

JOHN DUNCAN: THE ALFORD WEAVER AND BOTANIST.

BY WILLIAM JOLLY, H.M. INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

PART I.

AFTER the Don has gathered its many waters from the great mountains in the west of Aberdeenshire, crowned by the big Ben MacDhui, and has become a full-grown stream, it enters a pleasant expansion of its valley called the Vale of Alford. This wide basin has evidently been the bed of an ancient lake, from which the Don once issued at the narrow and picturesque gorge below Castle Forbes, and which has laid down the materials for its present cultivated beauty. The vale is a broad hollow plain, through which the clear stream of the Don wanders, warmly embosomed by low rounded hills, prettily varied with wood, water, and field; guarded on the east by the curious peak of the fort-crowned Ben-a-chie,* celebrated in song, and looked into, on the west, by the fine cone of the more distant Buck of the Cabrach. It is carefully cultivated to the tops of the enclosing hills, in a way that gives Alford no mean place in Aberdeenshire farming. Altogether, it is a sweet upland strath, surrounded by fine scenery, and a pleasant place of residence.

Leaving the village of Alford at its west end, a country road runs past the parish church amidst its tall trees, crosses a small stream called the Leochel,† which joins the Don a little below, and then runs along its banks, over the hills to Ballater on the Dee. The valley of the Leochel is a little side glen opening on the greater vale below, covered to its crests with sloping fields, and adorned with patches of wood, meadow, and moor. Farms and cottages are scattered over its slopes, generally amidst clumps of ash and plane. It breathes a pleasant pastoral quiet, soothing and sweet, especially as seen on a sunny morning in autumn, the only sounds heard being the voices of cattle and children, or the purling of a brook as it hurries to join the river below.

Four miles from Alford, where some houses stand by the highway, a clump of trees may be observed on the right, almost hiding from view the cottages they protect, which are discovered chiefly by their blue curling smoke. These cottages are known as Droghsburn,‡

from the little stream that drains the hollow in which they stand. They are approached by an unfrequented path skirting the burn, which is almost hidden by tall grass, wild mint, and luxuriant watercress. An upward walk of a quarter of a mile brings you to a garden, enclosed by a dyke and overhung by numerous tall willows and rowan trees. Behind the garden appears a long thatched cottage, with a smaller one beyond, standing amidst the corn. The little glen soon closes in to the left, and a low hill rises behind, crowned with broom and whin. The cottages thus nestle in a tranquil little nook, in solitary but pleasant seclusion, away from the great world without, overarched by the blue sky, clasped by the friendly hills, and turned to the sunny south, the very home and nursing-place of a lover of nature and flowers.

The first door in the larger cottage is the entrance to the house of an aged ditcher and his wife and family, a second opens on a weaver's workshop, and a third leads into a byre with the crofter's cows. The merry sound of the shuttle guides us to the subject of this history. Entering by the low doorway, beneath which you must stoop, you find yourself in a little room completely occupied by two looms, a wheel, a winding machine, and a few boxes near the door. It is very dimly lighted by three small windows, obscured by the dust of the loom and the webs of busy spiders, here visibly at home. The room opens right to the sloping roof, except near the door, where some deals are laid across the rafters.

Seated at the loom at the back, close by a window which throws the bright sunlight on the weaver and his work, and only dimly seen through the numberless cords of the loom, you perceive a little man busy with his noisy but lively occupation. He looks very old, and well he may, for he has entered his eighty-fourth year. His head is uncovered, and we can see that it is not yet bald—the hair, only a little mixed with grey, falling from the crown right round the head, and hanging over the brow. The head, larger than common, is a good one, showing the projecting brows of the keen observer, the broad forehead of the thinker, and the lofty crown that betokens kindness and piety.

* The name means in Gaelic, it seems, the Mountain of the Pap, from its fine peaked shape.

† Pronounced "Loch'el."

‡ Pronounced "Drochs'-burn."

The face is somewhat wrinkled but composed; scarcely, however, so tranquil and quiescent as that of an aged lover of flowers should be; evidently furrowed with toil, indicating a hard struggle with life, if not lined with sorrow. The firm features and wiry frame prove him a man of strong nervous temperament, keen and active, full of the vigour and will that commands success, as well as the quiet shrewdness and humour of the Scotch peasant; while the deep-set eyes, their colour hidden by the brows, look as if they could see much where most would see nothing. That is John Duncan, man-made Weaver, and God-made Botanist.

For many years, I had wished to see him; I had heard so much about him that was remarkable, from an early companion of his, and fellow-student of the flowers. Though too long prevented from gratifying my wish, in September last I saw the Vale of Alford for the first time. In company with Mr. Bell, the minister of Keig, on its northern slope, a botanist and entomologist, and another clergyman from Galloway, I paid John the long-desired visit. My friend had called on him twice before, and was greatly interested in the old man. I was quite unknown to him, even by name, and my coming was altogether unexpected. On account of his sensitive reserve, the minister and myself only entered the workshop. Seated at his loom in the streaming sunlight, behind the gauzy screen of threads and strings, and busy with the shuttle as it made its merry music, the lonely old man, all unconscious of our entry, was a picturesque sight, and would have made a pretty composition in lights and shadows. That one glance fulfilled the wish of years, and raised the liveliest anticipations.

Finding his way with some difficulty up the narrow passage between the looms and the winding-wheels, the minister advanced towards the old man, gave him friendly greeting, and introduced me as one who had come a long distance to see him. John at once ceased his weaving, and replied to the minister with evident pleasure, speaking in the broadest of Scotch. The presence of a stranger seemed to cause a shyness, as he turned to say that he was glad to see me; but the mention of his friend, Charles Black, through whom I had known him, at once stirred a pleasure that appeared in the brighter smile, and the lighting up of the countenance and eye. That name had evidently struck a deep chord and wakened distant memories, for he was silent and ab-

sorbed for a little; but the reserve was at once, and for all, dispelled. We soon got into active conversation, as I told him of Charles and his many stories of their past lives, and my own long wish to see a man so great a student of plants, and so dear to one I so much esteemed.

After talking for some time, he returned to his loom, according to his custom it seemed, to reflect in silence on what he had heard. He worked slowly but with great regularity, his eye watching the progress of the web and scanning the threads, to notice any defects as it grew under his hands. Old as he was, he was "gleg* o' the e'e," as he said, and seemed to miss nothing; for, all at once, he caught a break in the warp, leant forward over the beam, put his head and arms through the cords, and tied the thread with smartness and success. His hands were withered and wrinkled, the fingers bent, and the joints knotted and thick, with long tying of threads and digging of plants. It was astonishing, for a man above eighty, how well he did that trying work.

By-and-by the third visitor was introduced. His entrance seemed for a little to cause a return of John's constitutional reserve, for he shortly turned again to his web. Pointing to the "pirm"† wheel, which stood opposite the loom where he was employed, I asked, "Who fills your 'pirns' for you, John?"

"Ou, I do't mysel'," said he, with some surprise at the question.

