounded. I requested them to desist and allow those who belonged to the machine to get it under way. This they refused, and there was likely to be a scrimmage—the southrons groaning and hooting the Aberdonians. I requested the latter to step behind the sergeant and his party, now reinforced by four more of their comrades. "Now, sergeant, clear these fellows out, or the whole place will be in a blaze." Shouting the name of the regiment,

the sergeant ordered them to "Charge!" In a moment the bayonets were levelled—the commander placing himself in front, with his fusee at the port. The volunteers did not wait the onset. All but one fled! He, a sturdy fellow, endeavoured to seize the sergeant's arms. He was mistaken, for the officer stepping back, instead of using the steel, brought the butt end to bear, and with a smart blow levelled his opponent in the gutter. The rest rushed along the Guestrow, out upon the Upperkirkgate; and we, having placed double guards there, returned. I should mention, however, that the southrons vowed mortal vengeance against myself, as to me they ascribed the tactics which had prevented the display of their superiority to the Aberdonians in working the engine. All this took place in shorter time than it has taken to describe it, and soon the engine got into working order. The most that could be done was to prevent the fire spreading, some parts of the adjacent houses being knocked down for that purpose with crow-bars. I recollect seeing our present Sheriff-clerk, Mr. Ligertwood, then a stalwart youth, working one very efficiently. It may seem strange, but it is a fact nevertheless, that all these fires occurred within, I think, a couple of months; and that after

Rosenberg and the "cooper mannie" were *nabbed*, there was not a fire for nearly two years in the city. "Pace all of *yees*; I am making no insinuations!"

I may mention, ere closing this chapter on fires, that it was reported that Rosenberg had been burned out only a year previous to his coming northward, at Thirsk in Yorkshire, when some of the English insurance companies had to pay the piper. His adventure here was another proof, if such were needed, that the hard-headed Aberdonian is quite as wide awake as Yorkshire men who are generally credited with being more than a match for those of any other county in England. Mr. R. was, it was said, a Hungarian Jew, and of all cities in the kingdom, he ought to have eschewed Aberdeen; the only one of his race who ever managed to eke out an existence in it, being old Lazarus Myers, who lived in the Netherkirkgate, and who declared "he had been sent on a special mission to his lost *bro-ders of de same familie*."

Old municipal usages are not easily got rid of, even if their continuance involve considerable outlay of public money. While I was on the police, and for a good many years after, Charles Dawson, as Fiscal's Officer, had good times of it.

For instance, when we apprehended a party for theft, or any other crime for which they had to be brought before the Circuit Court, after we had apprehended the culprit, collected the evidence, and had the case all cut and dry, the Fiscal's Officer then stepped in and charged the public for apprehending, committing to prison, &c., &c.; and not only that, but in some instances got all the credit in the public prints for being an eagle-eyed detective. This led to a good deal of ill-feeling and jealousy between the town sergeants and the police.

On one occasion I obtained rather a triumph, and that too, over our greatest opponent. Standing one morning in Castle Street, a girl, about fifteen, whom I knew as a *suspect*, accosted me, asking if I had heard anything of *Baubie Gallo* lately. I replied we were often hearing of her.

"She's been oot this mornin'."

"And is she in again?"

"Ay is she."

"Anything with her?"

"A pretty filled shawl. I saw't aneath her oexter."

"And is she in just now?"

"She is."

I learned afterwards that jealousy of Baubie for having taken up with my informant's sweetheart, an "apple loon," was the reason of my receiving the information. Seeing a comrade in blue in Castle Street, I called him, and we went together to Baubie's domicile, a close off Justice Street, at the end of which was a house with an outside stone stair, and at the landing was the small room in which she and her mother lived. Leaving my assistant at the mouth of the close, I entered, and found Baubie sitting on a small stool at a miserable fire of shavings. There was no furniture in the room, but in the corner was some straw and shavings, which appeared to be the only apology for a bed the inmates had.

"Well, Baubie, where's your mother?"

"I ken naething about it. I suppose she's oot seeking her breakfast."

"Have you been oot yersel'?"

"Deed no."

"Have you anything in the house not your own?"

"Ye can look and see."

Going to the little bundle of chopped straw and shavings, I turned these over, and there, to be sure, was the shawl.

"Where did you get this?"

"Me! I ken naething about it."

"You'll have to go with me, at any rate," taking her by the hand.

She had a bushy, luxuriant crop of hair, and as we were passing through the dark passage leading to the street, she managed, unobserved by me, to slip a pair of tortoiseshell side-combs from her locks, and throw them behind her. My informant, who lived in the same court, had been keeping an eye on our movements, and seeing what had happened, picked the combs up, and followed some time after with the articles to the Watch-house. Coming down Castle Street with the shawl under my arm, and my prisoner in the other hand, I observed Mr. Barclay and Charles Dawson in close confab with a lady, who seemed in an excited state. I had to pass them closely, when the last-mentioned, darting from them and seizing the article I carried, exclaimed, "The L—d preserve me, there's my shawl!"

"Oh, sir," she asked, "have you got my pin, too, that I got from my brother, who is an officer in the East India Company's service. I would not part with it for money."

"I cannot say, Madam, whether there is a pin

in it or not, but just come inside and we will examine it."

