CHAPTER VII.

THE SCOTT MONUMENT AT EDINBURGH.

In the memoirs of my excellent friend, Mr. Adam Black, twice Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and for many years member of Parliament for the city, which were published in 1885, and edited by Dr. Alexander Nicholson, it is stated, in reference to the monument to the memory of Sir Walter Scott, erected in Princes Street in 1846, which forms one of the most beautiful ornaments of a beautiful city, that a committee had been formed many years previously, "had raised large subscriptions, which were not sufficient to complete the monument; *and that a second committee was formed, consisting of tradesmen, who succeeded in raising among this one class a sufficient sum for the purpose.*"

This is an unpardonable mis-statement. It imputes to the tradesmen of Edinburgh a liberality which, if they had indulged in, would have been highly creditable to their appreciation of

the literary genius of their illustrious fellow-citizen, and would have been a natural and in every way becoming expression of their gratitude to the man whose fame had attracted to their city so many thousands of admiring tourists and visitors from every part of the world, to pay homage at his shrine, and to spend money among them by so doing. The "tradesmen" may have possibly formed themselves into a committee, with the praiseworthy design of raising funds for the completion of the monument; but if they did so, a fact, if it were a fact, of which I have never heard until I saw it stated in Dr. Nicholson's memoir of Mr. Adam Black, they certainly failed in their object, and did little or nothing towards its fulfilment.

In the year 1844, as I have elsewhere fully recorded, with full particulars,* and documentary evidence, I was applied to by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Bart., to form a committee in London for the purpose of aiding the lagging and dilatory exertions of the Edinburgh people, who were either too poor, too niggardly, and too ungrateful, or who had been too inefficiently appealed to to do their duty in this respect. I succeeded in forming a London Committee, composed of some of the

* *Forty Years' Recollections of Life, Literature and Politics*, 2 vols. 8vo. Published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, London, 1877.

highest and most influential and most liberal members of the aristocracy, together with the most eminent literary men of the time. The sum of £3,000 was needed for the completion of the shrine; and, as the greater portion of the members of the committee which I succeeded in forming had previously subscribed, and were not all inclined to subscribe a second time, except in a few instances, the subscription was not a brilliant success, and produced less than £300 of the £3,000 required. Under the circumstances, an idea, first broached by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, and warmly taken up by me as Honorary Secretary of the Fund, was communicated to the Hon. C. A. Murray, one of the most zealous members of the London Committee, who then held a high office in Her Majesty's Household. I asked that gentleman, should he approve of the project, to use his influence at Court, to procure the patronage of the Queen and Prince Albert for a grand Waverley Ball at Willis's Rooms; a fancy ball, in which every dancer was to represent a character in the poems and romances of the illustrious author. The Prince acceded readily to the request. The ball was the great event of the fashionable London season of 1844, and was held on the 8th of July. It was, in all respects, a brilliant success, and produced a clear sum of £1,100, after payment of all expenses, or nearly four

times as much as the subscriptions of the poet's admirers.

There was thus a deficiency still left of £1,600; but whether, under the circumstances, the Edinburgh "tradesmen" put their shoulders to the wheel, to raise the money, which the hotel-keepers of the Northern Metropolis might well have spared out of the profits which had flowed into their coffers from the pockets of the crowd of pilgrims attracted annually to the city by Sir Walter's fame, I never heard or knew. I only know for certain that more than a quarter of a century afterwards, in 1878, the monument being still uncompleted, I was again appealed to from Edinburgh to form a London Committee to solicit subscriptions. I formed the Committee, which, under my guidance, as its chairman, refused to ask for a single subscription, but took the necessary measures to secure the patronage of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales for a second Waverley Ball, and, if possible, his personal presence at the festival. The Committee was successful in its endeavours: the Prince consented as readily as his royal father had previously done, but only stipulated, as a matter of personal comfort to himself and all the ladies and gentleman who might attend, that the number of tickets of admission should be limited to six hundred, so as to prevent any inconvenient pressure of the crowd. The condition was perforce

acceded to, and the otherwise possible amount of the proceeds was confined to the handsome, but relatively moderate, sum of £600.

The city and citizens of Edinburgh do not show to advantage in their appreciation of the genius of the most illustrious man who was ever born and resided among them. They may plead that they and their fathers have been too poor to render adequate homage to the great departed, and the plea might possibly be allowed, if it were not known that they spent fifteen thousand pounds in bon-fires, illuminations, junketings, and other forms of popular rejoicing, on the occasion of the marriage of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to the Princess of Denmark; but that they were never willing to find fifteen hundred pounds, or one half of that sum, towards the Scott monument. Even on the occasion of the celebration of the centenary of his birth in 1871, Edinburgh did nothing but institute a beggarly banquet, consisting of plum-cake and inferior sherry, to all who chose to pay the price for those indigestible dainties. About twelve hundred people assembled in a large hall to listen to long speeches which were inaudible to two-thirds of them. For a Prince of Wales, £15,000! For a Prince of Literature, nothing! Such is the record of the beautiful city of Edinburgh! Auld Reekie! all smoke and no flame!

