X.

THE SCOTCH MERCHANT

OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

Custom forms us all. Our thoughts, our morals, our most fixed beliefs, are consequences of our place of birth. — Hill.

It is according to the fixed economy of human affairs that individuals should lead, and that masses should follow; for the adorable Being who wills that the lower order of minds should exist by myriads, and produces the higher so rarely, has willed, also, by inevitable consequence, that the many should be guided by the few. On the other hand, it is not less in accordance with the dictates of His immutable justice, that the interests of the few should be subordinate to the more extended interests of the many. The leading minds are to be regarded rather as formed for the masses, than the masses for them. True it is, that, while the one principle acts with all the undeviating certainty of a natural law, the other operates partially and interruptedly, with all the doubtful efficiency of a moral one; and hence those long catalogues of crimes committed against the species by their natural leaders which so fill the pages of history. We see man as the creature of des-

tiny conforming unresistingly to the one law; as a free agent, accountable for all his actions, yielding an imperfect and occasional obedience to the other. And yet his duty and his true interest, were he but wise enough to be convinced of it, are in every case the same. The following chapters, as they contain the history of a mind of the higher order, that, in doing good to others, conferred solid benefits on itself, may serve simply to illustrate this important truth. They may serve, too, to show the numerous class whose better feelings are suffered to evaporate in idle longings for some merely conceivable field of exertion, that wide spheres of usefulness may be furnished by situations comparatively unpromising. They may afford, besides, occasional glimpses of the beliefs, manners, and opinions of an age by no means remote from our own, but in many respects essentially different from it in spirit and character.

The Lowlanders of the north of Scotland were beginning, about the year 1700, gradually to recover the effects of that state of miserable depression into which they had been plunged for the greater part of the previous century. There was a slow awakening of the commercial spirit among the more enterprising class of minds, whose destiny it is to move in the van of society as the guides and pioneers of the rest. The unfortunate expedition of Darien had dissipated well-nigh the entire capital of the country only a few years before, and ruined almost all the greater merchants of the large towns. But the energies of the people, now that they were no longer borne down by the wretched despotism of the Stuarts, were not to be repressed by a single blow. Almost every seaport and larger town had its beginnings of trade. Younger sons of good family, who would have gone, only half a century before, to serve as

mercenaries in the armies of the Continent, were learning to employ themselves as merchants at home. And almost every small town had its shopkeeper, who, after passing the early part of his life as a farmer or mechanic, had set himself, in the altered state of the country, to acquire the habits of his new profession, and employed his former savings in trade.

Among these last was James Forsyth, a native of the province of Moray. He had spent the first thirty years of his life as a mason and builder. His profession was a wandering one, and he had received from nature the ability of profiting by the opportunities of observation which it afforded. He had marked the gradual introduction among the people of new tastes for the various articles of foreign produce and manufacture which were beginning to flow into the kingdom, and had seen how large a proportion the profits of the trader bore — as they always do in the infancy of trade — to the amount of capital employed. Resigning, therefore, his old profession, he opened a small shop in the town of Cromarty, whose lucrative herring-fishery rendered it at this period one of the busiest little places in the north of Scotland. And as he was at once steady and enterprising, rigidly just in his dealings, and possessed of shrewd good sense, he had acquired, ere the year 1722, when his eldest son, William, the subject of the following memoir, was born to him, what at that period was deemed considerable wealth. His marriage had taken place, somewhat late in life, little more than a twelvemonth before.

William received from nature, what nature only can bestow, great force of character, and great kindliness of heart. The town of Cromarty at the time was singularly fortunate in its schoolmaster, Mr. David M'Culloch, a gen-

tleman who terminated a long and very useful life, many years after, as the minister of a wild Highland parish in Perthshire; and William, who in infancy even had begun to manifest that restless curiosity which almost always characterizes the dawn of a superior intellect, was placed at a very early age under his care. The school — one of Knox's strongholds of the Reformation — was situated in a retired wooden corner behind the houses, with the windows, which were half-buried in the thatch, opening to the old, time-worn Castle of Cromarty. There could not be a more formidable spectre of the past than the old tower. It had been from time immemorial the seat of the hereditary sheriffs of the district, whose powers at this period still remained entire; and its tall, narrow front of blind wall, its embattled turrets and hanging bartizans, seemed associated with the tyranny and violence of more than a thousand years. But the low, mean-looking building at the foot of the hill was a masked battery raised against its authority, which was to burst open its dungeon-door, and to beat down its gallows. There is a class — the true aristocracy of nature — which have but to arise from among the people that the people may be free; and the humble old school did its part in separating its due proportion of these from the mass. Of two of the boys who sat at the same form with William Forsyth, one, the son of the town-clerk, afterwards represented the county in Parliament; and the other, of still humbler parentage, attracted, many years after, when librarian of the University of Edinburgh and Professor of Oriental Languages, the notice of the far-known Dr. Samuel Johnson.

The scheme of tuition established in our Scotch schools of this period was exactly that which had been laid down by Knox and Craig, in the Book of Discipline, rather more

than a century and a half before. Times had altered, however; and, though still the best possible, perhaps, for minds of a superior order, it was no longer the best for intellects of the commoner class. The scheme drawn up by our first reformers was stamped by the liberality of men who had learned from experience that tyranny and superstition derive their chief support from ignorance. Almost all the knowledge which books could supply at the time was locked up in the learned languages. It was appointed, therefore, "that young men who purposed to travill in some handicraft or other profitable exercise for the good of the commonwealth, should first devote ane certain time to grammar and the Latin tongue, and ane certain time to the other tongues and the study of philosophy." But what may have been a wise and considerate act on the part of the ancestor, may degenerate into merely a foolish custom on the part of the descendant. Ere the times of Mr. M'Culloch, we had got a literature of our own; and if useful knowledge be learning, men might have become learned through an acquaintance with English reading alone. Our fathers, however, pursued the course which circumstances had rendered imperative in the days of their great-grandfathers, merely because their great-grandfathers had pursued it; and the few years which were spent in school by the poorer pupils of ordinary capacity, were absurdly frittered away in acquiring a little bad Latin and a very little worse Greek. So strange did the half-learning of our common people, derived in this way, appear to our southern neighbors, that there are writers of the last century who, in describing a Scotch footman or mechanic, rarely omit making his knowledge of the classics an essential part of the character. The barber in "Roderick Random" quotes Horace in the original; and Foote, in one of his

farces, introduces a Scotch valet, who, when some one inquires of him whether he be a Latinist, indignantly exclaims, "Hoot awa, man! a Scotchman and no understand Latin!"

The school of Cromarty, like the other schools of the kingdom, produced its Latinists who caught fish and made shoes; and it is not much more than twenty years since the race became finally extinct. I have heard stories of an old house-painter of the place, who, having survived most of his school-fellows and contemporaries, used to regret, among his other vanished pleasures, the pleasure he could once derive from an inexhaustible fund of Latin quotation, which the ignorance of a younger generation had rendered of little more value to him than the paper-money of an insolvent bank; and I remember an old cabinet-maker who was in the practice, when his sight began to fail him, of carrying his Latin New Testament with him to church, as it chanced to be printed in a clearer type than any of his English ones. It is said, too, of a learned fisherman of the reign of Queen Anne, that, when employed one day among his tackle, he was accosted in Latin by the proprietor of Cromarty, who, accompanied by two gentlemen from England, was sauntering along the shore, and that, to the surprise of the strangers, he replied with considerable fluency in the same language. William Forsyth was a Latinist, like most of his school-fellows; but the natural tone of his mind, and the extent of his information, were in keeping with the acquirement; and while there must have been something sufficiently grotesque and incongruous, as the satirists show us, in the association of a classic literature with humble employments and very ordinary modes of thought and expression, nothing, on the other hand, could have seemed less so than that an enterprising and liberal-

minded merchant should have added to the manners and sentiments of the gentleman the tastes and attainments of the scholar.

CHAPTER II.

The wise and active conquer difficulties by daring to attempt them; Sloth and Folly shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard, and make the impossibility they fear. — Rowe.

William Forsyth in his sixteenth year quitted school, and was placed by his father in a counting-house in London, where he formed his first acquaintance with trade. Circumstances, however, rendered the initiatory course a very brief one. His father, James Forsyth, died suddenly in the following year, 1739; and, leaving London at the request of his widowed mother, whose family now consisted of two other sons and two daughters,—all of them, of course, younger than himself, — he entered on his father's business at the early age of seventeen. In one interesting instance I have found the recollection of his short stay in London incidentally connected with the high estimate of his character and acquirements formed by one of the shrewdest and most extensively informed of his mercantile acquaintance. "I know," says a lady who has furnished me with some of the materials of these chapters, "that Mr. Forsyth must have spent some time in a London counting-house, from often having heard my father repeat, as a remark of the late Henry Davidson of Tulloch, that 'had the Cromarty merchant remained in the place where he received

his first introduction to business, he would have been, what no Scotchman ever was, lord mayor of London.'" I need hardly add that the remark is at least half a century old.

The town of Cromarty, at the time of Mr. Forsyth's settlement in it, was no longer the scene of busy trade which it had been twenty years before. The herring-fishery of the place, at one time the most lucrative on the eastern coast of Scotland, had totally failed, and the great bulk of the inhabitants, who had owed to it their chief means of subsistence, had fallen into abject poverty. They seemed fast sinking, too, into that first state of society in which there is scarce any division of labor. The mechanics in the town caught their own fish, raised their own corn, tanned their own leather, and wore clothes which had employed no other manufacturers than their own families and their neighbor the weaver. There was scarce any money in the district. Even the neighboring proprietors paid their tradesmen in kind; and a few bolls of malt or barley, or a few stones of flax or wool, settled the yearly account. There could not, therefore, be a worse or more hopeless scene for the shopkeeper; and had William Forsyth restricted himself to the trade of his father, he must inevitably have sunk with the sinking fortunes of the place. Young as he was, however, he had sagacity enough to perceive that Cromarty, though a bad field for the retail trader, might prove a very excellent one for the merchant. Its valuable, though at this time neglected harbor, seemed suited to render it, what it afterwards became, the key of the adjacent country. The neighboring friths, too, — those of Dingwall, Dornoch, and Beauly, which wind far into the Highlands of Ross and Sutherland, — formed so many broad pathways leading into districts which had no

other roads at that period; and the towns of Tain, Dornoch, Dingwall, Campbelton, and Fortrose, with the seats of numerous proprietors, are situated on their shores. The bold and original plan of the young trader, therefore, was to render Cromarty a sort of depot for the whole; to furnish the shopkeepers of the several towns with the commodities in which they dealt, and to bring to the very doors of the proprietors the various foreign articles of comfort and luxury with which commerce could alone supply them. And, launching boldly into the speculation at a time when the whole country seemed asleep around him, he purchased a freighting-boat for the navigation of the three friths, and hired a large sloop for trading with Holland and the commercial towns of the south.

The failure of the herring trade of the place had been occasioned by the disappearance of the herrings, which, after frequenting the Frith in immense shoals for a long series of years, had totally deserted it. It is quite according to the nature of the fish, however, to resume their visits as suddenly and unexpectedly as they have broken them off, though not until after the lapse of so many seasons, perhaps, that the fishermen have ceased to watch for their appearance in their old haunts, or provide the tackle necessary for their capture; and in this way a number of years are sometimes suffered to pass, after the return of the fish, ere the old trade is re-established. To guard against any such waste of opportunity on the part of his townspeople was the first care of William Forsyth, after creating, as it were, a new and busy trade for himself; and, representing the case to the more intelligent gentlemen of the district, and some of the wealthier merchants of Inverness, he succeeded in forming them into a society for the encouragement of the herring-fishery, which provided a yearly pre-

mium of twenty marks Scots for the first barrel of herrings caught every season in the Moray Frith. The sum was small; but as money at the time was very valuable, it proved a sufficient inducement to the fishermen and tradespeople of the place to fit out a few boats, about the beginning of autumn every year, to sweep over the various fishing-banks for the herrings; and there were few seasons in which some one crew or other did not catch enough to entitle them to the premium. At length, however, their tackle wore out; and Mr. Forsyth, in pursuance of his scheme, provided himself, at some little expense, with a complete drift of nets, which were carried to sea each season by his boatmen, and the search kept up. His exertions, however, could only merit success, without securing it. The fish returned for a few seasons in considerable bodies, and several thousand barrels were caught; but they soon deserted the Frith as entirely as before; and more than a century elapsed from their first disappearance ere they revisited their old haunts with such regularity and in such numbers as to render the trade remunerative to either the curers or the fishermen.

Unlike the herring speculation, however, the general trade of William Forsyth was eminently successful. It was of a miscellaneous character, as became the state of a country so poor and so thinly peopled, and in which, as there was scarce any division of labor, one merchant had to perform the work of many. He supplied the proprietors with teas and wines and spiceries, with broadcloths, glass, delft-ware, Flemish tiles, and pieces of japanned cabinet-work; he furnished the blacksmith with iron from Sweden, the carpenter with tar and spars from Norway, and the farmer with flaxseed from Holland. He found, too, in other countries markets for the produce of our own. The

exports of the north of Scotland at this period were mostly malt, wool, and salmon. Almost all rents were paid in kind or in labor; the proprietors retaining in their own hands a portion of their estates, termed demesnes or mains, which was cultivated mostly by their tacksmen and feuars, as part of their proper service. Each proprietor, too, had his storehouse or girnel, — a tall, narrow building, the strong-box of the time, which at the Martinmas of every year was filled from gable to gable with the grain-rents paid to him by his tenants, and the produce of his own farm. His surplus cattle found their way south, under charge of the drovers of the period; but it proved a more difficult matter to dispose to advantage of his surplus corn, mostly barley, until some one, more skilful in speculation than the others, originated the scheme of converting it into malt, and exporting it into England and Flanders. And to so great an extent was this trade carried on about the middle of the last century, that, in the town of Inverness, the English under Cumberland, in the long-remembered year of Culloden, found almost every second building a malt-barn.