"Dear me!" said I, for it is not usual for the weaver to do this work. "Is there no woman to do this for you?"

"Na, na," replied he—"no' for mony a year." His wife had died thirty years ago. "Besides, I dinna need their help and I manage awa' brawly mysel'; so that I am independent o' them: and I like to be independent," said the little man, and his voice and look told this better than words.

"And do you wind you own warp too?" continued I.

"Ay, ay," returned he briskly, "I do the hale thing mysel', frae beginnin' to end. I get the spun threed frae the women that employ me, that's a'; and frae that I manage a' the lave wi' my ain hands, till it's made into claith, and sent hame ready for use. Ye see, sir," he went on, "when I becam' a weiver, I made up my min' to be ane, and to maister the hale subject, and I did it; and tho' I say 't mysel', fyow cu'd beat me." There the old man revealed the stuff that had carried him

* Quick-sighted and keen; applied to any of the senses, but chiefly to sight.

† The small reel on which the thread to be used in the shuttle is wound.

through a hard life, and the thorny difficulties of a science more bristling with trying terminology than any other.

As we were pushed for time, we expressed a wish to see his collection of plants. John rose with alacrity. When he stood up, he appeared exceedingly round-shouldered and bent, the effect of years and the much stooping required by his work. He was unusually short, being little more than four feet and a half in height, though of course taller in his stronger youth. He was clad in moleskin trousers and a vest with sleeves, without a coat, at least while at work, and with a coloured napkin loosely tied round his neck. He wore the usual small leather apron of the weaver.

In the end of the room near the door stood several boxes and chests, and parts of old looms, and on the top of these lay a mass of papers and some books. These papers contained dried plants. They were sadly covered with dust and "stoor," and had evidently not been moved for some time. It was sad to see them. The whole would form a large herbarium, and his friend, Charles Black, has told me that John once possessed altogether as good a collection of native plants as he knew. But there they were, the slow and laborious gathering of years, representing the long and hard study and numberless wanderings of keenest enthusiasm, covered with dust, dirty, and moth-eaten, and so much dilapidated as to be almost valueless. The plants were contained in rough home-made volumes of foolscap size, of white and brown paper, newspapers being greatly used, his poverty not allowing him to purchase better. I opened several of the volumes, while we all looked on. The plants were laid down, in the usual manner, on the front of each page, but they had been much disturbed, and showed sadly the extensive ravages of moths. When I crushed some of these destroyers with an expression of annoyance, he remarked, "Weel, weel, it's a pity, but I canna keep them clean noo, as I ance did. But," added he, with a smile, "they were ance livin', the pair things," referring to the plants, "and they're livin' agen, you see!"

But they could scarcely have been other than wasted, even in better circumstances for preservation, for many of these plants must have been gathered by him forty years before. I was so saddened and disappointed at the sight of what I had looked forward to see, with such anticipations, as a rare and valuable collection, that I could not continue the

inspection, and asked if these were all; hoping that they were but duplicates and waste specimens and that the best were still to come.

Key in hand, he opened one of the chests close by the door and revealed a more cheering sight, a large number of books in very good condition. The under side of the lid of the chest was ornamented with coloured pictures and printed matter, evidently pasted there to brighten the box and increase his pleasure when he opened it. Turning over several of the books, at which we casually glanced, he produced two parcels carefully wrapped up in paper and tied with string. One of them contained a good and pretty large collection of the grasses, in a book well bound in canvas and interleaved with blotting paper. The plants were fastened to each page by cross strips of paper, with all the care of a practised hand, and duly inscribed with their technical names. The whole volume was neat, clean, and carefully preserved, and the plants were classed according to order and species. The other parcel comprised the general wild plants of the neighbourhood, not however scientifically arranged, but pressed with like care and neatness. These volumes had been prepared for a Horticultural Show held some years before at Alford, at which the prizes, offered for the best collection of the wild plants and grasses of the district, had been gained by John. Our praise of these collections raised the old man's spirits, somewhat depressed, as ours had been, at the state of the other plants. New animation seemed to inspire him, and his face wore a brighter and more youthful expression, that was pleasant to see. Poor old man! Alone there in that little room for more than twenty years in his advanced age, with very few to visit him at all, and fewer still to appreciate his singular scientific pursuits, toiling at unknown work, little understood or mis-interpreted by his neighbours, who generally regarded him as a curiosity as strange as his specimens, uncheered by scientific sympathy, widowed and childless—the presence of sympathetic spirits, students of his favourite subject, and the praise of admiring eyes, were like waters in the waste to the thirsty wanderer. His care of these finer plants was very great. Though I turned them over with all tenderness, he could not restrain himself from nervously saying more than once, "Tak' care o' them noo; see ye dinna hort them!" as he bent keenly over me, while I turned the leaves.

"But that's no a'," he said, after we had

finished looking at these books. He then lifted some other volumes from the chest, till he came to a larger parcel, which he delivered into my hands, with animated countenance, saying, "Look there noo, and see what's in that!"

I unloosed the string that bound it, unwrapped the paper, and found a similar string and wrapper inside. This I untied and uncovered, and again a third string and wrapper appeared. Once more untying and unfolding, I only exposed a similar protection within.



"Dear me, John!" we all exclaimed, "what have you here? Is it your silver plate, or a grand presentation, or what is it?"

"Ou, just gang on," replied John, "and ye'll ken in due time!"

He evidently enjoyed the lengthened process of revealing the mystery, and chuckled

to himself with a growing humorous glee. God bless the dear old man, and send him abundance of such innocent joy!

After the fifth cord and wrapper had been removed, there was revealed—a book! It was manifestly a favourite with John, and must enclose something better and rarer than

we had yet seen. And it did. It was a collection of the Cryptogamia of the district, the obscure mosses and their allies, one of the hardest sections of the botanical field for any one, however expert and skilful, to decipher. Yet here they were, preserved and named! The grasses, as every botanical student knows, are hard enough, and John showed his courage in attempting them; but the mosses!

As our Galloway friend remarked, the book was certainly well named Cryptogamia, for it was hidden fold within fold, and buried under many a tome, deep down in the bottom of a box! John enjoyed the joke with evident relish, and still more our spontaneous and unrestrained expressions of surprise, when we opened the book and saw what it contained.

The plants had been carefully pressed and neatly fastened on and named; and they were carefully covered and scented with camphor,

to preserve them from those enemies of the naturalist, the moths. The precious volume was sympathetically examined and then closed, as carefully hidden in its multitudinous wrappings, and then restored to its old hiding-place in the bottom of the chest.

Our time had now expired, and leaving John to put away the books again, we bade him good-night, in the door of his combined dwelling and workshop. But the old man would not permit us to depart thus, and, with the true feeling of the worthy host and gentleman, conducted us, bareheaded as he was, to the gate at the bottom of the field that leads up to the house; and, cordially shaking hands with us all, and thanking us for the visit, which he said he had enjoyed, he bade us good-night. We drove home delighted and impressed with the old weaver, charmed and rebuked by his remarkable enthusiasm and lifelong labours in science, amidst poverty and solitude.