It has always been a mystery to me why Walter

Scott stands so low in the estimation of the present race of Scotsmen all over the world, and why Robert Burns, a greatly inferior genius, stands so high. Is it because the majority of the Scotch people are so ultra-democratic that they cannot forgive Scott for being an aristocrat; and that they almost worship Burns because he was born and nurtured and died in poverty, because he was an ultra-plebeian, earning his scanty and precarious bread by the sweat of his brow? Or do the multitude, in all countries, love their heroes all the more because of their conspicuous human frailties, and have nothing but cold respect for the great men who are only virtuous and respectable? The popularity of King David among the Jews, and Charles II. among the English, may be accounted for on this principle.

> Passez, passez, monarques debonnaires,
> Le peuple perdra votre nom!

as Auguste Barbier sings in his beautiful *Iambes*. Perhaps Sir Walter Scott might have taken a deeper root in the hearts of his countrymen, if he had been less exemplary than he was in all the relations of life; and if he had had failings that leaned more or less to virtue's side, like those of Robert Burns. But, as the French poet already quoted sang in 1831,—

> La popularité est la grande impudique,

and its secrets are inscrutable.

Inverness and Ross-shire.

In the year 1844 my cousin, Mr. James Matheson, being then member for the small English borough of Ashburton, aspired to represent the county of Ross. The principal Liberal newspaper in the Highlands at this time was the *Inverness Courier*, edited by my excellent and accomplished friend, Mr. Robert Carruthers, who endeavoured to steer a middle course between the Conservatives and the Liberals, with a more or less decided leaning to the Liberals. His faint-hearted policy had the usual result of displeasing both sides.

> In moderation placing all his glory,
> The Tories called him Whig, the Whigs a Tory.

Mr. Matheson, in common with many other members of the Liberal Party in Ross-shire, being discontented with the often lukewarm and always uncertain support of this *Courier*, determined to establish a journal of more decided opinions, to be published at Dingwall; and applied to me, to know if I would undertake the editorship. The invitation reached me about the time when I usually took my annual holiday in the Highlands, so that I had the opportunity, of which I availed myself, of making personal investigations before I finally decided. The change from busy London, the world's metropolis, the centre of English lite-

rature, politics, and society, to a remote town, or rather village, in the wilds of Ross-shire, was too great and momentous in its probable effects upon my future career to be rashly undertaken, however agreeable and advantageous it might at first sight appear. It, therefore, behoved me, as the Scotch say, to "gang cannie," or, as the English would say, to "walk warily." Among the gentlemen more particularly interested in the project, in addition to Mr. Matheson, were Sir George Mackenzie, of Coul, Baronet, Mr. Mackenzie, of Muirton, and Mr. Hugh Innes Cameron, of Dingwall, all leading Liberals in Ross-shire, who had undertaken to raise the money for the purpose, and with each of whom it was advisable, if not absolutely necessary, that I should confer.

On leaving London for my holiday, I proceeded to Edinburgh, where I learned that Sir George Mackenzie was in *villegiatura*, at North Berwick, a bathing-place at the foot of Berwick Law, on the coast of the Firth of Forth, about twenty miles distant.

As no time was to be lost, I endeavoured to secure a place in the stage coach then run by Croll and Co., from their office in Princes Street, opposite the Register Office, the only public conveyance available, and learned, to my great disappointment, that every place, outside and inside, was bespoken for three days; and that there

might occur in the interval. I thought of walking this distance, passing through Portobello, Mussulburgh, Preston Pans, and a pleasant country within sight of the sea for the whole distance; but, on second thoughts, and in order to save time, resolved to hire a one-horse vehicle from Mr. Croll's establishment, and drive myself to my destination. It was a dangerous thing for me to attempt: I was unskilled in the management of a horse, and had never driven a vehicle before. However, on the assurance that the horse was the most docile of animals, knew every inch of the road, and that I need give myself neither trouble nor anxiety, I was emboldened to make my first, and, during many subsequent years, my last, attempt as a charioteer. As all is well that ends well, my foolhardy venture turned out successfully, much to the surprise and amusement of Sir George Mackenzie, when he learned from my own lips how inexperienced I was. Giving me hearty and hospitable welcome, he augured well of my courage, though not of my prudence, and wished I might get back again to Edinburgh as safely as I had come.

I found Sir George an able and accomplished man, but more of a philosopher and a scientist than a politician; a sound and consistent Liberal,

but not a very zealous one, for age had somewhat impaired his youthful ardour, or diverted what remained of it into quieter channels than those of party warfare. He was kind enough to suggest, in my interest, that I should not only be the Editor of a provincial journal, of which the salary would not be equal to what he was pleased to call my deserts, but that a place should be found for me which would give me rank as well as emolument in the county; though what the place was to be he did not tell me, nor did he perhaps know. He was quite willing to take a considerable share in the new journal. He thought, however, that the greatest amount of capital ought to come out of the pockets of Mr. Matheson, the millionaire, in whose political and personal interest the journal was to be established and maintained.