The town of Cromarty suffered much at this period, in at least the severer winters, from scarcity of fuel. The mosses of the district were just exhausted; and as our proprietors had not yet betaken themselves to planting, there were no woods, except in some of the remoter recesses of the country, where the remains of some of the ancient forests were still suffered to survive. Peats were occasionally brought to the town in boats from the opposite side of the Frith; but the supply was precarious and insufficient, and the inhabitants were content at times to purchase the heath of the neighboring hill, in patches of an hundred square yards, and at times even to use for fuel the dried dung of their cattle. "A Cromarty fire" was a

term used over the country to designate a fire just gone out; and some humorist of the period has represented a Cromarty farmer, in a phrase which became proverbial, as giving his daughter the key of the peat-chest, and bidding her take out a peat and a half that she might put on a good fire. It was the part of Mr. Forsyth to divest the proverb of its edge, by opening up a trade with the northern ports of England, and introducing to the acquaintance of his townspeople the "black stones" of Newcastle, which have been used ever since as the staple fuel of the place. To those who know how very dependent the inhabitants are on this useful fossil, there seems an intangible sort of strangeness in the fact that it is not yet a full century since Mr. Forsyth's sloop entered the bay with the first cargo of coal ever brought into it. One almost expects to hear next of the man who first taught them to rear corn, or to break in, from their state of original wildness, the sheep and the cow.

Mr. Forsyth had entered upon his twenty-fourth year, and had been rather more than six years engaged in business, when the rebellion broke out. There was an end to all security for the time, and of course an end to trade; but even the least busy found enough to employ them in the perilous state of the country. Bands of marauders, the very refuse of the Highlands, — for its better men had gone to the south with the rebel army, — went prowling over the Lowlands, making war with all alike, whether Jacobites or Hanoverians, who were rich enough to be robbed. Mr. Forsyth's sloop, in one of her coasting voyages of this period, when laden with a cargo of government stores, was forced by stress of weather into the Dornoch Frith, where she was seized by a party of Highlanders, who held her for three days, in the name of the prince.

They did little else, however, than consume the master's sea-stock, and joke with the ship-boy, a young but very intelligent lad, who, for many years after, when Mr. Forsyth had himself become a ship-owner, was the master of his vessel. He was named Robertson; and as there were several of the Robertsons of Struan among the party, he was soon on very excellent terms with them. On one occasion, however, when rallying some of the Struans on their undertaking, he spoke of their leader as "the Pretender." "Beware, my boy," said an elderly Highlander, "and do not again repeat that word. There are men in the ship who, if they heard you, would perhaps take your life for it; for remember, we are not all Robertsons." Another party of the marauders took possession of the town of Cromarty for a short time, and dealt after the same manner with the stores of townspeople, whether of food or clothing, as the other had done with the stores of the shipmaster. But they were rather mischievous thieves than dangerous enemies; and except that they robbed a few of the women of their webs and yarn, and a few of the men of their shoes and bonnets, they left them no very grave cause to regret their visit.

It so chanced, however, that Mr. Forsyth was brought more seriously into contact with the rebels than any of his townsmen. The army of the prince, after the failure of the attempt on England, fell back on the Highlands; and a body of sixteen hundred king's troops, which had occupied Inverness, had retreated northwards, on their approach into the county of Sutherland. They had crossed by the Ferry of Cromarty in the boats of the town's fishermen; and these, on landing on the northern side, they had broken up to prevent the pursuit of the rebels. Scarcely had they been gone a day, however, when an agent of govern-

ment, charged with a large sum of money, the arrears of their pay, arrived at Cromarty. He had reached Inverness only to find it in possession of the rebels; and after a perilous journey over a tract of country where almost every second man had declared for the prince, he found at Cromarty his further progress northward arrested by the Frith. In this dilemma, with the sea before him and the rebels behind, he applied to William Forsyth, and, communicating to him the nature and importance of his charge, solicited his assistance and advice. Fortunately Mr. Forsyth's boat had been on one of her coasting voyages at the time the king's troops had broken up the others, and her return was now hourly expected. Refreshments were hastily set before the half-exhausted agent; and then hurrying him to the feet of the precipices which guard the entrance of the Frith, Mr. Forsyth watched with him among the cliffs until the boat came sweeping round the nearer headland. The merchant hailed her in the passing, saw the agent and his charge safely embarked, and, after instructing the crew that they should proceed northwards, keeping as much as possible in the middle of the Frith until they had either come abreast of Sutherland or fallen in with a sloop-of-war then stationed near the mouth of the Spey, he returned home. In the middle of the following night he was roused by a party of rebels, who, after interrogating him strictly regarding the agent and his charge, and ransacking his house and shop, carried him with them a prisoner to Inverness. They soon found, however, that the treasure was irrecoverably beyond their reach, and that nothing was to be gained by the further detention of Mr. Forsyth. He was liberated, therefore, after a day and night's imprisonment, just as the rebels had learned that the army of Cumberland had reached the Spey; and he

returned to Cromarty in time enough to witness from the neighboring hill the smoke of Culloden. In after-life he used sometimes to amuse his friends by a humorous detail of his sufferings in the cause of the king.

CHAPTER III.

> So spake the Fiend; and with necessity
> The tyrant's plea excused his devilish deeds.
>
> MILTON.

By far the most important event of the last century to the people of Scotland was the rebellion of 1745. To use an illustration somewhat the worse for the wear, it resembled one of those violent hurricanes of the tropics which overturn trees and houses and strew the shores with wreck, but which more than compensate for the mischiefs they occasion by dissipating the deadly vapors of plague and pestilence, and restoring the community to health. Previous to its suppression the people possessed only a nominal freedom. The church for which they had done and suffered so much had now been re-established among them for nearly sixty years; and they were called, as elders, to take a part in its worship, and to deliberate in its courts. The laws, too, especially those passed since the union, recognized them as free. More depends, however, on the administration of law than on even the framing of it. The old hereditary jurisdictions still remained entire; and the meanest sheriff or baron of Scotland, after holding a court composed of only himself and his clerk, might consign the

freest of his vassals to his dungeon, or hang him up at his castle-door. But the rebellion showed that more might be involved in this despotism of the chiefs and proprietors of the country than the oppression of individuals, and that the power which they possessed, through its means of calling out their vassals on their own behalf, to-day, might be employed in precipitating them against the government on the morrow. In the year 1747, therefore, hereditary jurisdictions were abolished all over Scotland, and the power of judging in matters of life and death restricted to judges appointed and paid by the crown. To decide on such matters of minor importance as are furnished by every locality, justices were appointed; and Mr. Forsyth's name was placed on the commission of the peace; a small matter, it may be thought, in the present day, but by no means an unimportant one ninety years ago, to either his townspeople or himself.

Justices of the peace had been instituted about a century and a half before. But the hereditary jurisdictions of the kingdom leaving them scarce any room for the exercise of their limited authority, the order fell into desuetude; and previous to its re-appointment, on the suppression of the rebellion, the administration of the law seems to have been divided, in at least the remoter provinces, between the hereditary judges and the church. The session records of Cromarty during the establishment of Episcopacy are still extant, and they curiously exemplify the class of offences specially cognizable by the ecclesiastical courts. They serve, too, to illustrate, in a manner sufficiently striking, the low tone of morals which obtained among the people. Our great-great-grandfathers were not a whit wiser nor better nor happier than ourselves; and our great-great-grandmothers seem to have had quite the same pas-

sions as their descendants, with rather less ability to control them. There were ladies of Cromarty, in the reign of Charles II., "maist horrible cussers," who accused one another of being "witches and witch getts, with all their folk afore them," for generations untold; gentlemen who had to "stand at the pillar" for unlading the boats of a smuggler at ten o'clock on a Sabbath night; "maist scandalous reprobates" who got drunk on Sundays, "and abused decent folk ganging till the kirk;" and "ill-conditioned royit loons who raisit disturbances and faught i' the scholars' loft" in the time of divine service. Husbands and their wives do penance in the church in this reign for their domestic quarrels; boys are whipped by the beadle for returning from a journey on the Sabbath; men are set in the *jougs* for charging elders of rather doubtful character with being drunk; boatmen are fined for crossing the ferry with passengers "during church time;" and Presbyterian farmers are fined still more heavily for absenting themselves from church. Meanwhile, when the session was thus employed, the sheriff was amusing himself in cutting off men's ears, starving them in his dungeon, or hanging them up by the neck on his gallows. A few dark traditions, illustrative of the intolerable tyranny of the period, still survive; and it is not yet more than nine years since a quantity of human bones, found in digging on an eminence a little above the harbor, which in the reign of Charles is said to have been a frequent scene of executions, served as an attestation to their general truth. It is said that the last person sentenced to death on the gallows-hill of Cromarty was a poor Highlander who had insulted the sheriff, and that, when in the act of mounting the ladder, he was pardoned at the request of the sheriff's lady.

There is much of interest in catching occasional glimpses

of a bygone state of society through the chance vistas of tradition. They serve to show us, in the expressive language of Scripture, "the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were dug." They serve, too, to dissipate those dreamy imaginings of the good and happiness of the past in which it seems an instinct of our nature to indulge, and enable us to correct the exaggerated estimates of that school of philosophy which sees most to admire in society the further it recedes from civilization. I am enabled to furnish the reader with one of these chance glimpses.

An old man who died about ten years ago, has told me that, when a boy, he was sent on one occasion to the manse of a neighboring parish to bring back the horse of an elderly gentleman of the place, a retired officer, who had gone to visit the minister with the intention of remaining with him for a few days. The officer was a silver-headed, erect old man, who had served as an ensign at the battle of Blenheim, and who, when he had retired on half pay about forty years after, was still a poor lieutenant. His riding days were well-nigh over; and the boy overtook him long ere he had reached the manse, and just as he was joined by Mr. Forsyth, who had come riding up by a cross-road, and then slackened bridle to keep him company. They entered into conversation. Mr. Forsyth was curious in his inquiries, the old gentleman communicative, and the boy a good listener. The old man spoke much of the allied army under Marlborough. By far the strongest man in it, he said, was a gentleman from Ross-shire, Munro of Newmore. He had seen him raise a piece of ordnance to his breast which Mackenzie of Fairburn, another proprietor of the same district, had succeeded in raising to his knee, but which no other man among more than eighty

thousand could lift from off the ground. Newmore was considerably advanced in life at the time, — perhaps turned of fifty; for he had arrived at mature manhood about the middle of the reign of Charles II.; and, being a singularly daring as well as an immensely powerful man, he had signalized himself in early life in the feuds of his native district. Some of his lands bordered on those of Black Andrew Munro, the last Baron of Newtarbat, one of the most detestable wretches that ever abused the power of pit and gallows. But as at least their nominal polities were the same, and as the baron, though by far the less powerful man, was in perhaps a corresponding degree the more powerful proprietor, they had never come to an open rupture. Newmore, however, by venturing at times to screen some of the baron's vassals from his fury, — at times by taking part against him in the quarrel of some of the petty landholders, whom the tyrant never missed an occasion to oppress, — was by no means one of his favorites. All the labors of the baron's demesnes were of course performed by his vassals as part of their proper service. A late, wet harvest came on, and they were employed in cutting down his crops when their own lay rotting on the ground. It is natural that in such circumstances they should have labored unwillingly. All their dread of the baron even, who remained among them in the fields, indulging in every caprice of a fierce and cruel temper, aggravated by irresponsible power, proved scarcely sufficient to keep them at work; and, to inspire them with deeper terror, an elderly female, who had been engaged during the night in reaping a little field of her own, and had come somewhat late in the morning, was actually stripped naked by the savage, and sent home again. In the evening he was visited by Munro of Newmore, who came, accompanied by only a

single servant, to expostulate with him on an act so atrocious and disgraceful. Newmore was welcomed with a show of hospitality; the baron heard him patiently, and, calling for wine, they sat down and drank together. It was only a few weeks before, however, that one of the neighboring lairds, who had been treated with a similar show of kindness by the baron, had been stripped half naked at his table, when in a state of intoxication, and sent home with his legs tied under his horse's belly. Newmore, therefore, kept warily on his guard. He had left his horse ready saddled at the gate, and drank no more than he could master, which was quite as much, however, as would have overcome most men. One after one the baron's retainers began to drop into the room, each on a separate pretence; and, as the fifth entered, Newmore, who had seemed as if yielding to the influence of the liquor, affected to fall asleep. The retainers came clustering round him. Two seized him by the arms, and two more essayed to fasten him to his chair; when up he sprang, dashed his four assailants from him as if they had been boys of ten summers, and, raising the fifth from off the floor, hurled him headlong against the baron, who fell prostrate before the weight and momentum of so unusual a missile. In a minute after, Newmore had reached the gate, and, mounting his horse, rode away. The baron died during the night, a victim to apoplexy, induced, it is said, by the fierce and vindictive passions awakened on this occasion; and a Gaelic proverb, still current in the Highlands of Ross-shire, shows with what feelings his poor vassals must have regarded the event. Even to the present day, a Highlander will remark, when overborne by oppression, that "the same God still lives who killed Black Andrew Munro of Newtarbat."

CHAPTER IV.