DIVINE SORROW.

BY A. W. THOROLD, D.D., LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.

CHRIST'S sufferings are pre-eminently the sufferings of His Passion—not of course His only sufferings. For in a real sense His entire life, though it had its deep undercurrents of ineffable joy in doing the will and revealing the Name of His Father, was one long trial. The "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," in enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, suffered daily. Nor, again, are they the only sufferings that have an atoning value. Christ's work cannot be halved like that. From the hour of His Supernatural Conception to the moment of His expiring upon the Cross, He was making reconciliation for sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. But in view of the fact that man's sin and Satan's malice had their supreme climax upon the Cross, the Divine Love, made perfect in the offering of His innocent soul, had its perfect consummation and entire manifestation there. Three times does St. Peter refer to "the sufferings of Christ" as if absolutely possessed with their one meaning and value; twice elsewhere does he remind us that He suffered the just for the unjust, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness.

In proposing to my readers to meditate on these sufferings, I ask every one to re-

member that we are on Holy ground, and every one to ask God to prepare him for treading on it. Any great sorrow, for a heart with but an atom of humanity in it, is a solemn and touching spectacle. But the sorrow of an innocent spirit, suffering unjustly, and because of its innocence, is as elevating as it is rare; when it is also the sorrow of one Who loves us, and Who suffers because He loves us, and in order that we may love Him—there is no moral force like it in the world. But, to behold God in pain—God suffering on behalf of His sinful creatures, that they may become reconciled to Him—is just one of those mysteries which only the Word of God can reveal, and the Spirit of God press home.

Two thoughts on this subject may suffice us for the present: 1. The nature of His sufferings, or what it is He suffered. 2. The cause of His sufferings, or why their anguish was so great.

Now the Eastern Church, as some of us will remember, separates the Lord's sufferings into the known and unknown. It may be more definitely edifying for us, if we distinguish them as bodily and spiritual. As to His bodily sufferings, those who would read for themselves the most graphic and detailed history of the physical woe of the Passion, that the pen of a scholar, the imagination of

thereby you resemble and understand and enjoy and magnify Him; and out of your own glory there comes also more to your Lord: is not this a reason for taking into your trembling lips something of the prayer that Jesus took into His? Well, there are three chief things that will affect our glory—suffering, knowledge, and sacrifice. Suffering, according to His will, and in fellowship with Him; knowledge, through the teaching of His Spirit, for it is eternal life to know Him, and the more we study Him here, the more we shall resemble Him there—“changed from glory into glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord;” sacrifice, out of love that adores Him, and surrenders all for Him, content with more of Himself as our best reward,—“Thou shalt have treasure in Heaven—follow me.”

Finally, cultivate the assurance of it as your true safeguard against sin, your best antidote for that corroding and enfeebling earthliness that taints and degrades us all, your sweetest consolation for those who have gone before and now sleep in Him, your

loftiest encouragement to work and wait till He returns.

Christ is risen; and He has gone to prepare a home for us. Oh, let us not live as if our life here had no end to it; let us not plot and plan, dig and build, hoard and enjoy, as if there were no inheritance laid up for us in heaven.

Christ is risen; and those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him, radiant in the bloom of an immortal youth, glowing with the freshness of a Divine perfection, loving us better than ever, because themselves utterly saturated with the dear love of God.

Christ is risen; and He is coming back. Let us “work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh, when no man can work.” Just wages, glad welcome, full harvest, rich glory, will He have for His servants, when He comes to reckon with them. Look to it, look to it, that you are His servants; both seeking His favour, and walking in His light, and expecting His return, and then,—“when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

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PART II.

IT will be well, before returning to Droghda, briefly to narrate John Duncan's life.

He was born on the 24th of December, 1794, of poor parents, in Stonehaven, the county town of Kincardine. Not far off are the grand old ruins of Dunottar, on the old sea-cliff, with its interesting history and Covenanting memories. As a boy, he was small but active and athletic, and used to climb in through the windows of the old castle and spend many an hour there, alone or with companions, “rinnin' roond aboot,” as he said, “like a cat.” He received the little education he ever got, in a neighbouring school, but that was very small, as is still shown by the rude, though clear and creditable, style of his writing. He was early sent to work, and became a country weaver, which he has remained ever since. He married early in life, and had a son and two daughters. His children married, but they are all dead. His wife died more than thirty years ago, and he has lived a solitary life ever since, supporting himself by the small gains of his daily toil; and, though devoted

to out-door pursuits, has never failed to work for his bread. He was always fond of flowers; as he says, “I aye liket the bonnie things.” When a boy, he used to gather them along the beautiful green cliffs and braes of the old red conglomerate coast of the Mearns, which are covered with a rich and varied flora containing many sea-side species, which brighten the rocks, and scent the air with a fragrance ever remembered by those who have been privileged to range about these natural wilds, in childhood and youth. Though thus always fond of plants, he did not begin their scientific study till, in 1835, he made the acquaintance of his friend Charles Black, and caught from him the enthusiasm for such natural pursuits, which has been the sunshine of his life.

Charles Black is a remarkable man, with high natural endowments, of sterling worth, and great individuality of character—an excellent botanist, knowing intimately all our native plants; a good geologist, possessing a large gathering of fossils, and intelligently versed in the literature of Geology and its far-reaching problems; a capital ornithologist,

knowing all our native birds by plumage, flight, cry, and egg, and having an almost perfect collection of British eggs; a fair numismatist, with a remarkable collection of coins, home and foreign, ancient and modern, for a working man; an insatiable reader, especially in natural science and theology: in short, an ardent lover and student of beasts and birds and insects and plants, and not less of mankind.

In making the acquaintance of Charles Black, John Duncan came under the influence of a nature stronger than his own, and capable of moving him greatly and permanently for good. His affection for Charles is one of his strongest feelings, and remains to him now, in his solitariness, a perennial fountain of pure delight. I never mentioned Charles's name, but the old man's heart welled up into the moisture of the eye, and the thrill and even falter of the voice, which revealed depths of genuine affection. Though Charles was some twenty years younger than John, the two men entered into a covenant of friendship, of the diviner type, that has survived undimmed into old age.

Charles was a gardener, which pleasant æsthetic occupation, after a varied experience in many scenes, he still follows. He has been settled down, for many years, away beyond Dumfries, on the shores of the Solway, in sight of the mountains of Cumberland, while John has remained in the district where they first met. Both of them have numberless reminiscences of their long and happy intercourse in these earlier days, especially Charles; and, no doubt, had I known John sooner, before age had told on him as it has done, he would have been equally full of these old memories. For the old man delights to recall these pleasant times, and to tell stories about them, which he does with relish, humour, and picturesque detail, and with no little dramatic power; though now, in his old age, he may be too long-winded, perhaps, for the uninterested or unsympathetic.