On the night of my visit, Sir George was far less interested in political and literary questions than in a chemical invention which he had lately completed, by which he hoped that the nuisance to careful housewives, resulting from the accidental spilling of ink on their dresses and personal finery, or on their table and other linen, would be wholly prevented. He had succeeded in manufacturing an ink, for which he had taken out a patent, which was wholly colourless, and would not stain any textile fabric on which it might be thrown, or leave the slightest mark on the fingers of the daintiest

lady who wrote a love-letter with it. It was only when brought into contact with paper specially prepared to receive it that the colourless ink became black as jet and remained indelible. But whether Sir George had not taken the proper means to acquaint the public with the advantages of his delicate preparation, or, having done so, whether the public, obstinately conservative in the matter of ink, preferred the old method to the new one, or loved to see that its ink was black before it dipped its pen into the inkstand, the fact remained that the pretty invention of Sir George was a commercial failure, that the stationers did not and would not keep it in stock, and that customers never asked for it.

Having received all the information to be ob-obtained from Sir George Mackenzie with regard to the Ross-shire paper, and the probability of its steady and effective support by the Liberal party in the county, and learning that Mr. Mackenzie of Muirton and Mr. Hugh Innes Cameron were both in Inverness, I proceeded to that town, where I had many friends, with the intention of making it my head-quarters during the remainder of my investigations, and the possible negotiations that might result. My oldest and best friend in Inverness was Mr. Carruthers, of the *Courier*, whose interests might or might not be affected by the establishment of a rival in Dingwall; but as he was sure to hear

of the project from other sources, I thought it the more friendly course to tell him myself what the Liberals of Ross-shire intended, and the offers which they had made me. I found that Mr. Carruthers, as I expected he would be, was more or less annoyed at the proposal—perhaps more so than he allowed to appear—but that he treated it like a philosopher and a man of the world, and came to the sensible conclusion that, if opposition were to be met, he would meet it bravely, and that, after all, there might be room in the Highlands of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire for two Liberal journals.

I found Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Cameron favourably, though not enthusiastically, disposed, but more inclined to depend than I thought they were justified in doing upon the support of Mr. Matheson, whose objects were non-commercial and exclusively personal and political. While I was in uncertainty—but far more inclined to accept than to reject the offer, and come to terms about the remuneration I might expect if I gave up a valuable and influential position on the *Morning Chronicle* for a precarious one on a yet unborn journal—I received, through an Edinburgh friend and relative, the late Mr. John Alexander Mackay, of Blackcastle, information that the editorship of an established Liberal paper, published twice a week in the great city of Glasgow, would be

vacant in a month, and that the proprietors, admiring the principles and talent of the *Morning Chronicle*, were about to apply to the conductors of that journal to recommend one of their *alumni* for the office, if one fully competent could be found to accept it. The newspaper in question was the *Glasgow Argus*, whose editor, a Mr. Lang (who had succeeded Mr. Thornton Hunt, the son of Leigh Hunt), had so mismanaged it and impaired its usefulness by his unwise and persistent advocacy of mesmerism and animal magnetism, and his neglect of politics, as to have greatly reduced its circulation and to have injured its reputation. The prospect thus suddenly opened out was more attractive than that afforded by the Ross-shire speculation. To edit a bi-weekly newspaper, with no night-work, would be a sensible relief from the sub-editorship of a daily paper with night-work imperative during six nights. A life in a bustling, active, and growing city like Glasgow was far preferable in most respects to that of a life in a small and almost stagnant town in the remote Highlands of Scotland. And to a lover of grand scenery such as I was, Glasgow, being within an hour's journey by steam down the Clyde, from the beautiful lakes and mountains of Dumbarton and Argyllshire, offered the double advantages of pleasant society for my needs and delightful solitude for my pleasures, whenever I desired either.

On due reflection, I resolved to become a candidate for the *Glasgow Argus*; and, as the candidature might not be successful, though my prospects were highly favourable, I kept the negotiations with the Ross-shire people in abeyance, resolving at the same time to see Mr. Matheson, if opportunity allowed, and I could make it convenient to visit him in Stornoway. Meanwhile I remained in Inverness for my holiday, and visited, not for the first time, all the magnificent scenery of the environs—the falls of Kilmorack the "Dream" or "Druim" of Beauly, the lovely burn of Moniack, in the grounds of Mr. J. B. Fraser, the well-known author of the *Kuzzilbash* and other novels, the battle-field of Culloden, and Culloden House, the seat of a branch of the great clan of Forbes; Kilravock Castle, the seat of my maternal ancestors, the Roses of Kilravock, who had settled there in the thirteenth century, and who were popularly known as "Barons of Kilravock," though they were and are still untitled; and Cawdor Castle, the very ancient and picturesque abode of the Earls and former Thanes of Cawdor, of whom Macbeth, according to Shakspeare, was one. This old castle interested me exceedingly, presenting as it does, without modern change of any kind, except in the private apartments of the family, the furniture and ornamentation of a long bygone era. I was particularly interested in a white

marble chimney-piece, bearing date in the year 1510, with many sculptured figures, among others that of a monkey smoking a short pipe. This, if a genuine work of the time, as it no doubt is, as the wing of the castle in which it is placed was erected that year, proves that, although Sir Walter Raleigh, as history and tradition agree in asserting, first introduced tobacco into Europe in 1585, he did not introduce the practice of smoking, which, on this testimony, must have been known, if it were not common, three-quarters of a century before. What was the weed or herb which people smoked before they became acquainted with American tobacco, is not known, and perhaps never will be.