Are we not brothers?
So man and man should be;
But clay and clay differs in dignity,
Whose dust is both alike.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was no unimportant change to the people of Cromarty, which transferred them from the jurisdiction of hereditary judges to the charge of a justice such as Mr. Forsyth. For more than thirty years after his appointment he was the only acting magistrate in the place; and such was the confidence of the townspeople in his judgment and integrity, that during all that time there was not in a single instance an appeal from his decisions. In office and character he seems to have closely resembled one of the old landammans of the Swiss cantons. The age was a rude one. Man is a fighting animal from very instinct, and his second nature, custom, mightily improves the propensity; and nine tenths of the cases brought before Mr. Forsyth were cases of quarrels. With the more desperate class of brawlers he could deal at times with proper severity. In most instances, however, a quarrel cost him a few glasses of his best Hollands, and cost no one else anything. The disputants were generally shown that neither of them had been quite in the right; that one had been too hasty, and the other too ready to take offence; that the first blow had been decidedly a wrong, and the second unquestionably a misdemeanor; and then, after drinking one another's

health, they parted, wonderfully pleased with the decision of Mr. Forsyth, and resolved to have no more fighting till their next difference. He was much a favorite, too, with the townsboys. On one occasion, a party of them were brought before him on a charge of stealing green peas out of a field. Mr. Forsyth addressed them in his sternest manner. There was nothing, he said, which he so abhorred as the stealing of green peas; it was positively theft. He even questioned whether their parents did right in providing them with pockets. Were they again to be brought before him for a similar offence, they might depend, every one of them, on being locked up in the Tolbooth for a fortnight. Meanwhile, to keep them honest, he had resolved on sowing a field of peas himself, to which he would make them all heartily welcome. Accordingly, next season the field was sown, and there could not be a more exposed locality. Such, however, was the spirit of the little men of the place, all of whom had come to a perfect understanding of the decision, that not one pod of Mr. Forsyth's peas was carried away.

Before the close of 1752, when he completed his thirtieth year, Mr. Forsyth had succeeded in settling his two brothers in business, the one as a shopkeeper in Dingwall, the other as a merchant in Newcastle. Both gained for themselves, in their respective circles of acquaintance, the character of worthy and intelligent men; and their descendants still occupy respectable places in society. They had acquired their education and formed their habits of business under the eye of William; and now, in the autumn of this year, after he had thus honorably acquitted himself of the charge devolved upon him by the death of his father, he found himself at liberty to gratify an attachment formed several years before, by marrying a young lady of great

worth and beauty, Miss Margaret Russell, a native of Morayshire. She was the daughter of Mr. Russell of Earlsmill, chamberlain to the Earl of Moray.

I shall indulge, with leave of the reader, in a brief view of the society to which Mr. Forsyth introduced his young wife. The feudal superior of the town, and proprietor of the neighboring lands, formed, of course, its natural and proper head. But the proprietor of this period, a Captain William Urquhart of Meldrum, had thrown himself so fairly beyond its pale, that on his own estate, and in his own village, there were none to court favor or friendship at his hands. He was a gentleman of good family, and had done gallant service to the Spaniards of South America against the buccaneers. He was, however, a stanch Catholic, and he had joined issue with the townspeople, headed by Mr. Forsyth, in a vexatious and expensive lawsuit, in which he had contended, as patron of the parish, for the privilege of presenting them with a useless, time-serving clergyman, a friend of his own. And so it was, that the zeal, so characteristic at the time of the people of Scotland, — a zeal for religion and the interests of the kirk, — had more than neutralized in the minds of the townspeople their scarcely less characteristic feelings of respect for the laird. His place, therefore, in the society of the town was occupied by persons of somewhat less influence than himself. There was a little circle of gentility in it, rich in blood but poor in fortune, which furnished a sort of reposing place for the old prejudices of the people in favor of high descent, of ladies who were "real ladies," and gentlemen with coats of arms. Whenever there was aught to be done or resisted, however, the whole looked up to Mr. Forsyth as their man of thought and action.

At the head of this little community there was a dowager lady, the many virtues of whose character have found a warm encomiast in the judicious and sober-minded Doddridge. The good Lady Ardoch has been dead for the last seventy years, and yet her name is scarcely less familiar in the present day, to at least the more staid townspeople, than it was half a century ago. She was a daughter of the Fowlis family, one of the most ancient and honorable in Scotland; the ninth baron of Fowlis was slain fighting under the Bruce at Bannockburn. Her three brothers — men whose heroism of character and high religious principle have drawn forth the very opposite sympathies of Philip Doddridge and Sir Walter Scott — she had lost in the late rebellion. The eldest, Sir Robert Munro, the chief of his clan, died, with his youngest brother, at the battle of Falkirk; the third was shot about nine months after by an assassin, who had mistaken him for another by whom he had been deeply injured, and whose sorrow and remorse on discovering that he had unwittingly killed one of the best of his countrymen, are well described by Sir Walter in his "Tales of a Grandfather." Next in place to the good Lady Ardoch was the good Lady Scotsburn, — the widow of a Ross-shire proprietor, — who derived her descent from that Archibald, Marquis of Argyle, who acted so conspicuous a part during the troubles of the times of Charles I., and perished on the scaffold on the accession of Charles II. In excellence of character and the respect with which she was regarded, she very much resembled her contemporary Lady Ardoch. There were, besides, a family of ladies in the place, the daughters of Urquhart of Greenhill, a merchant of the times of the herring drove, and a scion of the old Urquharts of Cromarty, — and another much-respected family, the descendants of one of the old

clergymen of the place, a Mr. Gordon. A few ladies more, of rather lower pretensions, whom the kindness of relatives in the south enabled to be hospitable and genteel, some on fifty pounds a year and some on thirty, and a few retired half-pay ensigns and lieutenants, one of whom, as we have seen, had fought in the wars of Marlborough, completed what was deemed the better society of the place. They had their occasional tea-parties, at which they all met; for Mr. Forsyth's trade with Holland had introduced, ere now, about eight teakettles into the place. They had, too, what was more characteristic of the age, their regular prayer-meetings; and at these — for Christianity, as the equalizing religion of free men, has ever been a breaker-down of casts and fictitious distinctions — the whole graver people of the town met. The parlor of Lady Ardoch was open once a fortnight to the poorer inhabitants of the place; and the good lady of thirty descents knelt in her silks at the same form with the good fisherwoman in her *curch* and *toy*.

It is not, however, by notices such as these that adequate notions of the changes which have taken place within the last century in the very framework of Scottish society can be conveyed to the reader. "The state of things is so fast changing in Scotland," says Dr. Johnson, in one of his letters to Boswell, "that a Scotchman can hardly realize the times of his grandfather."

Society was in a transition state at the time. The old adventitious bonds which had held it together in the past still existed; but opinion was employed in forging others of a more natural and less destructible character. Among these older ties, the pride of family — a pride which must have owed its general diffusion over Scotland to the clans and sects of the feudal system — held by far the most important place. There was scarce an individual, in at least the

northern counties, whose claim to self-respect was not involved in the honor of some noble family. There ran through his humble genealogy some silver thread of high descent; some great-great-grandfather or grandmother connected him with the aristocracy of the country; and it was his pride and honor, not that he was an independent man, but that he was in some sort a dependent gentleman. Hence that assumption of gentility on the part of the Scotch so often and so unmercifully lashed by the English satirists of the last century. Hence, too, in no small measure, the entire lack of political whiggism among the people. Under the influence of the feelings described, a great family might be compared to one of those fig-trees of the East which shoot their pendulous branches into the soil, and, deriving their stability from a thousand separate roots, defy the tornado and the hurricane. Be it remembered, too, that great families included in this way the whole of Scottish society, from its upper to its lower extreme.

Now, one of the objections to this kind of bond was the very unequal measure of justice and protection which it secured to the two grand classes which it united. It depressed the people in the one scale in the proportion in which it raised the aristocracy in the other. It did much for Juggernaut, but little for Juggernaut's worshippers. Though well-nigh as powerful at this time in the north of Scotland as it had been at any previous period, it was fast losing its influence in the southern districts. The persecutions of the former age had done much to lessen its efficacy, by setting the aristocracy, who, in most instances, held by the court polities and the court religion, in direct and hostile opposition to the people. And the growing commerce of the larger towns had done still more to lower

it, by raising up from among the people that independent middle class, the creators and conservators of popular liberty, without which the population of any country can consist of only slaves and their masters. Even in the northern districts there were causes coming into operation which were eventually to annihilate the sentiment in at least its more mischievous tendencies. The state of matters in the town of Cromarty at this time, where a zealous Catholic was struggling to obtrude a minister of his own choosing on a Protestant people, furnishes no bad illustration of the nature of some of these, and of their mode of working. The absurd and mischievous law of patronage was doing in part for the Lowland districts of the north what the persecutions of the Stuarts had done for those of the south an age before, and what the large sheep-farm system, and the consequent ejection of the old occupants of the soil, has done for the Highlands an age after. And the first two were causes admirably suited to awaken a people who had derived their notions of rational liberty solely through the medium of religious belief. Their whiggism was a whiggism not of this world, but of the other; and as the privilege of preparing themselves for heaven in what they believed to be exclusively the right way was the only privilege they deemed worth while contending for, their first struggle for liberty was a struggle that their consciences might be free. The existence, too, of such men among them as Mr. Forsyth, men who had risen from their own level, had a twofold influence on the contest. They formed a sort of aristocracy of the people that served to divide the old feelings of respect which had been so long exclusively paid to the higher aristocracy; and they were enabled, through their superior intelligence,

to give a weight and respectability to the popular party which it could not otherwise have possessed.

William Forsyth was singularly unfortunate in his marriage. Towards the close of the first year, when but learning fully to appreciate the comforts of a state to which so many of the better sentiments of our nature bear reference, and to estimate more completely the worth of his partner, she was suddenly removed from him by death, at a time when he looked with most hope for a further accession to his happiness. She died in childbed, and the fruit of her womb died with her. Her husband, during the long after-course of his life, never forgot her, and for eleven years posterior to the event he remained a widower for her sake.

CHAPTER V.

There is a certain lively gratitude which not only acquits us of the obligations we have received, but, by paying what we owe them, makes our friends indebted to us. — La Rochefaucauld.

Among the school-fellows of William Forsyth there was a poor orphan boy named Hossack, a native of the landward part of the parish. He had lost both his parents when an infant, and owed his first knowledge of letters to the charity of the schoolmaster. His nearer relatives were all dead, and he was dependent for a precarious subsistence on the charity of a few distant connections, not a great deal richer than himself; among the rest, on a poor widow, a namesake of his own, who earned a scanty subsistence by

her wheel, but who had heart enough to impart a portion of her little to the destitute scholar. The boy was studious and thoughtful, and surpassed most of his school-fellows; and, after passing with singular rapidity through the course pursued at school, he succeeded in putting himself to college. The struggle was arduous and protracted. Sometimes he wrought as a common laborer, sometimes he ran errands, sometimes he taught a school. He deemed no honest employment too mean or too laborious, that forwarded his scheme; and thus he at length passed through college. His townspeople then lost sight of him for nearly twenty years. It was understood, meanwhile, that some nameless friend in the south had settled a comfortable annuity on poor old widow Hossack, and that a Cromarty sailor, who had been attacked by a dangerous illness when at London, had owed his life to the gratuitous attentions of a famous physician of the place, who had recognized him as a townsman. No one, however, thought of the poor scholar; and it was not until his carriage drove up one day through the main street of the town, and stopped at the door of William Forsyth, that he was identified with "the great doctor" who had attended the seaman, and with the benefactor of the poor widow. On entering the cottage of the latter, he found her preparing gruel for supper, and was asked, with the anxiety of a gratitude that would fain render him some return, "O, sir, will ye no tak' brochan?" He is said to have been a truly excellent and benevolent man, — the Abercromby of a former age; and the ingenious and pious Moses Browne (a clergyman who, to the disgrace of the English Church, was suffered to languish through life in a curacy of fifty pounds per annum) thus addresses him in one of his larger poems, written im-

mediately after the recovery of the author from a long and dangerous illness.

> The God I trust, with timeliest kind relief,
> Sent the beloved physician to my aid
> (Generous, humanest, affable of soul,
> Thee, dearest Hossack — oh, long known, long loved,
> Long proved; in oft-found tenderest watching cares,
> The Christian friend, the man of feeling heart);
> And in his skilful, heaven-directed hand,
> Put his best pleasing, only fee, my cure.
>
> SUNDAY THOUGHTS, PART IV.

To this gentleman Mr. Forsyth owed a very useful hint, which he did not fail to improve. They were walking together at low ebb along the extensive tract of beach which skirts, on the south, the entrance of the Frith of Cromarty. The shore everywhere in this tract presents a hard bottom of boulder stones and rolled pebbles, thickly covered with marine plants; and the doctor remarked that the brown tangled forests before them might be profitably employed in the manufacture of kelp, and, at the request of Mr. Forsyth, described the process. To the enterprising and vigorous-minded merchant the remark served to throw open a new field of exertion. He immediately engaged in the kelp trade; and, for more than forty years after, it enabled him to employ from ten to twelve persons during the summer and autumn of each year, and proved remunerative to himself.