John was introduced to Charles Black by letter from a mutual friend. He had already studied plants, but only for their practical uses as "herbs" for medical purposes, guided by Culpepper's "Herbal." At their first interview, Charles asked him if he knew any of the plants. John replied that he knew "most of the herbs," and could go out just then and lay his hand on them. Charles told him that he "had a surer way of finding them out" than by Culpepper's pictures, by help of Botany. That was John's first intro-

duction to the science. John eagerly inquired if he had a book to guide him in the work. Charles said he had, and asked if he would like to be shown the way to use it. John expressed his willingness; and there and then he began the study, which was to be the labour of his leisure and the sweetener and solace of his life, amidst not a few heavy sorrows.

They worked with ardour and success, made many a long excursion, climbed the hills round the Vale of Alford in search of plants, and gradually extended their knowledge of the subject.

The greatest difficulty with these poor and ardent students was, to obtain the requisite text-books for advancing in the subject and identifying the specimens when found; for "Hooker" was for them at a ransom price, being in two volumes, at something like a guinea a volume. One of John's stories of that period gives a vivid glimpse of the straits and shifts to which enthusiasm will be reduced, in pursuit of an object.

In the neighbourhood of Whitehouse, near Alford, where John and Charles at that time lived, a small public-house was kept by a worthy man, whose son had recently died of consumption, in the flower of his youth. This young man had been a gardener, evidently above the average of his class, and had, like themselves, entered on the scientific study of Botany. One of his employers, a gentleman in the district, observing his tendencies and wishing to assist him in such laudable and unusual pursuits, had generously presented him with both of Hooker's volumes. These and others of his books his father valued as mementos of his dead son, and he kept them carefully locked up in a drawer. If the two bookless students could only gain access to these precious works! The father would not lend them from fear of losing them, and John and Charles used to go to that tavern, and, over a gill of whisky, purchased for the good of the house, and as a kind of return for the kindness shown them, as well as, no doubt, for their own entertainment after the labours of the day, they got a look of the books as long and as often as they wished. And many a sixpence was spent, many a long and ardent hour passed, by the two men, poring over these hidden treasures of botanical lore.

Some time after this, the tavern-keeper and family removed to the colonies, and, for some reason, all his books were sold. John was at the sale, to watch the fate of the two memorable books, and, if possible, to rescue them from unappreciative hands; and they were

knocked down to him for the large sum of one shilling! So that each volume brought the price of one of the costly libations they used to pour to Bacchus—or shall we not rather say to Flora or Minerva?—to obtain a sight of them!

Having his time, as a home weaver, greatly in his own hands, John was able to command more leisure than Charles, who, as a servant, had his daily work to do, with the fewest of holidays, especially in those days. At every available opportunity, however, the two botanized together; but John took longer and wider excursions, and made increasing discoveries, which delighted both of them. Professor Dickie,* late professor of Botany in Aberdeen, about that time published a catalogue of plants found within a radius of fifteen miles of that city. Guided by this, John began a more systematic examination of the country, commencing with the coastline, which he then examined from Belhelvie, north of Aberdeen, to Portlethen, south of it; going up the Dee, by the Loch of Drum, to Tarland; conquering the Valley of the Don, up to near its source at Corgarf Castle, where he obtained one of his earliest finds of the plants unknown on the lower grounds, the *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, or cranberry, which he brought home in triumph, announcing the discovery to Charles in an odd "transmogrification" of the strange-looking name.

Charles's liking for Botany and John Duncan grew so great that, as he has told me, John "became as it were part of himself," and if he did not come up every evening, when at home, he felt a blank in the day; for they lived then only about a quarter of a mile distant. As Charles has often said of himself, he loved John "like a very brither." Whatever plants were found, whether in company or by John alone in his longer journeys during the summer, were pressed and kept in Charles's house; for they wisely used the summer chiefly for gathering plants. Then, during the long and happy winter nights, the two set themselves to discover them, with all the vigorous enthusiasm born of love for the plants and for each other; John being so eager that, winter as it was, he threw off his coat and shoes when the examination began, and worked in his shirt-sleeves and bare stockings! So very eager were these two students that, as Charles has told me, often did the dawn surprise them at

their pleasant labours. At that time, Charles did the chief part of the work of examination and arrangement, while John put them neatly in paper according to their classes. As Charles tells, "deftly did he do it," using the clean-washed floor to lay them on, the table being occupied by Charles.

Often, while thus occupied, they were so devotedly absorbed in the work that hours would pass without a single word being exchanged between them; as Charles says, "our heads and hearts were too full!" And who that has engaged, especially with a dear friend, in the same delightful work, among the plants they have gathered during the day, has not known the charms of like enthusiasm, and cannot vividly recall many a delightful hour so spent, as amongst the happiest of his life?

Would that such pursuits were commoner than they are among our people! Few things would do more to raise the intelligence and moral tone of the country, and save the memory many a blot, and the conscience many a pang. What an influence might not our schools exercise in kindling a love of science, and such employment of leisure! They have it in their power, and it is to be hoped that they will gradually rise to their high possibilities.

John's delight in returning to Charles after a more distant ramble with his bundle of treasures was something beautiful, as Charles has told me, his joy bursting out at the moment of meeting in some characteristic exclamation. He would then produce his specimens in succession, naming them not unfrequently (especially in his earlier efforts) by wonderful transformations of the technical terms, that raised many a merry laugh, and recounting, in humorous detail, the adventures he had had in search of them.

Many of John's experiences in his botanical rambles were entertaining and humorous, and exhibited his native shrewdness and keen appreciation of the ludicrous; but these it would be too long to tell in the present rapid sketch.

John was slow, it seems, but sure; and, through his ceaseless activity, soon gained a good knowledge and a practical mastery of the science. The Vale of Alford, Charles Black tells me, is very good for plants, though it contains nothing very rare. Ben-a-chie is also good in its lower reaches; on the higher they both found the *Rubus chamaemorus*, the cloud-berry or mountain strawberry, a rather uncommon sub-alpine plant, with a pale, large, luscious fruit—the only rare one they

* Author of a capital work, the "Flora of Aberdeen, Banff, and Kincardine," a pattern of what a local Flora ought to be in plan and exhaustiveness, and in generous acknowledgment of obligations.

ever found on it. That mountain was to them both, as Charles often says, "what Lochnagar was to Byron," and they often wandered over its slopes in search of plants. They had, therefore, round them a very good field for study, in a charming country.

Having to pursue the science at that time altogether unaided and alone, the difficulties they had frequently to encounter, in trying to decipher some of the more difficult and peculiar species, were very great, increased, of course, by the want of the microscope and other appliances of the more favoured botanical student. It took them two whole years, for instance, to discover the Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), which the unbotanical reader should understand is no grass at all, but a plant with a beautiful large white flower, which forms a sub-order by itself, and one that is very difficult for young botanists to make out. Charles Black found it out one wet Sunday, after long renewed examination; and the plant carries to both of them, independently of its great beauty, a certain delightful charm, which only those can understand who have tasted the like joy of discovery, after long-protracted search.