Inverness at this time was noted for the convivial hospitality of its principal inhabitants, and the conviviality, if not the hospitality, extended to the lowest grades of the people. This trait of manner was by no means peculiar to Inverness, but was the characteristic of society in all the great towns and cities of Scotland, as I can testify from my personal experience of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The consumption of whisky, whether neat in the shape of drams, or diluted with cold water, when it is called "grog," or with hot water, mixed with sugar, when it is called toddy, was large in Inverness, as, in fact, it was in every part of Scotland, and as it continues to this day, though with

somewhat abated and diminished intensity. During my stay in Inverness, I was told of a venerable old gentleman named Fraser (the clan Fraser is so numerous in this part of the Highlands, that the public mention of his name will not lift the veil from his exact identity), who for fifty years of his life, and up to the age of ninety, had daily drunk ten tumblers of hot whisky toddy. This regular and methodical old person died at last of intemperance, at the age of ninety-one or ninety-two, according to the testimony of the sober people of Inverness. Transgressing the bounds of temperance, which he had fixed for himself at ten tumblers *per diem*, he was rash enough on some joyous anniversary to indulge in eleven. The extra tumbler sealed his doom. Outraged nature exacted the penalty of his excess, and he was found dead in his bed the following morning after what sober people called his shameful debauch. The moral drawn by the temperate Invernessians from the unhappy story of poor old Fraser was that it was unwise and might be fatal to any man to overpass the limit that experience had prescribed, and to recklessly forget the fate of that proverbial pitcher that went too often to the well and got broken at last.

Another story, of a somewhat later date, with respect to whisky-drinking has been related of Inverness. The late eminent and universally respected philanthropist, the Earl of Shaftesbury,

in his visit to the town, was waited upon by the worthy Provost, a distiller, who from respect for his high character, and his knowledge of the enlightened interest which he took in every social question that affected the welfare of the people, though it his duty to do the honours of the place, and escort him over the most noteworthy localities and buildings, not forgetting the Workhouse, the Prison, the Lunatic Asylum, and all the other evidences of a high civilisation. During the course of their peregrinations, they were met by one of the Provost's partners in business, who, not knowing who Lord Shaftesbury was, took the liberty of stopping the Provost and asking if he were not coming to the Distillery during the day, as a matter had arisen which required his presence. Lord Shaftesbury's quick ear caught the sound of the word "distillery," and, as soon as the interlocutor had taken his leave, asked the Provost, "Do I understand, Mr. Provost, that you are a distiller?"

"Oh yes," replied the worthy magistrate, "I am a distiller, and our firm, I may add, is noted for producing the best whisky in the Highlands, if not in all Scotland. Will your lordship not come to my office and tak a pree o't (take a taste of it)?"

"Heaven forbid!" said his lordship, with a face of horror, "that a drop of such detestable liquor should ever pass my lips."

"Detestable liquor!" echoed the greatly surprised Provost.

"Yes!" reiterated the earnest philanthropist. "It poisons the bodies and ruins the souls of men."

The Provost, who had never heard whisky spoken of in such terms before, could not for some time find words to reply to so fierce and unexpected a denunciation, took breath at last, and remembering that Lord Shaftesbury was, or was reputed to be, an earnest teetotaler, said mildly: "I grant your Lordship that, taken in excess, whisky is bad, both for the body and the soul; but taken in moderation, it is a blessing, just as bread is, or beef, or any other gift of God to mankind. But intemperance in anything is a curse! And in truth, anyhow, I am as great a friend to temperance as your Lordship."

"Temperance!" said Lord Shaftesbury; "and what, Mr. Provost, is your idea of temperance, and what do you call a temperate man?"

"A temperate man, according to my notions, my Lord, is a douce, cannie, honest, respectable father of a family, who takes his six tumblers and an eke, every night, in the bosom of his family; but I hate intemperance!"

It should be added, for the benefit of those English-speaking people unacquainted with Scottish phraseology, that an "eke" signifies an extra glass, and that a very common appeal to a parting

guest, by a convivially-minded host, is to say to him, "Tak an eke, man, tak an eke!" passing the whisky-bottle to him at the same time; an invitation which is by no means invariably refused.

While at Inverness, I received an intimation from the legal gentleman in charge of the negotiations regarding the *Argus*, that he would be glad to see me in Glasgow, and I took my departure next day for that city.

GLASGOW, 1844–1847.

The terms offered to me on the part of the proprietors of the *Argus* were satisfactory; not so much on pecuniary grounds, for the emoluments were not greater than those I derived from the *Morning Chronicle*, but on those of more abundant leisure, greater freedom of action, easier work, and, more especially, the non-necessity of sitting up nearly all night for six nights in the week, or even for one night, unless I were disposed to do so. So the requisite documents were soon signed, and I had nothing further to do than to return to London, take leave of my kind friend John Black, the proprietors of the *Chronicle*, and my immediate colleagues in the editorial department, and break up my small establishment in the capital, and transfer myself and my belongings from the first to the second city in the Empire.