There is a story of two of Mr. Forsyth's kelp-burners, which, as it forms a rather curious illustration of some of the wilder beliefs of the period, I shall venture on introducing to the reader. The Sutors of Cromarty were known all over the country as resorts of the hawk, the eagle, and the raven, and of all the other builders among dizzy and

inaccessible cliffs; and a gentleman of Moray, a sportsman of the old school, having applied to a friend in this part of the country to procure for him a pair of young hawks, of a species prized by the falconer, Tam Polson, an unsettled, eccentric being, remarkable chiefly for his practical jokes, and his constant companion Jock Watson, a person of nearly similar character, were entrusted with the commission, and a promise of five pounds Scots, no inconsiderable sum in those days, held out to them as the reward of their success in the execution of it. They soon discovered a nest, but it was perched near the top of a lofty cliff, inaccessible to the climber; and there was a serious objection against descending to it by means of a rope, seeing that the rope could not be held securely by fewer than three or four persons, who would naturally claim a share of the reward. It was suggested, however, by Tam, that by fastening the rope to a stake, even one person might prove sufficient to manage it when the other warped himself down; and so, providing themselves with the stay-rope of one of their boats, and the tether-stake of one of their cattle, — for, like most of the townspeople, they were both boatmen and croft-renters, — they set out for the cliff early on a Monday morning, ere the other members of the kelp party with whom they wrought were astir. The stake was driven into the stiff diluvial clay on the summit of the cliff; and Tam's companion, who was the lighter man of the two, cautiously creeping to the edge, swung himself over, and began to descend; but, on reaching the end of the stay-rope, he found he was still a few feet short of the nest; and, anxious only to secure the birds, he called on his companion to raise the stake, and fix it a little nearer the brink. The stake was accordingly raised; but the strength of one man being insufficient to hold it on such broken ground,

and far less than sufficient to fasten it down as before, Tam, in spite of his exertions, staggered step after step towards the edge of the precipice. "O Jock! O Jock! O Jock!" he exclaimed, straining meanwhile every nerve in an agony of exertion, "ye'll be o'er like a pock o' weet fish." "Gae a wee bittie down yet," answered the other. "Down! down! deil gae down wi' ye, for I can gae nae further," rejoined Tam; and, throwing off the rope, — for he now stood on the uttermost brink, — a loud scream, and, after a fearful pause of half a minute, a deep hollow sound from the bottom told all the rest. "Willawins for poor Jock Watson," exclaimed Tam Polson; "win the gude five pounds wha like, they'll no be won, it seems, by either him or me."

The party of kelp-burners were proceeding this morning to the scene of their labors, through a heavy fog; and as they reached the furnace one by one, they sat down fronting it, to rest them after their walk, and wait the coming up of the others. Tam Polson had already taken his place among the rest; and there were but two amissing, the man whose dead body now lay at the foot of the cliff, and a serious elderly person, one of his neighbors, whose company he sometimes courted. At length they were both seen as if issuing out of a dense cloud of mist.

"Yonder they come," said one of the kelp-burners; "but gudesake! only look how little Jock Watson looms through the fog as mickle's a giant."

"Jock Watson!" exclaimed Polson, starting to his feet, and raising his hands to his eyes, with a wild expression of bewilderment and terror, "aye, murdered Jock Watson, as sure as death!"

The figure shrank into the mist as he spoke, and the old man was seen approaching alone.

"What hae ye done to Jock Watson, Donald?" was the eager query put to him, on his coming up, by half a dozen voices at once.

"Ask Tam Polson there," said the old man. "I tapped at Jock's window as I passed, and found he had set out wi' Tam half an hour afore daybreak."

"Oh," said Tam, "it was poor murdered Jock Watson's ghaist we saw; it was Jock's ghaist." And so he divulged the whole story.

The British Linen Company had been established in Edinburgh about the year 1746, chiefly with a view, as the name implies, of forwarding the interests of the linen trade; and in a few years after, Mr. Forsyth, whose character as an active and successful man of business was beginning to be appreciated in more than the north of Scotland, was chosen as the Company's agent for that extensive tract of country which intervenes between the Pentland Frith and the Frith of Beauly. The linen trade was better suited at this time to the state of the country and the previously-acquired habits of the people than any other could have been. All the linens worn in Scotland, with the exception, perhaps, of some French cambrics, were of home manufacture. Every female was skilled in spinning, and every little hamlet had its weaver, who, if less a master of his profession than some of the weavers of our manufacturing towns in the present day, was as decidedly superior to our provincial weavers. A knowledge of what may be termed the higher departments of the craft was spread more equally over the country than now; and, as is always the case before the minuter subdivisions of labor take place, if less could be produced by the trade as a body, the average ability ranked higher in individuals. In establishing the linen trade, therefore, as the skill essential to carrying it on

already existed, it was but necessary that motives should be held out sufficiently powerful to awaken the industry of the people; and these were furnished by Mr. Forsyth, in the form of remunerative prices for their labor. The town of Cromarty, from its central situation and excellent harbor, was chosen as the depot of the establishment. The flax was brought in vessels from Holland, prepared for the spinners in Cromarty, and then distributed by the boats of Mr. Forsyth along the shores of the Friths of Dornoch, Dingwall, and Beauly, and northwards as far as Wick and Thurso. At the commencement of the trade the distaff and spindle was in extensive use all over the north of Scotland, and the spinning-wheel only partially introduced into some of the towns; but the more primitive implement was comparatively slow and inefficient, and Mr. Forsyth, the more effectually to supplant it by the better machine, made it an express condition with all whom he employed for a second year, that at least one wheel should be introduced into every family. He, besides, hired skilful spinners to go about the country teaching its use; and so effectual were his measures that, in about ten years after the commencement of the trade, the distaff and spindle had almost entirely disappeared. There are parts of the remote Highlands, however, in which it is still in use; and the writer, when residing in a wild district of western Ross, which borders on the Atlantic, has repeatedly seen the Highland women, as they passed to and from the shore, at once bending under the weight of the creel with which they manured their lands, and ceaselessly twirling the spindle as it hung beneath the staff.

CHAPTER VI.

The less we know as to things that can be done, the less sceptical are we as to things that cannot. — COLTON.

ABOUT five years after the establishment of the linen trade, Mr. Forsyth became a shipowner; and as he had made it a rule never to provide himself from other countries with what could be produced by the workmen of his own, his first vessel, a fine large sloop, was built at Fortrose. There had been ship-builders established at Cromarty at a much earlier period. Among the designations attached to names, which we find in the older records of the place, there is none of more frequent occurrence than that of ship-carpenter. There are curious stories, too, connected with ship-launches, which serve to mark the remote period at which these must have occurred. An occasion of this kind, at a time when the knowledge of mechanics was more imperfect and much less general than at present, was always one of great uncertainty. Accidents were continually occurring; and superstition found room to mingle her mysterious horrors with the doubts and fears with which it was naturally attended. Witches and the Evil Eye were peculiarly dreaded by the carpenter on the day of a launch; and it is said of one of the early Cromarty launches that, the vessel having stopped short in the middle of her course, the master-carpenter was so irritated with a reputed witch among the spectators, to whom he attributed

the accident, that he threw her down and broke her arm. A single anecdote, though of a lighter cast, preserves the recollection of Mr. Forsyth's ship-building at Fortrose. The vessel was nearly finished; and a half-witted knave, named Tam Reid, who had the knack of tricking everybody, — even himself at times, — was despatched by Mr. Forsyth with a bottle of turpentine to the painters. Tam, however, who had never more than heard of wine, and who seems to have taken it for granted that the bottle he carried contained nothing worse, contrived to drink the better half of it by the way, and was drugged almost to death for his pains. When afterwards humorously charged by Mr. Forsyth with breach of trust, and urged to confess, truly, whether he had actually drunk the whole of the missing turpentine, he is said to have replied, in great wrath, that he "widna gie a'e glass o' whiskey for a' the wine i' the warld."

Mr. Forsyth's vessels were at first employed almost exclusively in the Dutch trade; but the commerce of the country gradually shifted its old channels, and in his latter days they were engaged mostly in trading between the north of Scotland and the ports of Leith, London, and Newcastle. There are curious traditionary anecdotes of his sailors still afloat among the people, which illustrate the credulous and imaginative character of the age. Stories of this class may be regarded as the fossils of history; they show the nature and place of the formation in which they occur. The Scotch sailors of ninety years ago were in many respects a very different sort of persons from the sailors of the present day. They formed one of the most religious classes of the community. There were even founders of sects among them. The too famous John Gibb was a sailor of Borrowstounness; and the worthy Scotchman

who remarked to Peter Walker that "the ill of Scotland he found everywhere, but the good of Scotland nowhere save at home," was a sailor too. Mr. Forsyth was much attached to the seamen of this old and venerable class, and a last remnant of them might be found in his vessels when they had become extinct everywhere else. On the breaking out of the revolutionary war, his sloop, the Elizabeth, was boarded when lying at anchor in one of our Highland lochs by a press-gang from a king's vessel, and the crew, who chanced to be all under hatches at the time, were summoned on deck. First appeared the ancient weather-beaten master, a person in his grand climacteric; then came Saunders M'Iver, the mate, a man who had twice sailed round the world about half a century before; then came decent Thomas Grant, who had been an elder of the kirk for more than forty years; and last of all came old, gray-headed Robert Hossack, a still older man than any of the others. "Good heavens!" exclaimed the officer who commanded the party, "here, lads, are the four sailors who manned the ark alive still." I need hardly add, that on this occasion he left all her crew to the Elizabeth.

Some of the stories of Mr. Forsyth's sailors may serve to enliven my narrative. The master of the Elizabeth, in one of his Dutch voyages, when on the eve of sailing for Scotland, had gone into a tavern with the merchant from whom he had purchased his cargo, and was shown by mistake into a room in which there lay an old woman ill of a malignant fever. The woman regarded him with a long and ghastly stare, which haunted him all the evening after; and during the night he was seized by the fever. He sent for a physician of the place. His vessel was bound for sea he said, and the crew would be wholly unable to bring her home without him. Had he no medicine potent enough

to arrest the progress of the disease for about a week? The physician replied in the affirmative, and prescribed with apparent confidence. The master quitted his bed on the strength of the prescription, and the vessel sailed for Cromarty. A storm arose, and there was not a seaman aboard who outwrought or outwatched the master. He began to droop, however, as the weather moderated, and his strength had so failed him on reaching Cromarty, that his sailors had to carry him home in a litter. The fever had returned, and more than six weeks elapsed after his arrival ere he had so far recovered from it as to be able to leave his bed. The story is, I believe, strictly true; but in accounting, in the present day, for the main fact which it supplies, we would perhaps be inclined to attribute less than our fathers did to the skill of the physician, and more to the force of imagination and to those invigorating energies which a sense of danger awakens.

Old Saunders M'Iver, the mate of the Elizabeth, was one of the most devout and excellent men of the place. There was in some degree, too, a sort of poetical interest attached to him, from the dangers which he had encountered and the strange sights which he had seen. He had seen smoke and flame bursting out of the sea in the far Pacific, and had twice visited those remote parts of the world which lie directly under our feet, — a fact which all his townsmen credited, for Saunders himself had said it, but which few of them could understand. In one of his long voyages, the crew with whom he sailed were massacred by some of the wild natives of the Indian Archipelago, and he alone escaped by secreting himself in the rigging, and from thence slipping unobserved into one of the boats, and then cutting her loose. But he was furnished with neither oars nor sail; and it was not until he had been tossed at the

mercy of the tides and winds of the Indian Ocean for nearly a week, that he was at length picked up by a European vessel. So powerfully was he impressed on this occasion, that it is said he was never after seen to smile. He was a grave and somewhat hard-favored man, powerful in bone and muscle even after he had considerably turned his sixtieth year, and much respected for his inflexible integrity and the depth of his religious feelings. Both Saunders and his wife — a person of equal worth with himself — were especial favorites with Mr. Porteous of Kilmuir, — a minister of the same class with the Pedens, Renwicks, and Cargills of a former age, — and on one occasion, when the sacrament was held in his parish, and Saunders was absent on one of his Dutch voyages, Mrs. M'Iver was an inmate of the manse. A tremendous storm burst out in the nighttime; and the poor woman lay awake, listening in utter terror to the fearful roarings of the wind, as it howled in the chimneys and shook the casements and the door. At length, when she could lie still no longer, she arose, and, creeping along the passage to the door of the minister's chamber, "O Mr. Porteous!" she said, "Mr. Porteous, do ye no hear that, and poor Saunders on his way back fra Holland! Oh, rise, rise, and ask the strong help o' your Master!" The minister accordingly rose, and entered his closet. The Elizabeth, at this critical moment, was driving onwards, through the spray and darkness, along the northern shore of the Moray Frith. The fearful skerries of Shandwick, where so many gallant vessels have perished, were close at hand, and the increasing roll of the sea showed the gradual shallowing of the water. M'Iver and his old townsman Robert Hossack stood together at the binnacle. An immense wave came rolling behind, and they had but barely time to clutch to the nearest hold

when it broke over them half-mast high, sweeping spars, bulwarks, cordage, all before it in its course. It passed, but the vessel rose not. Her deck remained buried in a sheet of foam, and she seemed settling down by the head. There was a frightful pause. First, however, the bowsprit and the beams of the windlass began to emerge; next the forecastle, — the vessel seemed as if shaking herself from the load, — and then the whole deck appeared, as she went tilting over the next wave. "There are still more mercies in store for us," said M'Iver, addressing his companion; "she floats still." "O Saunders! Saunders!" exclaimed Robert, "there was surely some God's soul at work for us, or she would never have cowed yon."

There is a somewhat similar story told of two of Mr. Forsyth's boatmen. They were brothers, and of a much lighter character than Saunders and his companion; but their mother, who was old and bed-ridden, was a person of singular piety. They had left her, when setting out on one of their Caithness voyages, in so low a state that they could scarce entertain any hope of again seeing her in life. On their return they were wrecked on the rocky coast of Tarbat, and it was with much difficulty that they succeeded in saving their lives. "O brother, lad!" said the one to the other, on reaching the shore, "our poor old mither is gone at last, or yon widna have happened us. We maun just be learning to pray for ourselves." And the inference, says the story, was correct; for the good old woman had died about half an hour before the accident occurred.

CHAPTER VII.