Charles removed to different parts of the country more or less distant, but they had frequent happy meetings, when they compared notes and helped each other onwards in the more advanced and thorny portions of their studies. These meetings were a special pleasure to the one who, remaining behind, had fewer opportunities of seeing the world. John used to look forward to them with keenest anticipation, for the pleasures of friendship, the pursuit of Botany, and the knowledge of things, his mental appetite being unusually strong and omnivorous. As he said, in speaking of these reunions, "Ah, man, Charlie was awfu' fine at telling stories, when he cam' hame!" And he was right, for Charles Black has a gift in that way, and he had "mony a fairlie" to tell about; for had he not been away in Edinburgh and seen the world south of the "Cairn-o'-Munt"?* Meantime John remained at home, winning his bread at the weaver's beam, and gradually perfecting his knowledge of the flora of the district. Having by-and-by greatly accomplished this, he was seized with a strong desire to know more of the botany of Scotland, and to see more of its scenery and the world. But how was this to be accomplished?

* The Cairn-of-Mount, a hill in the Grampians, over which a carriage-road passes between Banchory and Fettercairn, in Kincardine, then the great highway from Upper Dee and Don-side to the south.

He had a house and family to provide for by Don-side, and his employers were round him at home. He could not, therefore, wander about like an unmarried man, taking employment where he could find it. What was to be done, for the thirst was strong upon him? The plan he took was simple and successful. The cutting of grain in harvest was then performed almost altogether by the sickle, though the scythe was also used; for Bell had not yet dreamt of his wonderful reaping-machine, in the quiet manse at Carmyllie, which has caused such a revolution in old country habits and ways of work. It was then customary for many persons to go to different parts of the country, and hire themselves as harvesters for the season, returning at the beginning of winter, with improved health and a heavier purse, which helped to pay the rent and provide some of the milder luxuries. John determined to "gae to the hairst"* in various parts of the country. In this way, by selecting a different place every year, he traversed the greater part of Scotland, winning a needed penny, gaining health, seeing the country, increasing his knowledge of men and things, and gradually conquering, in detail, the botany of his native land. By this means, he has visited most places between Banff and the Border, on to Glasgow in the west. He has never been into Ayr or Galloway, or into the Highlands west of Banffshire, which was his utmost limit to the north. He visited Edinburgh—a memorable thing, for there he saw the beautiful capital, and Charles, who was then employed in the Botanical Gardens, and the students working under the Professor of Botany; and there he made acquaintance with many new and rare plants, and the grand vegetation of the tropics. During these yearly visits to different regions, the main object was the pursuit of his favourite science, the love of which continued steadily to grow with the food it fed on and his increasing grasp of its principles and technicalities. Many were the adventures he had in his search for plants, and curious the company he had often to associate with. These he delighted, like a wandering sailor from foreign parts, to recount to his wondering friends by the quiet Don.

Every year, when the snow began to powder Ben-a-chie, he would return home with a happy burden of dried specimens. He also brought some of the rarer living plants, which he used to place in suitable spots near his house. He thus not only gradually perfected

* To go to the harvest.

his herbarium, but gathered round him pleasant mementos of his wanderings, in the plants carried from far, which he tended with religious care.

In this way, by unwearied study of the plants wherever he went, and of the numerous books he continued to get on the science itself—for he now possesses a remarkable collection of works on Botany, purchased with his own hard-earned savings—he gradually acquired an extensive knowledge of the science, and of the flora of Scotland. He has also been successful in discovering some of the rarer plants of the country.* John has, however, not discovered any of our very rarest species, because he has never visited the higher mountains where only these are found. All his rarer specimens are sub-alpine.

Though little understood by his neighbours, and inclined himself to a quiet, retired life, John has had some youthful disciples, whom he imbued with a love for the science, and whose studies he assisted; but these were only from his immediate neighbourhood. When John and I were in the ditcher's house with whom John boards, and he deprecated, as is sometimes his wont, any such influence over others, the good-wife broke out, "Noo, John, I maun tell on ye; ye hae had

* The following may be mentioned, furnished to me by the Rev. Thomas Bell of Keig, after looking over John's broken specimens:—The *Pyrola secunda* and *rotundifolia* (the serrate, and the round-leaved, winter green), both uncommon varieties; *Linnaea borealis* (the two-flowered Linnaea), a rare and pretty plant which bears the name of the great botanist; *Goodyera repens* (the creeping Goodyera), named after an English botanist, and not very common; *Listera cordata* (the heart-leaved twayblade), to which another botanist has given name; *Vaccinium vitis-Idæa* and *uliginosum* (the cowberry, and the great bilberry); *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (the red bearberry); *Genista Anglica* (the needle whin). It is now impossible to make a complete list of the plants found by John Duncan.

scholars, and a wheen o' them. There was my ain son-in-law, noo in Aberdeen, and that clever loon doon the road there, noo a grand teacher awa in England, wha baith mony a day used to come to you wi' their bit floors and girses;* and mony a lauch I hae hain at ye a', as ye stud at the door there, in the gloaming, looking at the unco' things, and gabbin' ower them to nae end!"

The students from Aberdeen in their botanical excursions used sometimes to call on John, and he has led them, on occasions, to the spots where the rarer species grew. But "puir fallows," said he, "they cu'd na stand my walkin' at a'; they had ower thin boots. I was aye a grand walker. But fat cu'd you expect frae thae young loons?"

John knew and used to visit Professor Dickie, the Professor of Botany at Aberdeen, when he had found a new or rarer plant, and the professor, who seems to have appreciated the old man's enthusiasm and knowledge, asked John to visit him when in town, and often invited him to tea; though he never called on him at Droghsburn.

But so little known is the old man even in his own district, that I met an intelligent schoolmaster, and a merchant in large business, long located in the Vale of Alford, neither of whom had ever heard of him!

Thus for more than forty years in the neighbourhood of Alford, and for some twenty-five years in his present house, John Duncan has lived, a country weaver, and student of Botany, with quiet unobtrusiveness, known only to a few friends and acquaintances, solitary but contented.

* Flowers and grasses.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST.

By PROFESSOR CANDLISH, D.D.

IN his farewell discourses with his disciples before His death, our Lord gave them for their encouragement and consolation many great and precious promises; and as the seal and pledge of them all he pointed to that very death that He was about to endure, and that caused their grief and dismay. When they came to understand its meaning, that laying down of His life would be to them the strongest proof of the depth and tenderness of His love and of the close union of friendship between Him and them. The greatness of love is seen by what it moves him who feels it to do for those who are its objects. If there is no need or room

for doing anything for the loved ones, there can be no manifestation of the greatness of the love. But in general love will find something to do or to give; where it is in truth it will also be in deed, and not in word or tongue only (1 John iii. 18). Thus, in proportion to the greatness and costliness of what love does, is it seen to be great. To bestow a small gift or do a trifling service that costs but little, is of itself but a slight display of love; to give a large and costly boon shows proportionally more; and when one spends time, labour, money for another he gives a greater proof of love than by the most valuable gift that costs him little; still

JOHN DUNCAN: THE ALFORD WEAVER AND BOTANIST.