I had not been long in Glasgow before I discovered that theology sat like an incubus upon the intellect of the citizens, high and low, or the great majority of them, and injuriously affected the interest they took either in politics or literature. Glasgow was socially a plutocracy, intellectually a theocracy. No aristocracy of rank or talent existed within it, unless in the pulpit. A powerful minority chafed, it is true, under the infliction of the sacerdotal tyranny, and of this minority I was speedily made aware that I was expected to be the mouthpiece, in as far as I could become so without touching upon ecclesiastical polemics. I had, however, a wide field in the advocacy of Liberal politics, and if the Glasgowegians of the Liberal party took more interest in sermons than in leading articles, it was my duty, while leaving the pulpit alone, to make the press as powerful as I could in the exercise of its own vocation, acting as if I thought that there was room enough for both.

At the first dinner party to which I was invited by one of the rich leading citizens, I was asked by the hostess, a very handsome and agreeable young woman, next to whom I sat, if I had heard any of the principal preachers of the city. It so happened that the only preacher I had heard was the Rev. Dr. King, not in his pulpit but on the platform, where he had delivered a speech in denunciation of the Corn Laws. I replied that I thought

my questioner seemed to glow with satisfaction, as she remarked quickly, unaware alike of the *suppressio vera* and the *suggestio falsi* of my Jesuitical answer, "I am *so* glad you like Dr. King! *I* sit under Dr. King!" And she forthwith invited me also to sit under him, or, in other words, to become one of his congregation, which, however, I never did.

On another occasion, at another dinner party, got up especially to introduce me to some of the leading spirits among the Liberals, the one clergyman present, noted for his more than usual enmity to the Roman Catholic Church, even in a country where all the clergy were not only professionally but personally hostile to the Pope and all Papal doctrine and pretensions, said, in a loud and dictatorial voice, over his toddy, "Thanks be to God, we have no Pope in Glasgow." Without pausing to reflect on the possible offence which I might give, I suddenly ejaculated, "No Pope! why, you have a Pope in every parish!" I had no sooner uttered the words than I thought how reckless I had been, and would have recalled them had it been possible to do so, but was restored to equanimity, if not to satisfaction with myself, by a burst of applause all round the table, and a simultaneous request from half-a-dozen gentlemen to be per-

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mitted to drink my health. I had unwittingly struck a popular chord, and scored an unexpected triumph over the clerical party, that was far too rampant in the city, the motto on whose escutcheon was: "Let Glasgow flourish, by the preaching of the Word." Since those comparatively early days, a sensible change has come over the mind of that great and prosperous city. Long before my time a beginning had been made, and its motto judiciously abbreviated. It now stands in emphatic simplicity, "Let Glasgow flourish!"

I remained in Glasgow for three years, with pleasure to myself and satisfaction to my political supporters. I might have remained for a much longer period, had not the Liberal party split up into two hostile and irreconcileable sections on the question of the representation of the city in Parliament. The split extended to the proprietors of the *Argus*, with the result, in 1847, of bringing my connection with that journal to an end, and, after a fitful existence of three months without a recognised and responsible editor, consigning the *Argus* itself to inglorious extinction.

Meanwhile, and until the final catastrophe occurred, my days, like those of Thalaba in Southey's immortal poem, "flew happily by." I took a rural villa, called Rose Cottage, at Ibrox Holme, on the road to Paisley, within two miles and a half of the city, and every Saturday,

from the morning of that day to the evening of Monday, was able to shake off the dust of the city and to forget its theological and political squables and animosities, and to betake myself to the glorious mountains and lakes of the middle and southern Highlands of Dumbarton, Argyll, Renfrew, and the island of Arran.

The citizens of Glasgow, or such among them as appreciate fine scenery, are highly favoured by nature. They have easy and cheap access to some of the most beautiful spots on the globe, and, within two hours, may leave the smoky purlieus of the Broomielaw or the Salt Market, and find themselves on the unpolluted shores of the splendid estuary of the Clyde, in the Gare Loch, the Holy Loch, and the magnificent Loch Long, much finer than the better known and greatly boasted Rhine, on the lovely margin of Loch Lomond, at Tarbet, with the lordly Ben Lomond right in front of them.

In this region the villages and small towns beloved of the Glasgowegians are Helensburgh, Roseneath, Kilmun, Strone, the Kern, Dunoon, Rothesay, and, in the neighbourhood of Greenock, on the other side, Gourock, Wemyss Bay, Inverkip, Kellyburn Braes, renowned in song, Skelmorlie Castle, and Largs, within hail of the Greater and Lesser Cumraes.

My favourite resort during my residence in Glasgow was at Kilmun on the Holy Loch, where

I had, during the summer months, for my nearest neighbour, the celebrated Daniel Macnee, the portrait painter, afterwards President of the Royal Scottish Academy, one of the most amiable of men, a highly-accomplished artist, a univeral favourite in Glasgow society, and one of the best tellers of Highland stories, of which he had an inexhaustible budget, that ever set the table in a roar with innocent and exuberant mirth.