> Soft as the memory of buried love,
> Pure as the prayer which childhood wafts above,
> Was she.
>
> BYRON.

UNMARRIED men of warm affections and social habits begin often, after turning their fortieth year, to feel themselves too much alone in the world for happiness, and to look forward with more of fear than of desire to a solitary and friendless old age. William Forsyth, a man of the kindliest feelings, on completing his forty-first year was still a widower. His mother had declined into the vale of life; his two brothers had settled down, as has been already related, in distant parts of the country. There were occasional gaps, too, occurring in the circle in which he moved. Disease, decay, and accident kept up the continual draught of death; friends and familiar faces were dropping away and disappearing; and he began to find that he was growing too solitary for his own peace. The wound, however, which his affections had sustained, rather more than ten years before, had been gradually closing under the softening influence of time. The warmth of his affections and the placidity of his temper fitted him in a peculiar manner for domestic happiness; and it was his great good fortune to meet, about this period, with a lady through whom, all unwittingly on her own part, he was taught to regard himself as no longer solitary in the

present, nor devoid of hope for the future. He was happy in his attachment, and early in 1764 she became his wife.

Miss Elizabeth Grant, daughter of the Rev. Patrick Grant of Duthel, in Strathspey, and of Isabella Kerr of Ruthven Manse, was born in Duthel in the year 1742, and removed to Nigg, in Ross-shire, about twelve years after, on the induction of her father into that parish. Her character was as little a common one as that of Mr. Forsyth himself. Seldom indeed does nature produce a finer intellect, never a warmer or more compassionate heart. It is rarely that the female mind educates itself. The genius of the sex is rather fine than robust; it partakes rather of the delicacy of the myrtle than the strength of the oak, and care and culture seem essential to its full development. There have been instances, however, though rare, of women working their almost unassisted way from the lower to the higher levels of intelligence; and the history of this lady, had she devoted her time more to the registration of her thoughts than to the duties of her station, would have furnished one of these. She was, in the best sense of the term, an original thinker; one of the few whose innate vigor of mind carry them in search of truth beyond the barriers of the conventional modes of thought. But strong good sense, rising almost to the dignity of philosophy, a lively imagination, and a just and delicate taste, united to very extensive knowledge and nice discernment, though these rendered her conversation the delight of the circle in which she moved, formed but the subordinate excellences of her character. She was one of the truly good, the friend of her species and of her God. A diary, found among her papers after her death, and now in the possession of her friends, shows that the transcript of duty which her life afforded was carefully collated every day

with the perfect copy with which Revelation supplied her, and her every thought, word, and action, laid open to the eye of Omniscience. In the expressive language of Scripture, she was one of those "who walk with God." There was nought, however, of harshness or austerity in her religion. It formed the graceful and appropriate garb of a tender-hearted and beautiful woman of engaging manners and high talent. With this lady Mr. Forsyth enjoyed all of good and happiness that the married state can afford, for the long period of thirty-six years.

His life was a busy one; his very pleasures were all of the active kind; and yet, notwithstanding his numerous engagements, it was remarked that there were few men who contrived to find more spare time than Mr. Forsyth, or who could devote half a day more readily to the service of a friend or neighbor. But his leisure hours were hardly and fairly earned. He rose regularly, winter and summer, between five and six o'clock, lighted his office-fire, if the weather was cold, wrote out his letters for the day, and brought up his books to the latest period. Ere the family was summoned to breakfast he was generally well nigh the conclusion of his mercantile labors. The family then met for morning prayer; for, like the Cotter in Burns, Mr. Forsyth was the priest of his household, and led in their devotions morning and evening. An hour or two more spent in his office set him free for the remainder of the day from labor on his own behalf; the rest he devoted to the good of others and his own amusement. Once a month he held a regular Justice of Peace Court, in which he was occasionally assisted by some of the neighboring proprietors, whose names, like his own, were on the commission of the peace. But the age was a rude one; and differences were so frequently occurring among the people

that there were few days in which his time was not occupied from twelve till two in his honored capacity of peace-maker for the place. The evening was more his own. Sometimes he superintended the lading or unlading of his vessels; sometimes he walked out into the country to visit his humble friends in the landward part of the parish, and see how they were getting on with their spinning. There was not a good old man or woman within six miles of Cromarty, however depressed by poverty, that Mr. Forsyth did not reckon among the number of his acquaintance.

Of all his humble friends, however, one of the most respected, and most frequently visited by him, was a pious, though somewhat eccentric, old woman, who lived all alone in a little solitary cottage beside the sea, rather more than two miles to the west of the town, and who was known to the people of the place as Meggie o' the Shore. Meggie was one of the truly excellent, — a person in whom the Durhams and Rutherfords of a former age would have delighted. There was no doubt somewhat of harshness in her opinions, and of credulity in her beliefs; but never were there opinions or beliefs more conscientiously held; and the general benevolence of her disposition served wonderfully to soften in practice all her theoretical asperities. She was ailing and poor; and as she was advancing in years, and her health became more broken, her little earnings — for she was one of Mr. Forsyth's spinners — were still growing less. Meggie, however, had "come of decent people," though their heads had all been laid low in the churchyard long ere now; and though she was by far too orthodox to believe, with the son of Sirach, that it "is better to die than to beg," it was not a thing to be thought of that she should do dishonor to the memory of the departed by owing a single meal to the charity of the

parish. She toiled on, therefore, as she best could, content with the merest pittance, and complained to no one. Mr. Forsyth, who thoroughly understood the character, and appreciated its value, and who knew, withal, how wretchedly inadequate Meggie's earnings were to her support, contrived on one occasion to visit her early, and to stay late, in the hope of being invited to eat with her; for in her more prosperous days there were few of her visitors suffered to leave her cottage until, as she herself used to express it, they had first broken bread. At this time, however, there was no sign of the expected invitation; and it was not until Mr. Forsyth had at length risen to come away that Meggie asked him hesitatingly whether he would "no tak' some refreshment afore he went?"

"I have just been waiting to say yes," said the merchant, sitting down again. Meggie placed before him a half-cake of barley-bread and a jug of water.

"It was the feast of the promise," she said; "'thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.'"

The merchant saw that, in her effort to be hospitable, she had exhausted her larder; and, without remarking that the portion was rather a scanty one, partook with apparent relish of his share of the half-cake. But he took especial care from that time forward till the death of Meggie, which did not take place till about eight years after, that her feasts should not be so barely and literally feasts of the promise.

Mr. Forsyth, in the midst of his numerous engagements, found leisure for a few days every year to visit his relatives in Moray. The family of his paternal grandfather, a farmer of Elginshire, had been a numerous one; and he had an uncle settled in Elgin as a merchant and general dealer who was not a great many years older than him-

self. For the judgment of this gentleman Mr. Forsyth entertained the highest respect, and he rarely engaged in any new undertaking without first consulting him. Indeed, a general massiveness of intellect and force of character seemed characteristic of the family, and these qualities the well-known work of this gentleman's son, "Forsyth's Italy," serves happily to illustrate. There is perhaps no book of travels in the language in which the thoughts lie so closely, or in the perusal of which the reader, after running over the first few chapters, gives himself up so entirely to the judgment of the author. The work is now in its fourth edition; and a biographical memoir of the writer, appended to it by his younger brother, Mr. Isaac Forsyth of Elgin, shows how well and pleasingly the latter gentleman could have written had he employed in literature those talents which have rendered him, like his father and his cousin, eminently successful in business.

When on one of his yearly visits, Mr. Forsyth inquired of his uncle whether he could not point out to him, among his juvenile acquaintance in Elgin, some steady young lad, of good parts, whom he might engage as an assistant in his business at Cromarty. Its more mechanical details, he said, were such as he himself could perhaps easily master; but then, occupying his time as they did, without employing his mind, they formed a sort of drudgery of the profession, for which he thought it might prove in the end a piece of economy to pay. His uncle acquiesced in the remark, and recommended to his notice an ingenious young lad who had just left school, after distinguishing himself by his attainments as a scholar, and who was now living unemployed with some friends at Elgin. The lad was accordingly introduced to Mr. Forsyth, who was much pleased with his appearance and the simple ingenu-

ousness of his manners, and on his return he brought him with him to Cromarty.

Charles Grant, for so the young man was called, soon became much a favorite with Mr. Forsyth and his family, and was treated by them rather as a son than a dependant. He had a taste for reading, and Mr. Forsyth furnished him with books. He introduced him, too, to all his more intelligent and more influential friends, and was alike liberal in assisting him, as the case chanced to require, with his purse and his advice. The young man proved himself eminently worthy of the kindness he received. He possessed a mind singularly well balanced in all its faculties, moral and intellectual. He added great quickness to great perseverance; much warmth and kindliness of feeling to an unyielding rectitude of principle; and strong good sense to the poetical temperament. He remained with Mr. Forsyth for about five years, and then parted from him for some better appointment in London, which he owed to his friendship. It would be no unprofitable or uninteresting task to trace his after course; but the outlines of his history are already known to most of my readers. His extensive knowledge and very superior talents rendered his services eminently useful; his known integrity procured him respect and confidence; the goodness of his disposition endeared him to an extensive and ever-widening circle of friends. He rose gradually through a series of employments, each, in progression, more important and honorable than the one which had preceded it. He filled for many years the chair of the honorable East India Company's Court of Directors, and represented the county of Inverness in several successive parliaments; and of two of his sons, one has had the dignity of knighthood conferred upon him for his public services, and the other occupies an

honorable, because well-earned, place among the British peerage. Mr. Grant continued through life to cherish the memory of his benefactor, and to show even in old age the most marked and assiduous attentions to the surviving members of his family. He procured writerships for two of his sons, John and Patrick Forsyth; and, at a time when his acquaintance extended over all the greater merchants of Europe, he used to speak of him as a man whose judgment and probity, joined to his singularly liberal views and truly generous sentiments, would have conferred honor on the magisterial chair of the first commercial city of the world. It was when residing in the family of William Forsyth that Mr. Grant first received those serious impressions of the vital importance of religion which so influenced his conduct through life, and to which he is said to have given expression, when on the verge of another world, in one of the finest hymns in the language. Need I apologize to the reader for introducing it here?

HYMN.

With years oppressed, with sorrows worn,
Dejected, harassed, sick, forlorn,
To thee, O God! I pray;
To thee these withered hands arise;
To thee I lift these failing eyes; —
Oh, cast me not away.

Thy mercy heard my infant prayer;
Thy love, with all a mother's care,
Sustained my childish days;
Thy goodness watched my ripening youth,
And formed my soul to love thy truth,
And filled my heart with praise.

O! Saviour, has thy grace declined?
Can years affect the Eternal Mind,
Or time its love decay?
A thousand ages pass thy sight,
And all their long and weary flight
Is gone like yesterday.

Then, even in age and grief, thy name
Shall still my languid heart inflame,
And bow my faltering knee.
O, yet this bosom feels the fire,
This trembling hand and drooping lyre
Have yet a strain for thee.

Yes, broken, tuneless, still, O Lord!
This voice, transported, shall record
Thy bounty, tried so long;
Till, sinking slow, with calm decay,
Its feeble murmurs melt away
Into seraphic song.

CHAPTER VIII.

Good is no good but if it be spend;
God giveth good for none other end.
SPENSER.

THE year 1772 was a highly important one to the people of Cromarty. By far the greater part of the parish is occupied by one large and very valuable property, which, after remaining in the possession of one family for nearly a thousand years, had passed in little more than a century through a full half-dozen. It was purchased in the latter

part of this year by George Ross, a native of Ross-shire, who had realized an immense fortune in England as an army agent. He was one of those benefactors of the species who can sow liberally in the hope of a late harvest for others to reap; and the townspeople, even the poorest and least active, were soon made to see that they had got a neighbor who would suffer them to be idle or wretched no longer.

He found in William Forsyth a man after his own heart; one with whom to concert and advise, and who entered warmly into all his well-laid schemes for awakening the energies and developing the yet untried resources of the country. The people seemed more than half asleep around them. The mechanic spent well-nigh two thirds of his time in catching fish and cultivating his little croft; the farmer raised from his shapeless party-colored patches, of an acre or two apiece, the same sort of half-crops that had satisfied his grandfather. The only trade in the country was originated and carried on by Mr. Forsyth, and its only manufacture the linen one which he superintended. In this state of things, it was the part assigned to himself by the benevolent and patriotic Agent, now turned of seventy, to revolutionize and give a new spirit to the whole; and such was his untiring zeal and statesman-like sagacity that he fully succeeded.

One of his first gifts to the place was a large and commodious pier for the accommodation of trading vessels. He then built an extensive brewery, partly with the view to check the trade in smuggling, which prevailed at this time in the north of Scotland to an enormous extent, and partly to open a new market to the farmers for the staple grain of the country. The project succeeded; and the Agent's excellent ale supplanted in no small measure, from Aberdeen

to John O'Groat's, the gins and brandies of the Continent. He then established a hempen manufactory, which has ever since employed about two hundred people within its walls, and fully twice that number without; and set on foot a trade in pork, which has paid the rents of half the widows' cottages in the country for the last forty years, and is still carried on by the traders of the place to an extent of from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds annually. He established a nail and spade manufactory; brought women from England to instruct the young girls in the art of working lace; provided houses for the poor; presented the town with a neat, substantial building, the upper part of which serves as a council-room, and the lower as a prison; and built for the accommodation of the poor Highlanders, who came thronging into the town to work on his lands or in his manufactories, a handsome Gaelic chapel. He set himself, too, to initiate his tenantry in the art of rearing wheat; and finding them wofully unwilling to become wiser on the subject, he tried the force of example, by taking an extensive farm under his own management, and conducting it on the most approved principles of modern agriculture. It is truly wonderful how much may be effected by the well-directed energies of one benevolent and vigorous mind. It is to individuals, not masses, that the species owe their advancement in the scale of civilization and rationality. George Ross was a man far advanced in life when he purchased the lands of Cromarty, and he held them for but fourteen years, for he died in 1786, at the great age of eighty-five; and yet in these few years, which might be regarded as but the fag-end of a busy life, he did more for the north of Scotland than had been accomplished by all its other proprietors put together since the death of President Forbes.