BY WILLIAM JOLLY, H.M. INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS.

III.

ON the day following our united visit, I made my way alone once more to Droghsburn. The weather was fine, the Leochel flowed down its quiet valley in the bright sun-light amidst the ripening corn, and the retired nook, with its willows and rowans, where John lives seemed more removed from the outer world than before. I found the old man outside, in his own little plot, bare-headed and bent, but bright and healthy. In front of his own door, he has a small part of the larger garden belonging to the croft railed off for his own use. There he grows chiefly native wild plants, which he has gathered, and which he likes to look after when he comes out of doors for a rest from toil; nothing cheers and restores him like the flowers. The dike enclosing it was crested with Honeysuckle in bright blossom and sweetest scent, and the Woody Nightshade, with its lurid flower, was prominent above the rest. John gave me cordial welcome and a warm shake of the hand, and seemed in excellent but quiet spirits. After some remarks on the plants, we entered his house, and seating ourselves opposite each other, between the two looms, we chatted on many things for a long time. He sat with his back to the window, through which the sun-beams streamed and prettily touched his head and eager, intelligent face. He was brighter and more communicative than on the previous day. My relations with his old friend, Charles Black, had evidently opened to me his silent heart, and I enjoyed the glow created by memory and friendship.

Seated there, he told me, in considerable detail, amongst other things, the story of Linnæus, suggested by some subject we had mentioned, characterizing him as "a grand chiel,"* "an awfu' clever man," "wha had to fecht his wey up frae naething, for they were to mak' him a shoemaker!"

Like most old Scotchmen of any individuality or humour, John speaks capital Scotch; of course, the broad Aberdeen or Kincardine doric, but very recherché and fine, with the flavour of youth and early memories round it. His expressions are generally picturesque, and sometimes poetical; as, when crossing a

little burn, he wished me to notice "hoo bonnily the watter trinkled!" and when referring to the disastrous years, 1816 and 1817, when the harvest was not taken in till November, he characterized 1818, which had superabundant plenty, as "rinnin ower!"

"Did he not feel lonely, thus living by himself, his family gone, and Charles so far away?"

"Na," said he, "only noos and nans.* Ye see I hae my noospaper, for I aye get that, and my books; and there's aye the bonnie floors to look at. Na, na! I'm no lanely!"

"Did he never become tired, working so hard, now that he was getting old?"

"Some," said he. "But then I just rise and gang about a bit, and oot to the gairden for a wee. And a body, ye ken, maun just fa' till 't agen!"† continued he, with cheerful practical philosophy; "but I aye likit to wirk."

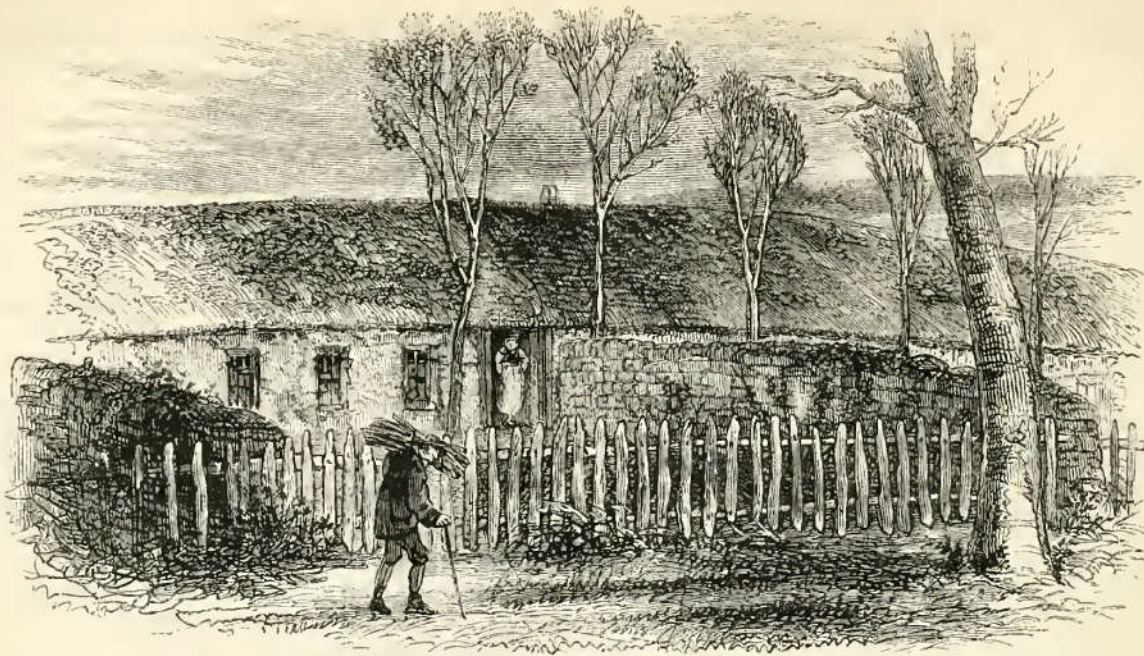
"How was he able to learn and to remember the great Latin and Greek words that Botany is so full of?" For he almost always uses the technical name of a plant, with the ease of long habit.

"Ow, ye see," he explained, "I had aye a gude memory. But when I got a noo plant and fund oot its naim, I used to write it doon on a bit paiper, and lay it on the wab afore me, as I was wirkin', to glance at it noo and nan, and say it ower to mysel', without disturbing my wark. I hae seen a gude lot o' thae words lyin' afore me, at the same time, on my loom. And then when I took a walk, I wu'd tak' them oot o' my pooch, and lairn them as I gaed along. But it was na very muckle trouble, for I had a guid memory; and I was aye usin' them, ye see!"

John's use of these technical terms is not a mere effort of memory without knowledge, for he knows the meanings of a large number of them, and had bought Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary, to get at these! A man like John is too intelligent to talk by mere note. For instance, speaking of the Woody Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*), he knew that *dulcamara* meant the same as its English name, Bittersweet, and said that *Solanum* had something to do "wi' makkin' you sleep." But

* Or "chield," a young man; often used with endearment. Pronounced "cheel" or "cheeld." The same word, likely, as the English "Childe," as in "Childe Harold." It occurs frequently in the old ballads.

* "Nows and thens," the English "now and then."
† Fall to it, that is, to work, again.



John Duncan's Cottage.

here he mistook one of the effects of the poisonous properties of the species for the etymology—which, however, is doubtful, a likely connection with the Latin *solor*, to “console” or “solace,” being suggested. Then he spoke of the uses God makes of the poisons in the world, in diseases and otherwise, and how the most useful of plants, the potato, belongs to this most dangerous order of the Deadly Nightshade. All which shows that John’s knowledge of plants is real, practical, and interesting, and not confined to mere technical barrenness. As an additional proof of this also, he has studied largely the medical properties of plants—a favourite pursuit of old intelligent country people—and he possesses several books on Medical Botany, such as a very fine octavo copy of “Culpeper’s Herbal,” by Sir John Hall, M.D., and other works. When we passed the Fig-wort (*Scrophularia aquatica*) that day, he told me of how he had cured himself of a very painful affection, by means of a decoction of this plant and the common field dock, saying with grateful energy, “Man, it wrocht like a chairm! Widna the doctors hae made a fine job o’ me?”