Daniel Macnee was as enthusiastic an angler as Isaak Walton himself, or as his friends and contemporaries, Professor Wilson, the renowned Christopher North of *Blackwood's Magazine*, Thomas Tod Stoddart of Kelso, the author of many angling lyrics, that seem beautiful to all anglers—and to me, who never caught a fish in my life, though I have two or three times endeavoured to do so—and Alexander Russel, for many years editor of the *Scotsman*. Macnee's favourite stream was the Eachaig, that runs from Loch Eck into the Holy Loch, a couple of miles above the village of Kilmun. Loch Eck, where large trout and gigantic salmon are often the reward of such patient and persistent piscators as Macnee, was, however, a more frequent resort than the comparatively barren waters of the shallow Eachaig; and thither I was often his companion as far as the little wayside inn at Whistlefield, on the shore of the lake. Here we could generally find abundant store of refresh-

ments, after long walks, in the shape of crisp oaten cake, delicious fresh butter, salmon steaks, and whisky *à discretion*. The last time I visited Whistlefield in Macnee's company, the landlady told us the tragic story of a rich Glasgow merchant, who had made a large fortune in his business, and retired to enjoy it as a country gentleman. He built for himself a magnificent mansion on the shore of the lake — on the opposite side of the high road from Kilmun—that he might be out of the too facile reach of friends or acquaintances from Glasgow, who might signal for a boat to ferry them across if they desired to pay him a visit. The house was commodious, spacious, and elaborately provided with everything that wealth and luxury could desire; the grounds were varied by height and hollow, and laid out tastefully and scientifically by a professional gardener of high repute; the situation—at the foot of Ben More—was excellently chosen, and the landscape within view, extended over a placid lake seven miles in length, and the wood-crowned, picturesque highlands on the shore. Everyone who knew the proprietor of the domain envied him its possession, and the promise it afforded him of a peaceful autumn and winter after the busy spring and summer of his successful life. They did not suspect the danger that lay hidden in the calm and beautiful haven into which he had entered in the decline of his

days. Appearances were all deceptive. The rich merchant had but little intellectual capacity, and that little had not been enlarged or cultivated by study and reflection. He was shrewd in his business, but had no mind beyond it. He had no stores of accumulated knowledge. He had a library; but he only looked upon his books as furniture. He admired their binding, and never opened their covers to see or study what was inside. He had purchased pictures at great price, though these were of little merit, and hung them upon his walls—furniture only, as his books were. He had no conversational powers, though he liked to be talked to by people who could amuse him; but, as few of these called upon him in his solitude —which he had purposely rendered difficult of access—he began, after a few months, to weary of his lonely grandeur. He had a wife, but no family, and his wife's society was not congenial to him, nor his to her, and the pair got on but ill together. The wife, on her part, having a busier and more cultivated mind, sought change of scene and intellectual intercourse in Glasgow, Edinburgh, or London, leaving him to his own devices. His pride would not allow him to go back to business, which he sometimes thought of doing. He had no fancy for wielding the woodman's axe—like Mr. Gladstone—or he might have amused himself and taken wholesome exercise by felling some of

the large trees in his domain; but, in default of this, he tried to find recreation without taking wholesome exercise, by sitting for hours in the solitary boat on the lake, angling for salmon, with great perseverance but without skill, all the while thinking—if he thought at all—how slow the fish were in biting; or, perhaps, chewing the cud of bitter fancy—if he had any fancies to form a cud, or was able to chew it, or sense enough to appreciate the bitterness of experiencing in his own person how useless was wealth to secure happiness to a man who had no wealth in his mind.

This poor rich man gave orders one morning to the assistant gardener to get the boat ready, put the fishing-tackle on board, together with a paper of sandwiches, a flask of whisky, a large grindstone, and a coil of rope. The gardener wondered what the grindstone was wanted for, but, suspecting no evil, asked no questions, and in due time pushed the boat from the shore, with his master in it alone, as was his custom, and wished him good sport and good luck. He rowed off to the middle of the loch. In less than an hour afterwards the unhappy master of the big house cut a length of rope, inserted the end through the hole in the middle of the grindstone, affixed the rope and the stone to his body, and dropped himself from the side of the boat into the water, and sank immediately. His body was not recovered for several days, and

was honoured with a grand funeral, as befitted his wealth. There are no coroner's inquests held in Scotland, or a jury would have been empanelled, and would doubtless have brought in the verdict, usual in such cases, of "Temporary insanity."

Among the few literary friends I made in Glasgow—which at that time was, and is now, far more renowned for trade and theology than for literature—was John Pringle Nichol, the Professor of Astronomy in the University. Professor Nichol was highly esteemed at the time when I first made his acquaintance, but was little known in Glasgow society, except by the select few that can appreciate or understand a man of genius when he appears among them. His genius did not exhibit itself more brightly until in after years he married an amiable lady of considerable fortune. The appreciation of his character increased immensely in consequence of that event. When a poor man, with nothing but the modest salary of his professorship, and the precarious profits of public lectures on Astronomy, to depend upon, he was not considered an authority on any subject except that of the science which he taught; but when he had become rich, he was looked up to as a shining light of politics, literature, and the social circle. No meeting for any public purpose was considered complete without him; his name was necessary to give *éclat* to any political or

philanthropic movement; and his support to any cause was looked upon as a necessary prelude to its success.