Mr. Dawson looked very black, but Mr. B. seemed highly pleased. Going into his room, the shawl was unfolded, and there, to be sure, was the pin. Then the lady added, "My side-combs were also folded up in the shawl." My informant was at the door, and these in her hand, asking for me. I went out, received them, and cautioned her to say nothing about giving me the information. This she was as anxious to keep secret as myself. Both Mr. B. and the lady tried hard to find out how I knew of the theft, and how I had managed so quickly to recover the articles and apprehend the thief; but, desiring she should carry a good report to England of the dexterity of detectives in the Granite City, I made no revelation, merely saying that I knew Galloway to be a prowling young thief, and had my eye upon her. Mr. B., while delighted with my success, and specially that I had so cleverly forestalled our opponents, the town sergeants, was not very well pleased that I was not more communicative of details. The lady was very anxious to leave me a substantial mark of her gratitude, but this our rules prohibited. She was a relation of Mrs. Simpson, Trinity Manse,

and it was from the drawing-room of the manse the articles had been stolen. Galloway was sent forty days to prison, and should have been sent five years to a reformatory.

Police-officers, being men of all work, have often queer and disagreeable duties to perform. One of the most repulsive to my feelings was the apprehending of youngsters in times of frost, for raising slides. The young rogues seemed so happy, and so full of enjoyment, that I really felt as if it were a hard matter to interfere. Yet, what could we do? Douce, decent people would fall, get injured, and then come to the office complaining of our inefficiency. I always thought the best plan would have been then, what has come much more into vogue since, viz., to cover the slides with ashes or sand. Such a policy was little thought of at the time to which this refers. The Hangman's Brae, which is now merely a by-path, was then the only communication 'twixt the east end of Castle Street and "Fittie," and in times of severe frost was always a resort of lads and boys for sliding; and where it joined Virginia Street was at such times one sheet of ice, well occupied by the "gamins." Complaints came pouring in, and four of us were told off to make a raid. This we



did by approaching under the direction of Robert Mackenzie, who was the senior officer. He came slowly down the brae, while the other three concentrated from both ends of Virginia Street, one coming up James Street. The youths had their eyes on Mackenzie, who was wending his way slowly down from Castle Street, no doubt feeling assured they could easily *skirt* as he neared them. We approached simultaneously by the accesses before mentioned, and had agreed to seize one each of the biggest of the *loons*, for the purpose of intimidating the rest. Knowing we were at hand, Bob made a rush when near the foot of the brae, and each caught a slider. They screeched fearfully, but we were determined to make examples, and hung on with desperate efforts. We proceeded up the narrow path with our prisoners, when a set of clamorous "termagants" set upon us, the one encouraging the other, and as we felt reluctant to use physical force on the *ladies*, it almost baffled us to get along with the boys. These grew more violent the more the women abused us and took their part. At length, however, we got to the level where the road leads down from the Barracks, and Mackenzie, who was equally ready-witted as cautious, gave us the

hint to let the boys go, and seize four of the most outrageous of the viragos. In a moment the boys were released, while each secured a lady partner. At first they were very independent, and expressed their willingness to go and report us, but when they arrived, and were examined by Mr. Weir—Mr. B. being out—they soon changed their tune, and each was put into a separate cell. The howling and *miserere* were indescribable ! Their husbands shortly made their appearance, and, after a suitable admonition, and a promise of good behaviour for the future, the women were released, after about two hours' confinement, which I don't think either of them would ever forget. On the same evening, as I was coming up James Street, I stood for a short time at the corner, watching whether any of the sliders would make their appearance. There had been a slight shower of flakes, such as sometimes fall from a cloud in times of keen frost, which covered the ice. One of the most noisy of the matrons whom we had apprehended was coming towards the well, with a bucket in each hand. She approached the large slide, and, not knowing the place, her feet spurted out in front, while her buckets came rolling to the strand, and, falling backwards, she came rolling after, exclaim-

ing, as soon as she got breath, "D—ls i' that loons, for I believe I hae gotten my death fae them this vera day. I wite," she added, "it's chaep upo' me." I thought so too; at same time, I gathered her buckets, and filled them.

A rencounter 'twixt Charles Dawson and one of his clients (he then acted, as did all the town sergeants, as a sheriff's officer) is worth relating. I had been in the office, and was just setting out to "perambulate," as M'Levy would have styled it, but stood to have a chat with Charlie, when a well-dressed man came into Huxter Row. Dawson gave me the hint not to leave. Now, the man approaching had employed Charles to prosecute a debtor. He was a person of some substance, and owned a house somewhere in Woodside. Dawson had written him to come in, as there were some particulars regarding the debt he professed not to be rightly acquainted with. From the time, however, when Dawson had been employed to recover the debt, a charge of theft had been laid against the creditor by the Messrs. Hadden; and Dawson had got two excise officers to *dacre* the house, on pretence of searching for illicit spirits, while their real object was to discover whether there was an extra stock of worsted on the premises. The re-

port they had made to Charles had satisfied him that he would be perfectly justified in apprehending his client, as he could easily prove theft or reset against him. Hence the note to come in. Mr. D. met his victim with great cordiality, shook hands, and was delighted he had been so punctual, but asked him to step into the Police-office, as he wanted to get pen and ink to note down the information. We entered—Dawson taking care to place himself 'twixt his friend and the door. "Sergeant Weir," said he, "this is so-and-so, from Woodside, accused of stealing or resetting a large quantity of worsted, the property of the Messrs. Hadden; search him and lock him up." The man looked petrified, remarking that he had better have stopped at home. However, it was our business to see to his safe custody, and accordingly, after receiving what property in coin and some other articles he had on his person, he was taken to be locked up. This not very pleasant duty devolved upon myself. The passage through below the Court-house, in which the cells were situated, went straight from the muster-room, then turning at right angles to the left, went towards the small courtyard in front of the East Prison. I was taking my prisoner to one of the cells in the second-

named alignment, when he, observing the light at the other end, while I was putting the key in the lock, started off to regain his liberty. Had he known of the side-door entrance in Lodge Walk, he would certainly have escaped, but turning to the left, he ran down the west side, 'twixt the jail and the wall, supposing it to be a lane, but was fairly caught in what the French call a *cul de sac*.