His memory is certainly unusually good, if not remarkable. He has in no case written down the dates or localities at which he discovered his plants—a great loss in regard to the rarer ones—and when asked why he had not done so, he said, “I didna need; I ken brawly far they a’ cam’ frae!” And certainly he recalls the times and places with wonderful readiness, and, no doubt, cor-

rectly; and, more than that, he can give the circumstances under which most of the plants were discovered, and any special experiences he had in obtaining them. Indeed, this is one very good means of getting at John’s past life, which he can now give chiefly by way of reminiscences suggested by his plants. Each one has become to him the centre of many happy, humorous, or hard memories; and thus, dry and dead and broken as they are, in their worm-eaten receptacles, they are all living to him, and are surrounded by him with the sunshine and the shower of his past life. In taking a walk with him, you have merely to direct his attention to the plants you pass, and you at once open springs of living memory, which flow without stint from the old man’s heart. In this way, his past life is now greatly linked with the wild flowers, and a stranger can get at his history mainly through their companionship.

Like all old men who have had a varied experience, John frequently illustrates and clenches what he has to say with an anecdote, or an apt Scotch proverb or sentiment—a fine old custom now greatly obsolete. What wealth of “proverbial philosophy,” the achieved wisdom of life and history, not unfrequently bursts from the experience of an old man or woman who has lived to some purpose—real gold, that as far surpasses much modern tinsel as it is ancient, wise, and pregnant!

We thus sat talking on many subjects, seated between the looms, while the bright sun was shining outside. I wished much to

get him out into the field, that I might see more of his habits and let the flowers do their office of suggestion, and I proposed that we should take a walk. He was ready at once to go, and was evidently willing to devote the day to me, as certainly I was to him. He rose, put on his bonnet, a small blue Glengarry, and, shutting the door of his dwelling, staff in hand, he led the way up the hill behind the house. He walked at a smart pace, with short steps, leaning far forward on his staff, which was put down on the ground at every step, being evidently required to support him. The way was rough, there being no proper path except the field or dike side; but he would not accept assistance even in difficult places, as when climbing the dike, getting over fences, or pushing through the tall broom on the steep hillside. "Na, na, I dinna need ony help, sir, thank you. I can manage awa' fine." Yet tottering as he seems, his steps, though short, are firm and smart, and he moves onwards at a considerable pace.

He led me first to a quarry of twisted Silurian slate, here largely developed, for, in the valley of the Leochel, we are west of the granite upheaval of Alford and Ben-a-chie. We then ascended to one of the pre-historic cairns, so common in the north, regarding which he gave the usual legend. Rising through wet bog and tall broom and whin, which completely hid us from view, John led manfully upwards, though it evidently was hard on him. He would, nevertheless, move on alone, earnestly believing to the last in "a stout heart to a stey brae,"* as he had always done in more things than in hill-climbing. The Grass of Parnassus, one of the very prettiest of our wild flowers, catching his eye, as it grew in the wet places of the hill, he called on me to look at "that bonnie snaw-white floorie!" in a tone of truest appreciation, as well as in words of correct description. When shown by me the backward movement of the sensitive stamens of the Rock Rose (*Helianthemum vulgare*), after the base of the style has been titillated, which, strangely, was new to him, and which is certainly very striking, he exclaimed, in child-like wonder, "Ay, man, ay, so it does! The creytur has sense!" He had only seen the green-house sensitive *Mimosæ*, and was not aware that we had any British sensitives, such as this one and the Barberry. He was exceedingly taken with the phenomenon, and frequently repeated to himself, "Ay, man, ay! ay, ay!" as if pondering over it.

* A steep brae or hillside. Brae is from Gaelic

We climbed at length to "the croon o' the hill," where he wished me to see "the gran' view." It certainly commanded a splendid prospect, looking down, on the one side, on the fine Vale of Alford, with Ben-a-chie at its extremity; and, on the other, away to the south, over a sea of rounded rolling hills, like heaving waves on a calm day in mid-ocean, the taller peaks of the Grampians rising beyond, still adorned with gleaming patches of snow, and surmounted by the fine top of Lochnagar. We rested there for some time, enjoying the far-stretching scene and the warm sunshine. He talked fluently, the various plants and places and features of the hills and landscape affording him abundant topics for remark, and I exceedingly enjoyed his interesting communications and picturesque speech.

That little saunter with the old man revealed him more than ever, and I enjoyed it immensely. I was delighted to see him out in the field, under the blue sky and amidst the plants he had loved so long and so well. He must have been a pleasant and instructive companion in his younger days, when mind and body were full of vigour and enthusiasm.

We wandered slowly down the hill again to the cottage, and entered the ditcher's house. The father was absent on his laborious toil; but the mother was there, a striking-looking old dame, with abundant traces in face and figure of the tall, handsome, and good-looking woman of earlier life, though now bent with rheumatism and needing a staff. The house is kept sweetly clean, both "but and ben,"* by the youngest daughter, a growing, pretty girl, active and bright-smiling, who bids fair to reproduce her mother's youth.

We sat in the cheerful kitchen chatting for some time with the vigorous old lady, who is a splendid talker in first-rate vernacular, while the young housekeeper prepared a meal for us in the best room. They had lived beside John for some fifteen years, so that she knew him well and all his ways. She told me that the last year had made "a terrible odds" on John, and that he was not like the same man now, as if natural decay were rapidly beginning to tell on him. She was greatly impressed with the man, respected his ability and knowledge, and spoke strongly in his favour, even when he himself deprecated praise. She was sorry I had not seen

* In the kitchen and best room, for there are but two rooms in such cottages. The words are derived from "be-out" and "be-in," the better apartment being reckoned the inmost one or sanctuary.

and known him in his more vigorous years. At length, John and I retired to the other room, where a homely but substantial meal was neatly laid down on a snowy cloth, consisting chiefly of the home produce of the field and the byre. We did full justice to the fare, after our appetising walk, seasoning our rustic meal with "smooth discourse and joyous thought."

Having finished, we entered once more his own room, to go over his books, which I wished much to see, and which he was justly proud to show; for they are numerous and good and in very good condition. He keeps the most of them in his chest, preserved from the ravages of moths and like lovers of literature, by little bags of camphor, which soon filled the place with a pleasant odour. In these books, we see far into John's tastes and studies, and obtain a glimpse of the work of his life, which will do us good service in estimating the man.