Professor Nichol was of highly poetical temperament, though he never, as far as I know, indulged in the luxury of verse—unless in his youthful days, when most men of any literary genius, or even love for literature, are guilty of it, just as in the susceptible age they are guilty of falling in love—in reality or in imagination—with every beautiful girl they meet. But he looked like a poet, without knowing that he did so, and reminded me irresistibly of the published portraits of Schiller, with whom my temporary residence in Aix-la-Chapelle, and other parts of Germany, had rendered me familiar. I often spent my evenings at the Observatory, and was privileged to survey the stars through his great telescope, with the immense advantage of being instructed by him in their mysteries—the more mysterious to our finite and narrow human faculties the more they are studied.

One day, after a particularly interesting survey of the clear heavens on the preceding night, and a most interesting colloquy with the Professor on the mighty wonders of the universe, I wrote some lines, entitled, "The Earth and the Stars," which I read to him and Mr. De Quincey, the "Opium-eater," who was at the time his guest at the Observatory. I had bestowed a week's careful

revision upon the composition before I ventured to read it aloud, and might have bestowed a still longer time, if I had known so competent and so severe a critic as De Quincey was to pass judgment upon it. The verses represented the Earth as appealing to the Stars to answer the mournful question, whether they also were the abodes of Sin, Suffering, and Death, and if there were no hope of a better time for the poor little planet on which men lived for their short allotted span, greedy of happiness, but never attaining or even beholding it. I represented the Stars as replying in hopeful terms to the querulous and half-despairing questioner :—

O mournful sister,
Rolling calmly through the calm infinity,
We have rolled for myriad ages on our track,
Ever onward, pressing onward—never back—
There is progress both for us and for thee !

Thou wilt make, O thou foolish little sister,
The full cycle of thy glory in thy time ;
We are rolling on in ours for evermore.
Look not backward ; see Eternity before,
And free thyself of Sorrow and of Crime.

God, Who made thee, never meant thee, mournful sister,
To be filled with sin and grief eternally ;
And the children that are born upon thy breast
Shall, in fulness of their destiny, be blest.
There is progress for the Stars and for thee !

" The true philosophy of the stars," said the Professor, when I had finished reading. " The

true lesson to be derived from the reverent contemplation of the universe."

"It is impossible," said Mr. De Quincey, "not to believe in Eternity. Matter and spirit are both eternal and indestructible, of whatever they may consist; but the forms which they assume and the functions which they perform are not eternal, either in appearance or in operation. That goodness is eternal we cannot but believe; but, if so, Evil—or what we ignorantly call Evil—must be eternal also. There can be no good without evil; there can be no evil without good. There can be no right unless there be a wrong; there can be no wrong unless there be a right. There can be no up unless there be a down; no light unless there be a dark; no joy without sorrow; no positive without a negative; no Yes without a *No*. There will be progress in the stars, as our friend supposes in his amiable optimism, for progress is infinite; but progress without the possibility of Evil, by which to measure, or understand, or feel, or know, or appreciate the good, would be equivalent to annihilation. It would be the Nirvana of the Eastern philosophy, which is impossible for God Himself to decree, inasmuch as He is eternal, infinite, and immutable—the great I AM for ever and ever, of which the whole universe, seen and unseen, is but a part, eternal as the whole; eternally immutable

in substance or essence, but eternally mutable in manifestation."

"In other words," I said, "you believe that what men call evil may in reality be good, and agree with Pope, that 'all evil is partial and all good universal.'"

"Not exactly," replied Mr. De Quincey. "Evil is not partial, but inherent and necessary, and never to be estimated from the supreme, inconquerable, ineradicable law of the universe."

"We are getting beyond our depth," said the Professor. "I believe in progress both in this earth and in the stars, progress from good to better; and even in progress, or rather in retrogression, from bad to worse. There is no such thing in all the universe as stagnation. Even a stagnant pool is the source of life and consequently of movement, and breeds countless myriads of creatures, that enjoy and suffer, feel good and evil, and then pass away to make room for their successors. Neither on earth nor in the stars are the living creatures that inhabit them to expect or enjoy perfect happiness; but both on earth and in the stars they may attain to greater happiness than the ignorant dwellers on this paltry little globe have ever yet experienced or even dreamed of as possible. I agree with our friend who has just read us his verses, optimist as we may consider them to be; and the more I study

the stars the more hopeful I become, and none the less hopeful because my mind, even in its utmost bewilderment, deems it foolish and wicked to despair."

At the time when this conversation took place Mr. De Quincey had been resident for more than a month at the Observatory, where the Professor had invited him to stay for a week. He had arrived without money, baggage, or a change of linen, and stayed, as I afterwards learned from the Professor, for at least six months. During this time he received occasional supplies of money for his contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine*, and so provided himself with such absolutely essential articles of under-clothing and over-clothing as he required, and with the loose silver in his pocket to purchase the laudanum that had become as necessary to his existence in health and comfort as food and fresh air. I did not know at the time that the "Opium-eater," as he was called, was so cruelly kind to his friends and admirers as to enact with them the part that the "Old man of the Sea" acted towards Sindbad the Sailor in the *Arabian Nights*; but that Professor Nichol was not the only person that he so highly favoured appears from the following extract from the *Life of Professor Wilson*, the great Christopher North of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, which was published by his daughter in 1862. She relates :—