As soon as he bolted, I gave a halloo, and followed. In a short time, Messrs. Weir, Dawson, Mellis, and Cockburn (the keeper of the prison) were after me, the latter remarking that he was safe enough, as he could not get over the wall. When we came to the end of the lane, the poor man was running round the yard evidently looking for some hole to get through. I could compare his appearance and exertions to nothing so much as that of a cock that has been beaten, and to get away from his conqueror, runs to any recess where he can hide his head from his pursuer. The whole of us burst out into a hearty laugh at the poor fellow's crest-fallen look when we saw how neatly he was trapped. He was not without some pluck, however, for he retorted by calling us "a lot of low beggars, to stand up there and laugh at a poor fellow's misfortunes;" swearing at the same time

that were he on the street, and fairly out, there was not a man amongst us could catch him. We thought it safest not to try the experiment. He was locked up safe enough for that night, but I believe intercession was made for him with the Messrs. Hadden by some influential parties, and the case was settled without a conviction.

A case happened one day, a bonnie April morning, I remember it well, which had a melancholy history. A case of theft of salmon from the Cruives of Don had been reported, and Robert Mackenzie and myself were sent on the look out. We examined several eating-houses. At last, coming up the Netherkirkgate, we were attracted by a fine specimen in the window of a small restaurant in that locality. On entering, we questioned the proprietor as to how and when he had obtained the fish. We saw at once that conscious guilt was apparent in his countenance and manner. It turned out, however, that the matter had no connection with the reported theft from the Don; and had the eating-house keeper had more fortitude we would have been baulked. As it was, he confessed having obtained the salmon from a lad in the employment of the proprietors of the stake nets at the back of the pier. We were sent to

apprehend the party. Now, although there has been different decisions and opinions, even among learned judges, regarding the right of the public fishing in different places on salt or fresh water, and although I have heard old hands at the salmon fishing stations declare that they have known more fish to be stolen, than are now caught, yet there could be but one opinion regarding the dishonesty of a paid servant purloining his employer's property. As I have said, the party indicated was apprehended, and at once confessed his guilt. He was a fine healthy, robust young man, and had never before been accused of any crime. He was locked up, and never did I witness any person in such a state of mental anguish. Claspings and wringing his hands, and uttering the most heart-rending wails, he paced from side to side of the narrow cell, in absolute despair. So touching were his state of mind and appearance, that it was said Mr. Barclay himself called upon the proprietors to see whether they would not forego their charge against the poor lad, but found them inexorable. He had been confined the whole night, and on my return to duty in the morning the night sergeant said he had never lain down, nor ceased his monotonous wails during the long

hours. I went to visit him, and such an alteration was there in his appearance from the time I had assisted in his apprehension, that I could scarcely recognise his features. On being asked to plead to the indictment, he bent his head forward, covering his face with both hands, and sobbed out "Guilty, guilty, guilty," and then burst into tears. He was sentenced to thirty days in jail.

He called on me after his release, to thank me for the kindness I had shown him when a prisoner in the Watch-house, and the sympathy manifested in his case. I saw at once he was an altered man. The hectic flush on his cheek, and the oppression in his breathing, augured ill for his ultimate recovery. But the complete prostration of spirits was the most melancholy feature noticeable. He repeatedly called afterwards, and I could observe the indication of premature old age in his appearance and gait. In six months after, he had gone where the weary are at rest. His death indicated, if ever one did, that he died of a broken heart.

Pawnbrokers have often been accused of being the cause of stealing; and no doubt their business affords facilities to the dissolute or dishonest of raising cash on articles purloined. They seem, however, to be indispensable in large towns, and



afford an opportunity to honest people of realising money on articles not of immediate want, which no other means can supply. I have known many of them as anxious as anyone could be to discountenance crime, and ever ready to assist in its detection. The late Mr. MacSween, who was manager for the Equitable Loan Company, was one of these. Yet he was often mulcted, both of cash and goods by our operations; besides, having a weekly sale, and the goods to be auctioned at night being exposed in the sale-room, he had some losses by pilferers, who called not to buy but to steal.

On one occasion, old Hughey Sutherland, his porter, called, reporting that a fine lever watch had been stolen, indicating the party suspected; and also stating that Mr. MacSween would reward whoever recovered it. Coming down George Street in the breakfast hour, just opposite Mr. Sherar's lamp saloon, I met the "suspect." He was a 'cute, active little Arab. Seeing me making across the street, he took to his heels, turning off up the lane which runs from George Street to Loch Street, at the back of the Soup Kitchen, where he came in contact with a country woman who had stepped in to arrange her basket. The