Mr. Forsyth was ever ready to second the benevolent and well-laid schemes of the Agent. He purchased shares in his hempen manufactory, — for Mr. Ross, the more widely to extend its interests, had organized a company to carry it on — and took a fine snug farm in the neighborhood of the town into his own hands, to put into practice all he had learned of the new system of farming. Agriculture was decidedly one of the most interesting studies of the period. It was still a field of experiment and discovery; new principles, little dreamed of by our ancestors, were elicited every year; and though there were hundreds of intelligent minds busy in exploring it, much remained a sort of *terra incognita* notwithstanding. Mr. Forsyth soon became a zealous and successful farmer, and spent nearly as much of his evenings in his fields as he did of his mornings in his counting-house. The farmers around him were wedded to their old prejudices, but the merchant had nothing to unlearn; and though his neighbors smiled at first to see him rearing green crops of comparatively little value from lands for which he paid a high rent, or, more inexplicable still, paying the rent and suffering the lands to lie fallow, they could not avoid being convinced at last that he was actually raising more corn than any of themselves. Though essentially a practical man, and singularly sober and judicious in all his enterprises, his theoretical speculations were frequently of a bolder character; and he had delighted in reasoning on the causes of the various phenomena with which his new study presented him. The exhaustive properties of some kinds of crop; the restorative qualities of others; the mysteries of the vegetative pabulum; its well-marked distinctness from the soil which contains it; how, after one variety of grain has appropriated its proper nourishment, and then

languished for lack of sustenance, another variety continues to draw its food from the same tract, and after that, perhaps, yet another variety more; how, at length, the productive matter is so exhausted that all is barrenness, until, after the lapse of years, it is found to have accumulated again, — all these, with the other mysteries of vegetation, furnished him with interesting subjects of thought and inquiry. One of the best and largest of his fields was situated on the edge of that extensive tract of table-land which rises immediately above the town, and commands so pleasing a prospect of the bay and the opposite shore; and from time immemorial the footpath which skirts its lower edge, and overlooks the sea, had been a favorite promenade of the inhabitants. What, however, was merely a footpath in the early part of each season, grew broad enough for a carriage-road before autumn; and much of Mr. Forsyth's best braird was trampled down and destroyed every year. His ploughman would fain have excluded the walkers, and hinted at the various uses of traps and spring-guns; at any rate, he said, he was determined to *build up the slap;* but the merchant, though he commended his zeal, negatived the proposal; and so the *slap* was suffered to remain unbuilt. On sometimes meeting with parties of the more juvenile saunterers, he has gravely cautioned them to avoid his ploughman Donald M'Candie. Donald, he would say, was a cross-grained old man, as they all knew, and might both frighten them and hurt himself in running after them. Mr. Forsyth retained the farm until his death; and it shows in some little degree the estimation in which he was held by the people, that his largest field, though it has repeatedly changed its tenant since then, still retains the name of Mr. Forsyth's Park.

Shortly after he had engaged with the farm, Mr. For-

syth built for himself a neat and very commodious house, which, at the time of its erection, was beyond comparison the best in the place, and planted a large and very fine garden. Both serve to show how completely this merchant of the eighteenth century had anticipated the improvements of the nineteenth. There are not loftier nor better-proportioned rooms in the place, larger windows, nor easier stairs; and his garden is such a one as would satisfy an Englishman of the present day. These are perhaps but little matters. They serve, however, to show the taste and judgment of the man.

CHAPTER IX.

'Tis not that rural sports alone invite,
But all the grateful country breathes delight;
Here blooming Health exerts her gentle reign,
And strings the sinews of the industrious swain.

GAY.

I AM not of opinion that the people of the north of Scotland are less happy in the present age than in the age or two which immediately preceded it; but I am certain they are not half so merry. We may not have less to amuse us than our fathers had; but our amusements somehow seem less hearty, and are a great deal less noisy, and, instead of interesting the entire community, are confined to insulated parties and single individuals. A whole hecatomb of wild games have been sacrificed to the genius of trade and the wars of the French Revolution. The age of holidays is

clean gone by; the practical joke has been extinct for the last fifty years; and we have to smuggle the much amusement which we still contrive to elicit from out the eccentricities of our neighbors, as secretly as if it were the subject of a tax.

In the early and more active days of Mr. Forsyth, the national and manly exercise of golf was the favorite amusement of the gentlemen; and Cromarty, whose links furnished a fitting scene for the sport, was the meeting-place of one of the most respectable golf-clubs in the country. Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown, Sheriff M'Leod of Geanis, Mr. Forsyth and the Lairds of Newhall, Pointzfield, and Braelanguil were among its members. Both the sheriff and Sir Charles were very powerful men, and good players. It was remarked, however, that neither of them dealt a more skilful or more vigorous blow than Mr. Forsyth, whose frame, though not much above the middle size, was singularly compact and muscular. He excelled, too, in his younger days, in all the other athletic games of the country. Few men threw a longer bowl, or pitched the stone or the bar further beyond the ordinary bound. Every meeting of the golf-players cost him a dinner and a dozen or two of his best wine; for, invariably, when they had finished their sport for the day, they adjourned to his hospitable board, and the evening passed in mirth and jollity. Some of the anecdotes which furnished part of their laughter on these occasions still survive; and, with the assistance of the wine, they must have served the purpose wonderfully well. All the various casks and boxes used by Mr. Forsyth in his trade were marked with his initials W. F., that he might be the better able to identify them. They were sometimes suffered so to accumulate in the outhouses of the neighboring proprietors, that they met the eye at every

turning; and at no place was this more the case than at Pointzfield. On one occasion a swarm of Mr. Forsyth's bees took flight in the same direction. They flew due west along the shore, followed by a servant, and turned to the south at the Pointzfield woods, where the pursuer lost sight of them. In about half an hour after, however, a swarm of bees were discovered in the proprietor's garden, and the servant came to claim them in the name of his master.

"On what pretence?" demanded the proprietor.

"Simply," said the man, "because my master lost a swarm to-day, which I continued to follow to the beginning of the avenue yonder; and these cannot be other than his."

"Nonsense," replied the proprietor. "Had they belonged to your master they would have been marked by the W. F., every one of them."

Eventually, however, Mr. Forsyth got his bees; but there were few golf-meetings at which the story was not cited against him by way of proof that there were occasions when even he, with all his characteristic forethought, could be as careless as other men.

It was chiefly in his capacity of magistrate, however, that Mr. Forsyth was brought acquainted with the wilder humors of the place. Some of the best jokes of the townsmen were exceedingly akin to felonies; and as the injured persons were in every case all the angrier for being laughed at, they generally applied for redress to their magistrate. There is a transition stage in society, — a stage between barbarism and civilization, — in which, through one of the unerring instincts of our nature, men employ their sense of the ludicrous in laughing one another into propriety; and such was the stage at which society had arrived in the

north of Scotland in at least the earlier part of Mr. Forsyth's career. Cromarty was, in consequence, a merry little place, though the merriment was much on the one side, and of a wofully selfish character. The young, like those hunting parties of Norway that band together for the purpose of ridding their forests of the bears, used in the long winter evenings to go prowling about the streets in quest of something that might be teased and laughed at; the old, though less active in the pursuit, — for they kept to their houses, — resembled the huntsmen of the same country who lie in wait for the passing animal on the tops of trees. Their passion for the ludicrous more than rivalled the Athenian rage for the new; and while each one laughed at his neighbor, he took all care to avoid being laughed at in turn.

The poor fishermen of the place, from circumstances connected with their profession, were several degrees lower in the scale of civilization than most of their neighbors. The herring-fishery had not yet taught them to speculate, nor were there Sabbath schools to impart to them the elements of learning and good manners; and though there might be, perhaps, one of fifty among them possessed of a smattering of Latin, it was well if a tithe of the remaining forty-nine had learned to read. They were, however, a simple, inoffensive race of people, whose quarrels, like their marriages — for they quarrelled often, though at a small expense — were restricted to their own class, and who, though perhaps little acquainted with the higher standards of right, had a code of foolish superstitions, which, strange as it may seem, served almost the same end. They respected an oath, in the belief that no one had ever perjured himself and thriven; regarded the murderer as exposed to the terrible visitations of his victim, and the thief as a person doomed to a *down look;* reverenced the Bible

as a protection from witchcraft, and baptism as a charm against the fairies. Their simplicity, their ignorance, their superstition, laid them open to a thousand petty annoyances from the wags of the town. They had a belief, long since extinct, that if, when setting out for the fishing, one should interrogate them regarding their voyage, there was little chance of their getting on with it without meeting with some disaster; and it was a common trick with the youngsters to run down to the water's edge, just as they were betaking themselves to their oars, and shout out, "Men, men, where are you going?" They used, too, to hover about their houses after dark, and play all manner of tricks, such as blocking up their chimney with turf and stealthily filling their water-stoups with salt-water just as they were about setting on their *brochan*. One of the best jokes of the period seems almost too good to be forgotten.

The fairies were in ill repute at the time, and long before, for an ill practice of kidnapping children and annoying women in the straw; and no class of people could dread them more than fishers. But they were at length cured of their terrors by being laughed at. One evening, when all the men were setting out for sea, and all the women engaged at the water's edge in handing them their tackle or launching their boats, a party of young fellows, who had watched the opportunity, stole into their cottages, and, disfurnishing the cradles of all their little tenants, transposed the children of the entire village, leaving a child in the cradle of every mother, but taking care that it should not be her own child. They then hid themselves, amid the ruins of a deserted hovel, to wait the result. Up came the women from the shore; and, alarmed by the crying of the children and the strangeness of their voices, they went to their cradles and found a changeling in each. The

scene that followed baffles description. They shrieked and screamed and clapped their hands; and, rushing out to the lanes like so many mad creatures, were only unhinged the more to find the calamity so universal. Down came the women of the place, to make inquiries and give advices; some recommending them to have recourse to the minister, some to procure baskets and suspend the changelings over the fire, — some one thing, some another; but the poor mothers were regardless of them all. They tossed their arms and shrieked and hallooed; and the children, who were well-nigh as ill at ease as themselves, added, by their cries, to the confusion and the uproar. A thought struck one of the townswomen. "I suspect, neighbors," she said, "that the loons are at the bottom of this. Let's bring all the little ones into one place, and see whether every mother cannot find her own among them." No sooner said than done; and peace was restored in a few minutes. Mischievous as the trick was, it had this one effect, that the fairies were in less repute in Cromarty ever after, and were never more charged with the stealing of children. A popular belief is in no small danger when those who cherished learn to laugh at it, be the laugh raised as it may.

CHAPTER X.

Blest be that spot, where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil and trim their evening fire;
Blest that abode, where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair.

GOLDSMITH.

THERE were two classes of men who had no particular cause of gratitude to Mr. Forsyth. Lawyers, notwithstanding his respect for the profession, he contrived to exclude from the place, for no case of dispute or difference ever passed himself, nor was there ever an appeal from his decisions; and inn-keepers found themselves both robbed of their guests by his hospitality, and in danger of losing their licenses for the slightest irregularity that affected the morals of their neighbors. For at least the last twenty years of his life, his house, from the number of guests which his hospitality had drawn to it, often resembled a crowded inn. Did he meet with a young man of promising talent, however poor, who belonged in any degree to the aristocracy of nature, and bade fair to rise above his present level, he was sure of being invited to his table. Did he come in contact with some unfortunate aspirant who had seen better days, but who in his fall had preserved his character, he was certain of being invited too. Was there a wind-bound vessel in the port, Mr. Forsyth was sure to bring the passengers home with him. Had travellers come to visit the place, Mr. Forsyth could best tell them all what deserved

their notice; and nowhere could he tell it half so well as at his own table. Never was there a man who, through the mere indulgence of the kindlier feelings of our nature, contrived to make himself more friends. The chance visitor spent perhaps a single day under his roof, and never after ceased to esteem the good and benevolent owner. His benevolence, like that of John of Calais in the old romance, extended to even the bodies of the dead; an interesting instance of which I am enabled to present to the reader.

Some time in the summer of 1773 or 1774, a pleasure-yacht, the property of that Lord Byron who immediately preceded the poet, cast anchor in the bay of Cromarty, having, according to report, a dying lady on board.' A salmon-fisher of the place, named Hossack, a man of singular daring and immense personal strength, rowed his little skiff alongside in the course of the day, bringing with him two fine salmon for sale. The crew, however, seemed wild and reckless as that of a privateer or pirate; and he had no sooner touched the side, than a fellow who stood in the gangway dealt his light skiff so heavy a blow with a boat-hook that he split one of the planks. Hossack seized hold of the pole, wrenched it out of the fellow's grasp, and was in the act of raising it to strike him down, when the master of the yacht, a native of Orkney, came running to the gun-wale, and, apologizing for the offered violence, invited the fisherman aboard. He accordingly climbed the vessel's side, and disposed of his fish.