I remember his coming to Gloucester Place one stormy night. He remained hour after hour, in vain expectation

that the waters would assuage and the hurly-burly cease. There was nothing for it but that our visitor should remain all night. The Professor ordered a room to be prepared for him, and they found each other such good company that this accidental detention was prolonged, without further difficulty, for the greater part of a year. During this visit some of his eccentricities did not escape observation. For example, he rarely appeared at the family meals, preferring to dine in his own room at his own hour, not unfrequently turning night into day. His tastes were very simple, though a little troublesome, at least to the servant who prepared his repast. Coffee, boiled rice and milk, and a piece of mutton from the loin were the materials that invariably formed his diet. The cook, who had an audience with him daily, received her instructions in silent awe, quite overpowered by his manner; for, had he been addressing a duchess, he could scarcely have spoken with more deference. He would couch his request in such terms as these: "Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional disarrangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise, so much so, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than in a longitudinal form." The cook, a Scotchwoman, had great reverence for Mr. De Quincey as a man of genius; but, after one of these interviews, her patience was pretty well exhausted, and she would say: "Weel, I never heard the like o' that in a' my days; the bodie has an awfu' sicht o' words. If it had been my ain maister that was wanting his dinner, he would ha' ordered a hale tablefu' wi' little mair than a waff o' his haun, and here 's a' this claver aboot a bit mutton, nae bigger than a prin. Mr. De Quinshey would mak' a gran' preacher, though I 'm thinking a hantle o' the folk wouldna ken what he was driving at."

It was during my editorship of the *Glasgow Argus* that *The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* was published—a very remarkable book, that preceded and was in some sense the pioneer of the still more remarkable work of Mr. Darwin, that has been more generally received as an authority and been more widely accepted by philosophers and physicists. The *Vestiges*, published anonymously in London, excited a great sensation at the time, as well as great curiosity as to the authorship. The book was successful, highly praised by some, violently abused by others, and went through no less than ten editions before it finally "blew over" and disappeared alike from public favour and animadversion. Many surmises were hazarded about the authorship, which was attributed to at least fifty different people of more or less literary and scientific celebrity. But Professor Nichol detected the writer from the very first, though every possible means were employed by the writer to keep the secret inviolate. The Professor had written to Mr. Robert Chambers, of the eminent house of W. and R. Chambers, of Edinburgh, many eloquent letters on scientific subjects, and he found more than one of them incorporated in the text of the *Vestiges*, not in spirit alone, but in form; not in substance merely, but in the very *ipsissima verbæ*, sometimes extending to a whole page of the printed book. There could thus be no mistaking the fact that Mr.

Robert Chambers was either the author of the volume, or that some third person had become either honestly or dishonestly possessed of the Professor's letters. The Professor, however, never wavered in his opinion that Mr. Robert Chambers was the author; that his brother and partner, Mr. William Chambers, was not in the secret; and that the mystery maintained on the subject was not due to whim, caprice, or modesty on the part of the writer, but to worldly prudence, and to trade considerations of the very highest importance to the commercial and social position of the writer. The Messrs. Chambers were the publishers of many educational works having a large and very profitable circulation in schools and colleges, all more or less under clerical and religious control; and the avowal of such a book as *The Vestiges*, which was unfairly but vehemently denounced in half of the pulpits of the land, as not only unorthodox, but infidel and God-denying, would have been in a high degree damaging, if not fatal, to the reputation and the monetary stability of a publishing firm that depended for much of its support on the teachers of the young. Suspicion from the first attached to Mr. Robert Chambers, and, as time wore on, fixed itself more generally upon him. To such an extent was the feeling of animosity in the clerical mind of Scotland developed on the subject, that when it was announced that Mr. Chambers, as one of the

leading and most respected of the citizens of Edinburgh, would be proposed at the next municipal election for the high office of Lord Provost, to which he was known to have aspired, a clergyman publicly announced that if Mr. Chambers presented himself before the citizens with that object, he would ask him point-blank the question, "Are you or are you not the author of *The Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation?*" Mr. Chambers might have declined to answer, or he might have denied the fact, which no one had any moral or legal right to force him to confess; but, as refusal to answer would have been in the opinion of his opponents equivalent to a confession, and as denial would have been a falsehood, Mr. Chambers avoided being placed on either horn of the dilemma by forthwith resigning his pretensions to the greatest honour his fellow-citizens could confer upon him. All these circumstances tended to fix the conviction in the public mind that Mr. Robert Chambers was indubitably the author of the celebrated book that had so uncomfortably "fluttered the dovecots" of the believers in the Mosaic account of the Creation. Since that time the age has grown more tolerant of theological differences of opinion, and Mr. Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, has done openly, without obloquy, though not without dissent, what Mr. Chambers was unable to avow for fear of social ostracism and financial calamity to himself and his

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unconscious and non-participating brother. It was not until after the death of Mr. Chambers, one of the greatest ornaments to and disseminators of wholesome popular literature that his country ever produced, that the secret of *The Vestiges* was avowed. By that time the book had ceased to be an authority, or even to be spoken of, and Darwin's *Origin of Species* reigned in its stead, uncontroverted but not unquestioned.