lane being narrow and the pursuit hot, there was neither space to pass, nor time to parley, so he rushed bang against the woman, overturning her and her basket together, shot into Loch Street, down John Street and into George Street, where I overtook and secured him. Of course a crowd was collected, and, but for the assistance I received from a pensioner who knew something of the prisoner, I believe he would have been taken from me. So ignorant of right and wrong are the mob, that they actually believed the young rogue, because he loudly asserted his innocence, and declared that the police in general, and myself in particular, persecuted him ! When he was taken to the Police-Office, another with myself stripped and searched him, but found nothing. Afterwards, Sergeant Watson repeated the same experiment unsuccessfully. About two hours after, having come in from dinner, I made another call upon him in the cell ; and feeling certain he had had little time to dispose of the watch, it having been stolen in the morning, I listened to hear if there was any ticking audible. I imagined it was so, and putting my ear on the boards, I distinctly heard it. After a long search, I found the watch betwixt two stones at the bottom of, and in contact with, one

of the footposts of the wooden bed for the prisoners: hence the vibrations. I don't think the lad was ever again accused; and he is, or was lately, living in town, the only one of all the young scapegraces I then knew who has reformed and wrought for a livelihood. The most remarkable thing about the case was the fact that he had the watch about his person during our repeated searchings. Mr. MacSween was as good as his word; nor had I any compunction in accepting his largess.

The criminal law of Scotland is often extolled as being, both in its code and administration, superior to that of England, specially as to the last-mentioned, viz., that whereas in England, the prosecution of offenders devolves upon the individual, there are in Scotland, public prosecutors for the protection of the lieges; and, I think, there is much to be said in commendation of our system: yet human justice, however well administered, is often liable to failure. In illustration of this, I shall relate two cases, both of which were tried at the same circuit, and before the same judges. A lad, clerk to a lawyer in King Street, took it into his head to augment his salary, by fleecing a good many of the well-to-do

lieges, by sending them threatening letters. In some cases, he wrote to indulgent and anxious mothers, who had reckless boys about his own age, and of whose habits he had somehow become cognizant, stating that he knew of some of their tricks, which if divulged, would bring them into disgrace, and that unless a certain sum were sent to him through the Post-Office, enclosed in a letter, to be called for, he would give information against them in the proper quarter. With some he succeeded, which no doubt led him to try the same dodge with others. One of his threatening epistles was sent to Mr. Samuels, then cashier to the Equitable Loan Company, who at once communicated with the Fiscal. A letter was written by Mr. S., enclosing a sovereign, the sum demanded, the coin being marked by two witnesses. Two officers were set to watch at the Post-Office, which was then in the Adelphi. They had a most harassing time of it, for Mr. Stewart, the late Postmaster, threw every obstacle he could in their way. At length their perseverance was rewarded. The third or fourth day after the letter had been posted, they observed a suspicious looking youngster enter the court. He looked stealthily around, but they were out of sight. As he returned, and just as he

was opening the missive, before coming out on Union Street, he was seized with the evidence of his guilt in his hands. After this, a number of those who had been trepanned, were found out, and the whole correspondence was embodied in the indictment. The same day on which his trial came on, and just before it, a case of sheep-stealing from the parish of Tyrie was called. There were two men indicted for the crime. Both had been bailed, but one only appeared. The other, in consequence of non-appearance, was outlawed. The wife of the last-mentioned, was examined as a witness. The panel having pleaded not guilty, she swore that her husband and the prisoner came in on a certain night, and that he, meaning her husband, carried the wether on his back. That panel and her husband together, slaughtered and divided it; and that the feet and some other parts of the animal were put into a small cask; and that they went together to bury it in a field not far from her house. The cask was found and produced at the trial, and she identified it. There was a good deal of evidence corroborating; but the prisoner had a very clever counsel, who laid great stress on some seemingly contradictory evidence brought forward; and specially, he tried

hard to depreciate the poor woman's testimony, alleging that the jury must expect, that as her husband had fled from justice, she would do all in her power to make this man appear the more guilty of the two. Lord Cockburn, however, in summing up, came heavily down on the learned gentleman's forensic eloquence. While admitting his perfect right to do all in his power for his client, he could not allow him to cast a slur on the witness's character, declaring with much force that a fairer witness never stood in that box. He then read over to the jury the notes he had taken of her evidence.

The jury seemed a good deal puzzled, and were requested to retire and consult. While they were thus employed, to save time, the case of the lawyer's clerk was called. It took the Clerk of court above a quarter of an hour to read the lengthy indictment; and when the prisoner was asked to plead, he confessed his guilt. The officers employed were much chagrined at this, as they hoped to have had an opportunity of showing before their lordships, as well as the public, the usage they had met with at the hands of the Postmaster. The lad's master gave him an excellent character, stating that he had never even suspected

him of any mal-practices, and that he possessed considerable talent. This his letters proved. He was, moreover, an orphan, and his counsel pled hard for a lenient sentence. Lord Moncrieff addressed him in one of the severest speeches I ever heard from the judgment seat ; and sentenced him to seven years' transportation. I was standing just at his back when the sentence was pronounced, and saw the poor lad writhing convulsively when he heard his doom. Indeed it might be said to have been to him sentence of death, for he went down in the same vessel in which Rosenberg, the furrier, perished. The hang-dog looking fellow accused of sheep-stealing, sat just beside him in the dock, and as soon as the sliding panel had closed, the jury who had been consulting on his case, were called in. I almost thought he read in their countenances his escape. The clerk put the question, after they had answered to their names, when the foreman declared, that by a majority they found the indictment against the prisoner not proven. I don't believe there were a dozen people in the court, besides themselves, who had the least doubt of his guilt. He rose, however, and walked through the crowded passage with the utmost unconcern.

It was evident that the eloquent harangue of the panel's counsel, had completely upset the reasoning powers of the gentlemen who occupied the proud position of defenders of the great "Bulwark of the Constitution."