Lord Byron, a good-looking man, but rather shabbily dressed, was pacing the quarter-deck. Two proprietors of the country, who had known him in early life, and had come aboard to pay him their respects, were seated on chairs near the stern. But the party seemed an unsocial one. His lordship continued to pace the deck, regarding his visitors from

time to time with an expression singularly repulsive, while the latter had the blank look of men who, expecting a kind reception, are chilled by one freezingly cold. The fisherman was told by the master, by way of explanation, that his lordship, who had been when at the soundest a reserved man, of very eccentric habits, was now unsettled in mind, and had been so from the time he had killed a gentleman in a duel; and that his madness seemed to be of a kind which, instead of changing, deepens the shades of the natural character. He was informed further, that the sick lady, a Miss Mudie, had expired that morning; that she was no connection whatever of his lordship, but was merely an acquaintance of the master's, and a native of Orkney, who, having gone to Inverness for the benefit of her health, and becoming worse, had taken the opportunity, in the absence of any more eligible conveyance, of returning by Lord Byron's yacht. The master, who seemed to be a plain, warm-hearted sailor, expressed much solicitude regarding the body. The unfortunate lady had been most respectable herself and most respectably connected, and was anxious that the funeral should be of a kind befitting her character and station; but then, he had scarce anything in his own power, and his lordship would listen to nothing on the subject. "Ah," replied Hossack, "but I know a gentleman who would listen to you, and do something more. I shall go ashore this moment, and tell Mr. Forsyth."

The fisherman did so, and found he had calculated aright. Mr. Forsyth sent townswomen aboard to dress the corpse, who used to astonish the children of the place for years after by their descriptions of the cabin in which it lay. The days of steamboats had not yet come on, to render such things familiar; and the idea of a room panelled with

mirrors, and embossed with flowers of gold, was well suited to fill the young imagination. The body was taken ashore; and, contrary to one of the best established canons of superstition, was brought to the house of Mr. Forsyth, from which, on the following day, when he had invited inhabtants of the place to attend the funeral, it was carried to his own burying-ground, and there interred. And such was the beginning of a friendship between the benevolent merchant and the relatives of the deceased which terminated only with the life of the former. Two of his visitors, during the summer of 1795, were a Major and Mrs. Mudie from Orkney.

I may mention, in the passing, a somewhat curious circumstance connected with Lord Byron's yacht. She actually sat deep in the water at the time with a cargo of contraband goods, most of which were afterwards unloaded near Sinclair's Bay, in Caithness. Hossack, ere he parted from the master, closed a bargain with him for a considerable quantity of Hollands, and, on being brought astern to the vessel's peak on the evening she sailed from Cromarty, he found the place filled with kegs, bound together by pairs, and heavy weights attached to facilitate their sinking, in the event of their being thrown overboard. It is a curious, but, I believe, well-authenticated fact, that one of the most successful smuggling vessels of the period, on at least the eastern coast of Scotland, was a revenue-cutter provided by government for the suppression of the trade.

Besides the chance visitors entertained at the hospitable board of the merchant, there were parties of his friends and relatives who spent, almost every summer, a few weeks in his family. The two daughters of his brother, who had removed to England so long before, with the son and daughter of the other brother, who had settled in

Dingwall; the brother of his first wife, a Major Russell, with the brother and sisters of his second; his relatives from Elgin; a nephew who had married into a family of rank in England, and some of his English partners in the hempen manufactory, were among the number of his annual visitors. His parties were often such as the most fastidious would have deemed it an honor to have been permitted to join. He has repeatedly entertained at his table his old townsman Duncan Davidson, member of Parliament at the time for the shire of Cromarty, the late Lord Seaforth, Sir James Mackintosh, and his old protegé Charles Grant, with the sons of the latter, Charles and Robert. The merchant, when Mr. Grant had quitted Cromarty for London, was a powerful and active man, in the undiminished vigor of middle life. When he returned, after his long residence in India, he found him far advanced in years, indeed considerably turned of seventy, and, in at least his bodily powers, the mere wreck of his former self. And so affected was the warm-hearted director by the contrast, that, on grasping his hand, he burst into tears. Mr. Forsyth himself, however, saw nothing to regret in the change. He was still enjoying much in his friends and his family; for his affections remained warm as ever, and he had still enough of activity left to do much good. His judgment as a magistrate was still sound. He had more time, too, than before to devote to the concerns of his neighbors; for, with the coming on of old age, he had been gradually abridging his business, retaining just enough to keep up his accustomed round of occupation. Had a townsman died in any of the colonies, or in the army or navy, after saving some little money, it was the part of the merchant to recover it for the relatives of the deceased. Was the son or nephew of some of his humble neighbors

trepanned by a recruiting party, — and there were strange arts used for the purpose fifty years ago, — the case was a difficult one indeed if Mr. Forsyth did not succeed in restoring him to his friends. He acted as a sort of general agent for the district, and in every instance acted without fee or reward. The respect in which he was held by the people was shown by the simple title by which he was on every occasion designated. They all spoke of him as "the Maister." "Is the Maister at home?" or, "Can I see the Maister?" were the queries put to his servants by the townspeople perhaps ten times a day. Masters were becoming somewhat common in the country at the time, and esquires not a great deal less so; but the "Maister" was the designation of but one gentleman only, and the people who used the term never forgot what it meant.

In all his many acts of kindness the merchant was well seconded by his wife, whose singularly compassionate disposition accorded well with his own. She had among the more deserving poor a certain number to whom she dealt a regular weekly allowance, and who were known to the townspeople as "Mrs. Forsyth's pensioners." Besides, rarely did she suffer a day to pass without the performance of some act of charity in behalf of the others who were without the pale; and when sickness or distress visited a poor family, she was sure to visit it too. Physicians were by no means so common in the country at the time as they have since become; and, that she might be the more useful, Mrs. Forsyth, shortly after her marriage, had devoted herself, like the ladies of an earlier period, to the study of medicine. Her excellent sense more than compensated for the irregularity of her training; and there were few professors of the art of healing in the district whose prescriptions were more implicitly or more success-

fully followed, or whose medicine-chest was oftener emptied and replenished. Mr. Forsyth was by no means a very wealthy man, — his hand had been ever too open for that, — and, besides, as money had been rapidly sinking in value during the whole course of his career as a trader, the gains of his earlier years had to be measured by a growing and therefore depreciating standard. It is a comfortable fact, however, that no man or family was ever ruined by doing good under the influence of right motives. Mr. Forsyth's little fortune proved quite sufficient for all his charities and all his hospitality. It wore well, like the honest admiral's; and the great bulk of it, though he has been nearly forty years dead, is still in the hands of his descendants.

CHAPTER XI.

> Good and evil, we know, in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably. — MILTON.

THERE are few things more interesting, in either biography or history, than those chance tide-marks, if I may so express myself, which show us the ebbs and flows of opinion, and how very sudden its growth when it sets in on the popular side. Mr. Forsyth was extensively engaged in business when the old hereditary jurisdictions were abolished; not in compliance with any wish expressed by the people, but by an unsolicited act on the part of the government. Years passed, and he possessed entire all his earlier energies, when he witnessed from one of the

windows of his house in Cromarty the procession of a Liberty and Equality Club. The processionists were afterwards put down by the gentlemen of the county, and their leader, a young man of more wit than judgment, sent to the jail of Tain; but the merchant took no part either for or against them. He merely remarked to one of his friends, that there is as certainly a despotism of the people as of their rulers, and that it is from the better and wiser, not from the lower and more unsettled order of minds, that society need look for whatever is suited to benefit or adorn it. He had heard of the Dundees and Dalziels of a former age, but he had heard also of its Jack Cades and Massaniellos; and after outliving the atrocities of Robespierre and Danton, he found no reason to regard the tyranny of the many with any higher respect than that which he had all along entertained for the tyranny of the few.

The conversation of Mr. Forsyth was rather solid than sparkling. He was rather a wise than a witty man. Such, however, was the character of his remarks, that it was the shrewdest and best informed who listened to them with most attention and respect. His powers of observation and reflection were of no ordinary kind. His life, like old Nestor's, was extended through two whole generations and the greater part of the third, and this, too, in a century which witnessed more changes in the economy and character of the people of Scotland than any three centuries which had gone before. It may not be uninteresting to the reader rapidly to enumerate a few of the more important of these, with their mixed good and evil. A brief summary may serve to show us that, while we should never despair of the improvement of society on the one hand, seeing how vast the difference which obtains be-

tween the opposite states of barbarism and civilization, there is little wisdom in indulging, on the other, in dreams of a theoretical perfection, at which it is too probable our nature cannot arrive. Few great changes take place in the economy of a country without removing some of the older evils which oppressed it; few also without introducing into it evils that are new.

It was in the latter days of Mr. Forsyth that the modern system of agriculture had begun to effect those changes in the appearance of the country and the character of the people by which the one has been so mightily improved and the other so considerably lowered. The clumsy, inefficient system which it supplanted was fraught with physical evil. There was an immense waste of labor. A large amount of the scanty produce of the country was consumed by a disproportionably numerous agricultural population; and, from the inartificial methods pursued, the harvest, in every more backward season, was thrown far into the winter; and years of scarcity, amounting almost to famine, inflicted from time to time their miseries on the poorer classes of the people. It was as impossible, too, in the nature of things, that the system should have remained unaltered after science had introduced her innumerable improvements into every other department of industry, as that night should continue in all its gloom in one of the central provinces of a country after the day had arisen in all the provinces which surrounded it. Nor could the landed interests have maintained their natural and proper place had the case been otherwise. There were but two alternatives, advance in the general rush of improvement, or a standing still to be trampled under foot. With the more enlightened mode of agriculture the large-farm system is naturally, perhaps inevitably, con-

nected; at least, in no branch of industry do we find the efficient adoption of scientific improvement dissevered from the extensive employment of capital. And it is this system which, within the last forty years, has so materially deteriorated the character of the people. It has broken down the population of the agricultural districts into two extreme classes. It has annihilated the moral and religious race of small farmers, who in the last age were so peculiarly the glory of Scotland, and of whom the Davie Deans of the novelist, and the Cotter of Burns, may be regarded as the fitting representatives; and has given us mere gentlemen-farmers and farm-servants in their stead. The change was in every respect unavoidable; and we can only regret that its physical good should be so inevitably accompanied by what must be regarded as its moral and political evil.

It was during the long career of Mr. Forsyth, and in no small degree under his influence and example, that the various branches of trade still pursued in the north of Scotland were first originated. He witnessed the awakening of the people from the indolent stupor in which extreme poverty and an acquiescent subjection to the higher classes were deemed unavoidable consequences of their condition, to a state of comparative comfort and independence. He saw what had been deemed the luxuries of his younger days, placed, by the introduction of habits of industry, and a judicious division of labor, within the reach of almost the poorest. He saw, too, the first establishment of branch-banks in the north of Scotland, and the new life infused, through their influence, into every department of trade. They conferred a new ability of exertion on the people, by rendering their available capital equal to the resources of their trade, and gave to character a money-

value which even the most profligate were compelled to recognize and respect. Each of these items of improvement, however, had its own peculiar drawback. Under the influence of the commercial spirit, neighbors have become less kind, and the people in general less hospitable. The comparative independence of the poorer classes has separated them more widely from the upper than they had ever been separated before; and mutual jealousies and heartburnings mark, in consequence, the more ameliorated condition. The number of traders and shopkeepers has become disproportionably large; and while a few succeed and make money, and a few more barely maintain their ground at an immense expense of care and exertion, there is a considerable portion of the class who have to struggle on for years, perhaps involved in a labyrinth of shifts and expedients that prove alike unfavorable to their own character and to the security of trade in general, and then end in insolvency at last. The large command of money, too, furnished at times by imprudent bank accommodation, has in some instances awakened a spirit of speculation among the people, which seems but too much akin to that of the gambler, and which has materially lowered the tone of public morals in at least the creditor and debtor relation. Bankruptcy, in consequence, is regarded with very different feelings in the present day from what it was sixty years ago. It has lost much of the old infamy which used to pass downwards from a man to his children, and is now too often looked upon as merely the natural close of an unlucky speculation, or, worse still, as a sort of speculation in itself.

There is one branch of trade, in particular, which has been suffered to increase by far too much for the weal of the country. More than two thousand pounds are squan-

dered yearly in the town of Cromarty in spirituous liquors alone, — a larger sum than that expended in tea, sugar, coffee, soap, and candles, put together. The evil is one of enormous magnitude, and unmixed in its character; nor is there any part of the country, and, indeed, few families, in which its influence is not felt. And yet in some of the many causes which have led to it we may trace the workings of misdirected good, natural and political. A weak compassion on the part of those whose duty it is to grant or withhold the license without which intoxicating liquors cannot be sold, has more than quadrupled the necessary number of public houses. Has an honest man in the lower ranks proved unfortunate in business; has a laborer or farm-servant of good character met with some accident which incapacitates him from pursuing his ordinary labors; has a respectable, decent woman lost her husband, — all apply for the license as their last resource, and all are successful in their application. Each of their houses attracts its round of customers, who pass through the downward stages of a degradation to which the keepers themselves are equally exposed; and after they have in this way irremediably injured the character of their neighbors, their own, in at least nine cases out of ten, at last gives way; and the fatal house is shut up, to make way for another of the same class, which, after performing its work of mischief on a new circle, is to be shut up in turn. Another great cause of the intemperance of the age is connected with the clubs and societies of modern times. Many of these institutions are admirably suited to preserve a spirit of independence and self-reliance among the people exactly the reverse of that sordid spirit of pauperism which has so overlaid the energies of the sister kingdom; and there are few of them which do not lead to a general

knowledge of at least the simpler practices of business, and to that spread of intelligence which naturally arises from an intercourse of mind in which each has somewhat to impart and somewhat to acquire. But they lead also, in too many instances, to the formation of intemperate habits among the leading members. There is the procession and the ball, with their necessary accompaniments; the meeting begun with business ends too often in conviviality; and there are few acquainted with such institutions who cannot assign to each its own train of victims.