The larger portion of his books are, as might be expected, connected with his favourite science, and they are surprisingly numerous for a poor man, especially when we consider that, with a few exceptions, they had been bought by himself. They amount in all to some thirty volumes of different kinds, including some of the more costly technical works, as well as those of a more popular nature, and a few on Medical Botany, many of them now rare and out of date, but interesting as his early guides in the science.

Next to Botany, like the true Scotchman he is, theology was his chief study. In this subject, he had taken a warm and intelligent interest, for, like most of our older countrymen, he is constitutionally religious. He entered keenly into the religious struggles of '43, which issued in the Disruption and the formation of the Free Church. He possesses and has of course read the "Ten Years' Conflict," which gives the story of this remarkable religious contest. Sympathizing with the dissentients, he joined the Free Church, to which he is still warmly attached, and in which he holds the dignity of deacon. His religious books include, "Matthew Henry's Bible," "Brown's Dictionary," "Stackhouse's History of the Bible," "Cassell's Biblical Educator," "The Plants and Trees of Scripture," thus applying his science to the interpretation of the Sacred Book; and others.

Like a true Scotchman, also, especially one born and brought up within sight of Dunottar Castle with its "Whigs' Dungeon," where the Covenanters were immured and suffered so much for their faith, he shares the universal Scotch enthusiasm—at least in the

uncontaminated country—for the "strong stout hearts of the Covenanting men:" a grand element in Scottish history, which has, perhaps, done more than aught else to nourish high-souled independence and religious fervour in the country. John has, of course, the books that contain the story of that period, once found in every cottage in the land, the "Scots Worthies," a fine large copy, and the "Cloud of Witnesses." And he would be no Scot, at least no Scot of the good old type, who did not possess the "History of Scotland," which John has in two large volumes.

His determination to get at the bottom of things, and to have a real knowledge of the subjects he has studied, and the words he uses, is still further proved by his possession of the English dictionary of "N. Bailey *Φιλόλογος*," a capital old work, unique in its time, and still well worth having, which must have been of special value to John with its derivations and "explications" of all scientific, technical, and legal terms; as also by Ainsworth's Latin dictionary, and the other works, already named, for the interpretation of the Bible. But John could not even work his loom without knowing all about it, and he gets "Murphy on Weaving."

His appetite for general knowledge, as already said, is keen and active, and as supplying healthy food for this, he has Chambers' "Information for the People," a whole library in itself, and the "Dictionary of Daily Wants."

He had also a great wish to study Geology, to interpret the rocks, amidst which his plants grew, and the constant sight of which, in their close relations to these favourites, was a continual challenge to his intelligence and an attraction to his desire of intellectual acquisition: he therefore began the study of the subject, and made a collection of the rocks of the district, but he was reluctantly obliged to abandon it, for he "had naeboddy to gie him a lift wi't;" and Geology is a science requiring above most, especially in its earlier stages, like music, the assistance of a master, in the practical work of the field and the identification of the rocks.

But the stars above him, which looked down on him nightly, and often cheered him homewards, when late and tired with his long rambles, appealed to him to know them with their bright speaking eyes; and he studied Astronomy, and stranger still, that curious phase of it, which their distant silence and mystery created in the youth of the world—Astrology, of which he possesses a Manual.

The living creatures that fill the earth and are fed by its plants, he could not be ignorant of, and he gets "Charles Knight's Natural History," a large and very good book. He does not seem, however, to have followed his friend, Charles Black, in the study of the birds at all; at least, he has no work on Ornithology, though doubtless he possesses a more than common knowledge of their names and charming ways. He was presented with a copy of "The Common Seaweeds," but never had an opportunity, as a man, of studying that branch of Botany, having lived far inland since he took to science, and since he used to range as a thoughtless boy along the sea-cliffs near Dunottar.

These books show an unusual range of reading and study, as well as remarkable thoroughness, not only in his special science, but in all he took in hand to do. They abundantly prove that their possessor is a man of large intelligence, and strong religious aspirations, who wishes to interpret the world in which he moves, and to know its relations to the universal and eternal.

While he puts back his library into its place, let us look a little more minutely round this little room, which is his domestic world, and see how he lives here. The whole space of the floor is occupied with the various apparatus required for his trade, except a small part near the door, which is filled with his chests and boxes. Yet this room contains the whole of his dwelling-place, and here he spends his days and nights, except when he goes next door for his meals. Where is his sleeping-room? Here also. Close by the door will be observed a short home-made ladder, leaning on the wall. Looking upwards, we see some planks laid across the couples of the roof at this end of the room, the rest being open to the rafters and the thatch. These boards form a kind of small room, supporting his bed, to which the ladder leads up. That is John's bedroom. Its roof is the thatch, and it is entirely without light, except what comes from the room below, which is sufficient for his purpose, for he went up the ladder several times for things he wished to show me. That is all and nothing more.

Here, then, within these four low narrow walls, covered with thatch and lighted by these three dim windows, we have the whole of John's interior domain, his home, forming at once his workshop, tool house, dwelling place, and sleeping room, as well as his library, study, and museum; and here he has lived and read, and studied and laboured, for some twenty-five years—poor, but contented,

yea, happy—a workman, a student, a thinker, and an honest man! Is it not blessedly true, that our happiness is bounded not by our possessions, but by our desires, and that our life depends, not on what we have, but on what we wish to have? Are we not reminded, by these meagre furnishings and narrow bounds and the reigning contentment, of the hut of the old slave philosopher, at Nicopolis, with its straw pallet and its one lamp? Ah, yes, the secret lies within, in cultivating the "internals," as good Epicurus wisely tells us, and putting "externals" in their due place and rank; and in possessing some of that highest alchemy which turns all it touches into gold, and by which "all great souls still make their own content!"

The day had passed with a strange speed to me, and as evening was now drawing near and I had a long way to return, I was reluctantly obliged to propose to go. He accompanied me, staff in hand, down the burn that sung its even-song beneath the cress and scented mint, and along the highway some distance towards Alford. The sunshine was warm and bright, and the quiet valley of the Leochel was filled with a calm sunset light, as we walked on together, pursuing the pleasant talk that had given the day such delight to me and happiness to him. I told him how I had enjoyed the time I had spent with him, how it had realised a happiness I had looked forward to for years, and how, seeing he looked so well, I hoped, ere long, again to visit him at Droghsburn, before he passed to his long home. I told him that I should tell his friend Charles of my visit, and all I had seen and heard. This visibly affected him, and touched a chord that trembled on his lip, and gave a pearly brightness to his eye. He assured me that he had enjoyed the day and would remember it, for he now had few to visit him, and fewer to understand and sympathize with him; and he sent his best remembrances and many messages to Charles. We shook hands warmly and parted. As the old man moved back to solitary contentment, I could not refrain from watching with some emotion his retreating form, a little crooked casket that enclosed no common soul, seen, it might be, for the last time. As I slowly made my way to the house of my friend, the sinking sun and sweet waning light induced quiet meditation on the experiences of these two days, mingled with thoughts on the strange web of human life and destiny, the beautiful compensations in every lot, the power we have to make or mar our own happiness, and the blissfulness of higher pursuits.