About this time, the winter of 1841, there were a good many cases of house and shop-breaking in the city. In one of these, the night men succeeded in apprehending a delinquent. He was a seaman, a young man who lived in the Gallowgate. The case was not thoroughly sifted, although there were a good many circumstances connecting him with the crime. He was taken before the sitting Baillie, for the purpose of being remanded until further investigation. There was at that time a new man of the name of Kean, an old artilleryman, who acted as clerk in the office, and as Mr. Barclay was very fond of new men, he was entrusted with the charge of the culprit. As the accused was coming down stairs to be again locked up, he observed the Court-house door open. Castle Street was then undergoing repair. The "Plain Stanes" were being removed, and the Cross-house shifted; and, it being Friday, the fish-wives were seated on mounds of sand and piles of causeway stones. Thinking it better to run the gauntlet through



these, than to return to his old quarters in the cell, he gave Mr. K. the slip. Clearing the heads of a group of fish-wives, he dashed down Marischal Street. I happened to be coming along by the Athenæum, and joined in the pursuit;—but Jack was too swift for us all;—he bolted down the stairs at Virginia Street, and getting into some of the lanes leading to the shore, succeeded in baffling all our exertions. The town was searched and the outlets guarded for days; but all our vigilance was unavailing. He was never again heard of. Kean lost caste with Mr. B., and soon after left the establishment.

The strictest orders were issued to the night patrols and watchmen to inspect all closes and corners, and to allow no person to loiter in the vicinity of these, and if they heard any noise, or saw any one in such places, to spring their lanterns, and make sure who these were, and what was their business. Acting upon these stringent instructions, a most efficient and faithful servant of the public met a very undeserved recompense. I knew him intimately, and a better behaved or more trustworthy officer was not in the establishment. John Macdonald, as his name imported, was from the Highlands; hardy,

faithful, and robust. His beat was in Broad Street, Guestrow, and the Upperkirkgate. In one of the closes leading back from the last-named, about twelve o'clock one night, he heard a noise at the top, and going up, he turned his "bull's eye" on, to see what the object was, when he discovered—not a burglar—but a Baillie, who, on being "vised," got into a furious passion, demanding his name, which the watchman at once gave; and going straight to the Watch-house, the choleric magistrate accused the officer of inspecting his person. It was in vain that he, the watchman, pleaded his imperative orders. He was suspended, because in the dark he could not distinguish a Baillie from a burglar. The sentence of suspension hung over him for six weeks. He was never dismissed. He appealed to the Watching Committee, and called personally on Treasurer Webster, its Chairman. That worthy man assured him that his case puzzled them all. "But, you see," said the Chairman, "ye're nae dismisst, only suspended, and as we give the superintendent full powers in sic matters, we cannot interfere." Macdonald was at length satisfied that the suspension cord was not meant to have an end, so he had to cut it himself, and seek for other employment. He found that however

just his cause was, he had no chance against the influence of a Baillie.

There are always a number of clauses in special enactments, such, for instance, as the levying of fines upon our merchants, for leaving bales of goods or hurlies opposite their places of business, even for a very short space of time, which, if rigorously carried out, would render the best digested local bill in its administration anything but agreeable, even to its promoters, and would make it almost impossible to live, and carry on business within a police boundary. There was a clause in the Aberdeen Police Bill of 1829 which was bitterly condemned by the carters, and not without reason. By a most ingenious piece of phraseology, while the driver of a vehicle with springs was allowed to sit in or upon such conveyance while driving through the streets, no carter whose cart was not on springs, could do so, however substantial reins he had: just as if a man could not as safely drive a horse and cart without springs, riding on his cart, as the driver of a post-chaise could drive a pair, the former usually walking, while the latter generally went at a smart trot. The carters could never see the justice of compelling them always to walk

and drive, while their brethren of the springs and leather conveyance were allowed to ride ; and I presume, in the present Police and Water Works Bill, the anomaly has been done away with, for I often see carters now, who have not springs to their carts, riding and driving.

It was to me a most irksome and disagreeable duty to report many of these men ; yet, strange as it may appear, we were not only expected, but urged to perform this unpleasant duty.

Mr. Barclay seemed to have a strange idea of the proper functions of a police force in this respect, for often have I heard him say as we left the office for our beats in the morning, "Now, men, we have no cases for court to-day ; see if you can get hold of some bakers or carters."

My idea of what was our proper duty in regulating street traffic or usages was to endeavour, as far as possible, to prevent or suppress what was dangerous to the lieges. It was customary in those days for dealers in horse flesh to turn these out when a buyer wished to see their paces, although this was clearly illegal and dangerous too, as there is no time a spirited animal is more likely to lash out than when he is held in leash and urged by his trainer running alongside. On one occasion, coming

along Harriet Street, I saw a dealer showing off a young horse. I remonstrated, and warned him of the danger and illegality of the act. In fact, I should have done the same thing had I been only a citizen passing, but considered that I was doubly bound as a public officer to do so. I was set upon by the dealer, as well as his brother, who was leading the animal, and abused with their tongues to their hearts' content; and, as there were a good many "coupers" present, I came in for a large share of their expressive expletives. Knowing that they were directly contravening a distinct clause in the Police Act, I went to the office and reported the case to Mr. Weir, who sent another officer with me with instructions to apprehend the man who was running the animal. This, after a tough tussle, we effected; and his brother, the dealer, came down soon after, and bailed him out. Next day, before court time, the horse-dealer and Mr. B. were closeted together. The bail was returned, although this was strictly illegal—there being a special clause enacting that where a party was accused, and bail taken, the party bailed must be taken before a magistrate. I have been thus particular in relating the facts of this case, as it

afterwards formed part of an accusation, quite unknown to me, by two men who accused the superintendent of various acts of malversation of office, and dereliction of duty. There were a good many distinct acts charged, with the particulars of two of which, I was intimately conversant. The first was that above indicated. The principal one, however, and indeed the only one that was investigated, was a charge of unlawfully keeping confined in the cells a young girl, a native of Inverness, for two days and three nights, and having then released and sent her out of town. She had been freely stating among her frail sisters of the *pave* her intimacy with Mr. B., and thereby creating a fama in Justice Street, whereupon William Gilbert apprehended and brought her to the office. That she had just grounds for spreading such a story I never believed; but that she was unlawfully detained for the period mentioned was beyond a doubt, and as she received no subsistence but a couple of rolls and cold water each day, we were both surprised and alarmed for the consequences. One of the two men who became informants and accusers had been dismissed in consequence of a story which had no foundation, and was fabricated by a broker whom we all knew as

a resetter of theft, and about one of the most dangerous of his class in the city; and as the officer was a sober, steady man, we were all chagrined and alarmed at the step taken by our chief. The other had been clerk in the establishment, and although he was not such a favourite with his comrades, he was shrewd and clear-headed, and we also considered him harshly used.

After a few weeks of precognitions, a committee of the legal gentlemen on the Board were appointed to investigate the charges. Messrs. William Gray and Robinson, lawyers, were employed by Mr. Barclay to defend him.

On the night the investigation was to be proceeded with, Gilbert, who should have been the chief witness, was absent at the Stirling Circuit Court. This Mr. B. *exceedingly* regretted, with what sincerity I leave any one to judge, as he knew for certain he would be absent more than three weeks before this, and had the choice of the night for the examination in his own hands. But in addition, the more astute of the two prosecutors was absent, and a few days afterwards, we learned that he had obtained the appointment of Superintendent of the Arbroath Police, through the influence of his Aberdeen friends. Whether

Mr. B. had any hand in it, I cannot assert, but such was generally believed.

A great number of the night-watchmen were in attendance in the muster room, and well for us day-men that they were so. On that night, the most savage row occurred in Broad Street that ever I had a hand in. Pies and porter were then favourite refreshments. Some folks almost made fortunes by that peculiar branch of business. A party, who was a good pastry cook, had opened one of these places in the Guestrow, and a coal carter had gone in for a refresher. Whether he intended from the first to raise a row, I cannot tell, but, upon being asked for payment, he threatened the girl who had served him, and upon her insisting on payment, he first struck her, and then seizing her by the hair, swung her round, and dashed her against the furniture. Some parties in the place at the time came running breathless to the office, when two of the day force started to the rescue. We began to wonder what could keep them so long, when another messenger came in crying for help, saying there was a great crowd in Broad Street, and that they were abusing and overpowering our two men. I seized a baton, winding the leather thong round my wrist, and ran to the



scene. The two officers were hanging on like terriers. Their prisoner was a man above six feet, and built in proportion. The crowd was excited to an awful pitch, and almost without an exception, shouting "Down with the *Bulkies*." As I approached, a cowardly villain was kicking one of them with his feet, and standing behind him too. On seeing me he fled, as cowards generally do, but he had to make his way through the crowd, in doing which he cleared a way for me to pursue. I soon had him fixed, and, with the assistance of another, lodged him safe in *durance*. Sallying out again, we met the officers, their prisoner, and the crowd, not yet past the head of Queen Street, on their way to the Watch-house. There was a young man, a sailor, who made himself very conspicuous on that occasion. He was a native of the Granite City, and had been absent from it upwards of three years, and had returned that very day. Certainly his conduct proved he had not learned to respect order during his sojourn. He was a powerful, dare-devil looking fellow, and many of the constables felt the weight of his blows. He tumbled them like one playing at nine pins, and was rewarded by the ringing cheers of the mob. What aggravated us all was that after we had

secured half-a-dozen of the more violent, as well as the prisoner, the sailor was still at large, and standing in Huxter Row, receiving the ovations of the ragamuffins who had witnessed his prowess in knocking down the police. A lad of the name of McGregor, who was then on the day patrol, took another officer by the arm (he had observed the crowd thinning), and said, "Now, if you'll come with me, we'll capture that sailor, as sure-as he's alive." Three or four of their comrades who were inside the iron gate at the entrance to the Watch-house were apprised, and watched the proceedings. The crowd in Huxter Row stood yelling and hooting at the police, with their faces to the entrance. McGregor and the other slipped out, took a turn down Union Street, then up Broad Street. As they came along Huxter Row, they saw with satisfaction that Jack was at no great distance from the Town-house. Separating, but keeping in line, they rushed upon, and seized each an arm, and by main strength bore him along ere he had time to resist, or his admirers to help. Those of our number inside the gate made a sortie, and the sailor was secured. So tremendous was his muscular power, that it took four men to handcuff him, which we were compelled to do for our own safety. Next day the

whole batch were tried: he who had been the chief cause of the disturbances being sentenced to forty days' imprisonment, and the others to heavy fines. There was a deal of influence brought forward to save our sailor from going to prison, and I believe, but for the great influence of his agent, no fine would have been accepted. I happened to have the unpleasant duty of taking through the carter to the prison, and saw him weighed and measured. He stood six feet four inches, and weighed fourteen stones. That he was not drunk at the time he committed the assault, I can testify, for no man could have resisted as he did, in a state of intoxication. As he was being carried perforce in at the back of the Town-house he upbraided and abused the mob for allowing him to be taken, and swore if he had had a dozen as good as himself they would have leathered the whole of us.

But how in the meantime proceeded the court of enquiry by the committee of the legal members of the Board? These were assembled in a room in the Town-house; and I believe I was the first witness examined. Mr. Fiscal Simpson was President, and the only prosecutor of the complaint was our friend, who had been dismissed by Mr. B., on the

report of the broker before-mentioned. I confess I was rather stunned, when on entering, I observed that Alexander Mackenzie, whom I knew to have been the prime instigator of the charges, was absent.

Mr. Simpson desired me to be seated, and then, addressing the complainer, stated that the Committee had resolved to investigate only the charge as to the illegal imprisonment of the Inverness girl. The prosecutor then asked me if I remembered her apprehension and the alleged cause of it, to which I answered in the affirmative. I was then asked how long she was detained, and had to give an answer inculcating my master. Before doing so, however, I appealed to Mr. Simpson, if it was fair to put me in such a position, pointing out that Mr. B. had it in his power to dismiss me next day without giving any reason. While this was admitted, I was assured that no such action should be taken for my speaking out what I knew to be truth, and on receiving such assurance, I stated the time, as I had a most distinct recollection of all the circumstances. Messrs. Gray and Robinson cross-questioned me hard how I could know that the girl was not liberated and re-apprehended; and as I was not present in the Watch-house during the whole time she was

said to have been detained, how I could possibly know she had not been liberated, and again confined. I got indignant, and I believe in showing that this could not possibly have been the case, from the remarks of all and sundry in the Watch-house as well as the girl herself, I drew upon myself the settled hate of the Superintendent. A good many others were examined, among the rest Mr. Weir, who, I believe, corroborated my testimony. However, next day a paragraph appeared in the public prints, declaring that the Committee found no grounds for the accusation against the Superintendent, and that they hoped the result would ever after be a warning to the Police Board, as to entertaining allegations against a master by servants who had been very properly dismissed, and whose accusations were prompted by private spleen.

I confess I have ever since entertained a strong suspicion of the truth of newspaper paragraphs. The whole affair was a convincing proof to those who, like myself, were behind the scenes, of the intuitive genius of the great dramatist, when he says—

That in the captain's but a cholerick word,  
Which in the soldier is flat blasphemy.

Or perhaps the shrewd common sense of the man-o'-wars-man before the mast, who declared that "he would never be afraid of the sentence, were he to be tried by his own messmates." I have said before, that I never for one moment believed the story which led to the apprehension of the unfortunate lassie; but that she was apprehended and detained illegally for the length of time stated, in the police cells, and was afterwards, by Mr. Barclay's orders, conveyed out of town, with a threat that if ever she returned, she would be again locked up, can yet be proved by three living witnesses.

I have no wish to be severe on Mr. B.'s memory in these reminiscences, but care not to sacrifice truth in the details. I believe he acted from mistaken motives, and, as I have previously indicated, his great failing was a want of moral firmness, and a nervous apprehension of the effect of flying rumours, which it had been much better he had held in contempt. After this night, I found my efficiency as an officer at a discount, it mattered not how steady or active my conduct was. I saw there was a great gulph between us, and shortly after, having obtained the offer of another situation, resigned. The necessity for this step I always regretted, as it entirely lost me

my chance of promotion; and I had the opportunity of seeing not a few who joined the Aberdeen police appointed to situations, both south and north, who, I felt certain, were no better acquainted with the duties of a police officer than myself.

The following may help to confirm the observations of the worthy M.P. for West Aberdeenshire, regarding Mr. Ward Hunt's confidence in the evidence of chief constables relating to the Game Laws:—One day Sheriff Watson met me on the street, and desired me to accompany him to the Watch-house. There was to be on that day an inspection of a ragged school, shortly before opened in Chronicle Lane, and the worthy Sheriff was anxious to know if any of our special acquaintances were among the scholars.

Mr. John Watson and myself went to the review. I think there were only four out of about sixty known to us; but I recollect when we returned there was a long conversation between Mr. Barclay, the sergeant, and myself, regarding the probability of the success of such schemes for the reclamation of young criminals, and that we were unanimous in pronouncing them Utopian!

As I have attempted to sketch the official character of several gentlemen, mostly citizens, it may not

be deemed here inappropriate to attempt a delineation of one, who, although not a citizen of Bon-Accord by birth, was so by residence; and who, by his own exertions, raised himself from a night watchman to the post of Superintendent, which he filled worthily for several years.

In stature he was tall and well built, in gait rather heavy, but active and powerful. He had a large well-developed brain, which, when his head was uncovered, would have led a person to think him rather slow in perception. A closer acquaintance soon proved the opposite. Little did the poor waifs or hardened criminals, with whom his office brought him into contact, think, that under the stern exterior of his aspect there beat a heart as humane, kindly, ay, and one too of as true Christian philanthropy, as ever dwelt in our good city,—but he was not demonstrative. I had the honour and pleasure of his intimate friendship from the time I first joined the establishment, until a few weeks before his death, and was more than seven years in the enjoyment of his much esteemed confidence, ere I discovered the enduring principle of simple faith which was the substratum of his useful and upright life. He was a most inimitable mimic, and had the keenest sense of



humour to be met with; and as many of the scenes and circumstances with which he came daily into contact had a tendency to excite these qualities, his remarks in conversation were no ordinary treat to those to whom he could freely open his mind. I have enjoyed many a hearty laugh at his quaint illustrations. When asking him how he liked his position as *chief*, he would say, "Deed I'm just like the *puddock* when the harrow went over it: I hae owre mony *maisters*." But he would say again, "There is a great difference here besides when you were with us." Any one at all conversant with matters could easily perceive it was so. I would say regarding him,—Praise and peace to his memory. It is but rarely a man so well fitted to fill so responsible a situation obtains it. In regard to Mr. John Watson, the right man was in the right place.

With one more instance of official reminiscence, I intend to finish these rambling details. It is in some particulars not over delicate, but as it has afforded myself and others many a hearty laugh, I think it deserves to be recorded, were it only for its ludicrousness. It happened when what is now Crown Terrace was a barley field—the only house in the locality being that of Lieutenant

Skues. There were no houses nearer it on the east side of Crown Street than those in St. Mary's Place. How Mr. Skues got the rank of Lieutenant I cannot tell. He was by profession and practice a dentist. He had a garden at the back of his house well-filled with fruit trees and berry bushes, and as it was only protected by a paling about five feet high, the boys, about the time of ripening, had a tendency to pay it a visit. This they had done on a Sunday afternoon, when Mr. Skues and family were at church. Next day the proprietor lodged a complaint at the Police-Office, and the following Sunday I was on the alert.

I had just gone along Union Street Bridge as the bells ceased tolling. A close mist was settling on the city from the south. Wending my way pretty sharply, for I felt certain the state of the atmosphere would encourage the pilferers, I passed the front of the dentist's house. The barley had been reaped and carried, and there was nothing but a stubble field to be seen. The foundation of the ancient-looking structure of St. John the Evangelist had not then been thought of. Turning sharply to my right when in line with the gable of the house, I came full in view of about a dozen *nickums*, the one hoisting the other

up to get over the paling. In a moment they were off, helter-skelter. I singled out the biggest I saw among them, and ran him hard. No fox or hare ever doubled better than did my *gamin*. Half-a-dozen times I almost had hold, when he would jerk out below my arm, and off he went at a tangent. At length, being hardly pressed, he made for a hole in the metal railing, which ran along the top of the Terrace, dividing it from College Street, but he miscalculated the leap, and I had him just as he got on the stone wall.

In a moment he was firmly clutched, and screaming with terror. I began, "Now, sir, you're the biggest of the lot, and you need not attempt resistance. I have been badgered and abused about you rascals stealing people's fruit, and I'll take you to the Watch-house, if I should have to carry you in pieces." He gave a howl of horror, and, looking in my face with an expression I shall never forget, exclaimed, "Oh L—d be here, I've f-l-d mysel'!" There was no reason to suspect that he was feigning—both sight and smell corroborated,—and as it was out of the question to think of carrying so disagreeable a cargo such a distance, I decided at once what was the next best thing to do. Throwing him from me, I seized firmly the

cane which I generally carried, and taking care to be close ere he got on his legs, I applied the sapling to his offending posteriors, while he ran howling down Crown Street: nor did I leave off until he was near Dee Village. I never again heard of any more complaints about robbing orchards; and I'll be bound, he who was the subject of the rencounter would never forget it as long as he lived. For aught I know, he may be living still, and may perhaps laugh over this recital.

A keen observer and worthy citizen of the United States, Jacob Abbot, holds that the number of police required to keep order and repress crime in any city or country is a good index of the morality of their inhabitants. If this is a just criterion, I doubt whether Aberdeen can be said to be improving in regard to the morals of the community. Thirty years since, forty-two officials were considered equal to the task; and I observe, by the report of last inspection, ninety-two are now employed for that purpose. I don't think the coming census will show that the population has doubled since that time. I rather doubt the Government subsidy has had a good deal to do with the increase of numbers; and as, in my

humble opinion, our municipal institutions are quite able to manage such affairs—and, moreover, believing that what is saved to our funds in cash, is more than counterbalanced by centralisation of authority, thereby interfering with local self-government,—I think it is very questionable, whether, in availing ourselves of the proffered aid, we have taken a step in the right direction. One thing is certain, we are not *now* in a position materially to reduce our police force ; although, if we are to believe the theories of the advocates of the Permissive Bill, when that measure is carried, we shall be in a fair way to get rid of a large share of the maintenance of such establishments. If the present movement of Good Templarism is to be of a permanent character, we may hope to see a proof of such theories in their practical effects. My own experience as a police officer was that the real causes of crime lay deeper than in the excitement caused by drink. I would in this matter homologate the saying of the “ Old Book,” that the “ love of money is the root of all evil ; ” and that the desire to acquire it at all hazards, specially by those of lazy habits, who will never work to obtain it honestly, is still the bane of society.

In concluding these reminiscences, I may be allowed to remark, that there is not a statement made which, I believe, is not truthful. Most of what is stated came under my own observation; and as every word has been written by my own hand, no embellishment has been resorted to in the narration of facts. I always had, and hope will continue to have, a love for truth; and while I would be one of the first to resent and expose any undue exercise of authority on the part of constables, supreme or subordinate, I yet sympathise with and honour these men, when acting as intelligent guardians of the public weal. No part of the duties I had to perform, gave me so much pleasure as directing a stranger who was at a loss in the city, or the recovering and restoring a lost child to its sorrowing and anxious parents.