Another grand cause of this gigantic evil of intemperance, — a cause which fortunately exists no longer, save in its effects, — was of a political nature. On the breaking out of the revolutionary war, almost every man in the kingdom fit to bear arms became a soldier. Every district had its embodied yeomanry or local militia, every town its volunteers. Boys who had just shot up to their full height were at once metamorphosed into heroes, and received their monthly pay; and, under an exaggerated assumption of the military character, added to an unwonted command of pocket-money, there were habits of reckless intemperance formed by thousands and tens of thousands among the people, which have now held by them for more than a quarter of a century after the original cause has been removed, and which are passing downwards, through the influence of example, to add to the amount of crime and wretchedness in other generations.

In no respect does the last age differ more from the present than in the amount of general intelligence possessed by the people. It is not yet seventy years since Burke estimated the reading public of Great Britain and Ireland at about eighty thousand. There is a single Scotch periodical of the present day that finds as many

purchasers, and on the lowest estimate twice as many readers, in Scotland alone. There is a total change, too, in the sources of popular intelligence. The press has supplanted the church; the newspaper and magazine occupy the place once occupied by the Bible and the Confession of Faith. Formerly, when there were comparatively few books and no periodicals in this part of the country, there was but one way in which a man could learn to think. His mind became the subject of some serious impression. He applied earnestly to his Bible and the standards of the church; and in the contemplation of the most important of all concerns, his newly-awakened faculties received their first exercise. And hence the nature of his influence in the humble sphere in which he moved; an influence which the constitution of his church, from her admission of lay members to deliberate in her courts and to direct her discipline, tended powerfully to increase. It was not more intellectual than moral, nor moral than intellectual. He was respected not only as one of the best, but also as one of the most intelligent men in his parish, and impressed the tone of his own character on that of his contemporaries. Popular intelligence in the present age is less influential, and by far less respectable, in single individuals; and, though of a humanizing tendency in general, its moral effects are less decided. But it is all-potent in the mass of the people, and secures to them a political power which they never possessed before, and which must prove for the future their effectual guard against tyranny in the rulers; unless, indeed, they should first by their own act break down those natural barriers which protect the various classes of society, by becoming tyrants themselves. There is a medium-point beyond which liberty becomes license, and license hastens to a

despotism which may, indeed, be exercised for a short time by the many, but whose inevitable tendency it is to pass into the hands of the few.

A few of the causes which have tended to shut up to so great an extent the older sources of intelligence may be briefly enumerated. Some of them have originated *within*, and some *without* the church.

The benefits conferred on Scotland by the Presbyterian Church, during at least the two centuries which immediately succeeded the Reformation, were incalculably great. Somewhat of despotism there might, nay, must have been, in the framework of our ecclesiastical institutions. The age was inevitably despotic. The church in which the Reformers had spent the earlier portion of their lives was essentially and constitutionally so. Be it remembered, too, that the principles of true toleration have been as much the discovery of later ages as those principles on which we construct our steam-engines. But whatever the framework of the constitutions of our church, the soul which animated them was essentially that spirit "wherewith Christ maketh his people free." Nay, their very intolerance was of a kind which delighted to arm its vassals with a power before which all tyranny, civil or ecclesiastical, must eventually be overthrown. It compelled them to quit the lower levels of our nature for the higher. It demanded of them that they should be no longer immoral or illiterate. It enacted that the ignorant baron should send his children to school, that they, too, might not grow up in ignorance; and provided that the children of the poor should be educated at the expense of the state. A strange despotism truly, which, by adding to the knowledge and the virtue of the people among whom it was established, gave them at once that taste and capacity for freedom

without which men cannot be other than slaves, be the form of government under which they live what it may.

Be it remembered too, that, whatever we of the present age may think of our church, our fathers thought much of it. It was for two whole centuries the most popular of all establishments, and stamped its own character on that of the people. The law of patronage, as re-established by Oxford and Bolingbroke, first lowered its efficiency; not altogether so suddenly, but quite as surely, as these statesmen had intended. From being a guide and leader of the people, it sunk, in no small degree, into a follower and dependant on the government and the aristocracy. The old Evangelical party dwindled into a minority, and in the majority of its Church of Scotland became essentially unpopular and uninfluential. More than one half our church stood on exactly the same ground which had been occupied by the curates of half a century before; and the pike and musket were again employed in the settlement of ministers, who professed to preach the gospel of peace. A second change for the worse took place about fifty years ago, when the modern system of agriculture was first introduced, and the rage for experimental farming seemed to pervade all classes, — ministers of the church among the rest. Many of these took large farms, and engaged in the engrossing details of business. Some were successful and made money, some were unfortunate and became bankrupt. Years of scarcity came on; the price of grain rose beyond all precedent; and there were thousands among the suffering poor who could look no higher in the chain of causes than to the great farmers, clerical and lay, who were thriving on their miseries. It is a fact which stands in need of no comment, that the person in the north of Scotland who first raised the price of oatmeal to three pounds per boll was a clergy-

man of the established church. A third change which has militated against the clergy is connected with that general revolution in manners, dress, and modes of thinking which, during the last forty years, has transferred the great bulk of our middle classes from the highest place among the people to the lowest among the aristocracy; the clergymen of our church, with their families, among the rest. And a fourth change, not less disastrous than even the worst of the others, may be traced to that recent extension of the political franchise which has had the effect of involving so many otherwise respectable ministers in the essentially irreligious turmoil of party. There is still, however, much of its original vigor in the Church of Scotland; a self-reforming energy which no radically corrupt church ever did or can possess; and her late efforts in shaking herself loose from some of the evils which have long oppressed her give earnest that her career of usefulness is not hastening to its close.

There is certainly much to employ the honest and enlightened among her members in the present age. At no time did that gulf which separates the higher from the lower classes present so perilous a breadth, at no time did it threaten the commonwealth more; and if it be not in the power of the equalizing influence of Christianity to bridge it over, there is no other power that can. It seems quite as certain that the spread of political power shall accompany the spread of intelligence, as that the heat of the sun shall accompany its light. It is quite as idle to affirm that the case should be otherwise, and that this power should not be extended to the people, as to challenge the law of gravitation, or any of the other great laws which regulate the government of the universe. The progress of mind cannot be arrested; the power which necessarily

accompanies it cannot be lessened. Hence the imminent danger of those suspicions and dislikes that the opposite classes entertain each of the other, and which are in so many instances the effect of mistake and misconception. The classes are so divided that they never meet to compare notes, or to recognize in one another the same common nature. In the space which separates them, the eavesdropper and the tale-bearer find their proper province; and thus there are heart-burnings produced, and jealousies fostered, which even in the present age destroy the better charities of society, and which, should the evil remain uncorrected, must inevitably produce still sadder effects in the future. Hence it is, too, that the mere malignancy of opposition has become so popular, and that noisy demagogues, whose sole merit consists in their hatred of the higher classes, receive so often the support of better men than themselves. It is truly wonderful how many defects, moral and intellectual, may be covered by what Dryden happily terms the "all-atoning name of patriot," — how creatures utterly broken in character and means, pitiful little tyrants in fields and families, the very stuff out of which spies and informers are made, are supported and cheered on in their course of political agitation by sober-minded men, who would never once dream of entrusting them with their private concerns. We may look for the cause in the perilous disunion of the upper and lower classes, and the widely-diffused bitterness of feeling which that disunion occasions.

CHAPTER XII.

Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor men would live in vain;
Were death denied, to live would not be life.
YOUNG.

MR. FORSYTH was for about forty years an elder of the church, and never was the office more conscientiously or more consistently held. It was observed, however, that, though not less orthodox in his belief than any of his brother elders, and certainly not less scrupulously strict in his morals, he was much less severe in his judgments on offenders, and less ready in sanctioning, except in extreme cases, the employment of the sterner discipline of the church. On one occasion, when distributing the poor's funds, he set apart a few shillings for a poor creature, of rather equivocal character, who had lately been visited by the displeasure of the session, and who, though in wretched poverty, felt too much ashamed at the time to come forward to claim her customary allowance.

"Hold, Mr. Forsyth," said one of the elders, a severe and rigid Presbyterian of the old school, — "hold; the woman is a bad woman, and doesn't deserve that."

"Ah," replied the merchant, in the very vein of Hamlet, "if we get barely according to our deservings, Donald, who of us all shall escape whipping? We shall just give the poor thing these few shillings which she does not deserve, in consideration of the much we ourselves enjoy which we deserve, I am afraid, nearly as little."

"You are a wiser man than I am, Mr. Forsyth," said the elder, and sat down rebuked.

No course in life so invariably smooth and prosperous in its tenor that the consolations of religion — even regarding religion as a matter of this world alone — can be well dispensed with. There are griefs which come to all; and the more affectionate the heart, and the greater its capacity of happiness, the more keenly are these felt. Of nine children which his wife bore to him, William Forsyth survived six. Four died in childhood; not so early, however, but that they had first engaged the affections and awakened the hopes of their parents. A fifth reached the more mature age at which the intellect begins to open, and the dispositions to show what they are eventually to become, and then fell a victim to that insidious disease which so often holds out to the last its promises of recovery, and with which hope struggles so long and so painfully, to be overborne by disappointment in the end. And a sixth, a young man of vigorous talent and kindly feelings, after obtaining a writership in India through the influence of his father's old protegé, Mr. Charles Grant, fell a victim to the climate in his twentieth year. Mr. Forsyth bore his various sorrows, not as a philosopher, but as a Christian; not as if possessed of strength enough in his own mind to bear up under each succeeding bereavement, but as one deriving comfort from conviction that the adorable Being who cared for both him and his children does not afflict his creatures willingly, and that the scene of existence which he saw closing upon them, and which was one day to close upon himself, is to be succeeded by another and a better scene, where God himself wipeth away all tears from all eyes. His only surviving son, John, the last of four, left him, as he himself had left his father more than fifty years before, for a house of

business in London, which he afterwards quitted for India, on receiving an appointment there through the kindness of Mr. Grant. Mr. Forsyth accompanied him to the beach, where a boat manned by six fishermen was in waiting to carry him to a vessel in the offing. He knew too surely that he was parting from him for ever; but he bore up under the conviction until the final adieu, and then, wholly overpowered by his feelings, he burst into tears. Nor was the young man less affected. It was interesting to see the effects of this scene on the rude boatmen. They had never seen "the Maister" so affected before; and as they bent them to their oars, there was not a dry eye among them.

Age brought with it its various infirmities, and there were whole weeks in which Mr. Forsyth could no longer see his friends as usual; nor even when in better health — in at least what must often pass for health at seventy-seven — could he quit his bedroom before the middle of the day. He now experienced how surely an affectionate disposition draws to itself, by a natural sympathy, the affection of others. His wife, who was still but in middle life, and his two surviving daughters, Catherine and Isabella, were unwearied in their attentions to him, anticipating every wish, and securing to him every little comfort which his situation required, with that anxious ingenuity of affection so characteristic of the better order of female minds. His sight had so much failed him that he could no longer apply to his favorite authors as before; but one of his daughters used to sit beside him and read a few pages at a time, for his mind was less capable than formerly of pursuing, unfatigued, long trains of thought. At no previous period, however, did he relish his books more. The state of general debility which marked his decline resembled that which characterizes the first stage of convalescence in lingering

disorders. If his vigor of thought was lessened, his feelings of enjoyment seemed in proportion more exquisitely keen. His temper, always smooth and placid, had softened with his advance in years, and every new act of attention or kindness which he experienced seemed too much for his feelings. He was singularly grateful; grateful to his wife and daughters, and to the friends who from time to time came to sit beside his chair and communicated to him any little piece of good news; above all, grateful to the great Being who had been caring for him all life long, and who now, amid the infirmities of old age, was still giving him so much to enjoy. In the prime of life, when his judgment was soundest and most discriminative, he had given the full assent of his vigorous understanding to those peculiar doctrines of Christianity on which its morals are founded. He had believed in Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and man; and the truth which had received the sanction of his understanding then, served to occupy the whole of his affections now. Christ was all with him, and himself was nothing. The reader will perhaps pardon my embodying a few simple thoughts on this important subject, which I offer with all the more diffidence that they have not come to me through the medium of any other mind.

It will be found that all the false religions, of past or of present times, which have abused the credulity or flattered the judgments of men, may be divided into two grand classes, — the natural and the artificial. The latter are exclusively the work of the human reason, prompted by those uneradicable feelings of our nature which constitute man a religious creature. The religions of Socrates and Plato, of the old philosophers in general, with perhaps the exception of the sceptics, and a few others, — of Lord Herbert of

Cherbury, Algernon Sidney, and Dr. Channing, of all the better Deists, of the Unitarians too, and the Socinians of modern times,—belong to this highly rational but unpopular and totally inefficient class. The God of these religions is a mere abstract idea; an incomprehensible essence of goodness, power, and wisdom. The understanding cannot conceive of him, except as a great First Cause,—as the incomprehensible source and originator of all things; and it is surely according to reason that he should be thus removed from that lower sphere of conception which even finite intelligences can occupy to the full. But in thus rendering him intangible to the understanding he is rendered intangible to the affections also. Who ever loved an abstract idea? or what sympathy can exist between human minds and an intelligent essence infinitely diffused? And hence the cold and barren inefficiency of artificial religions. They want the vitality of life. They want the grand principle of *motive;* for they can lay no hold on those affections to which this prime mover in all human affairs can alone address itself. They may look well in a discourse or an essay, for, like all human inventions, they may be easily understood and rationally defended; but they are totally unsuited to the nature and the wants of man.

The natural religions are of an entirely different character. They are wild and extravagant; and the enlightened reason, when unbiassed by the influences of early prejudice, rejects them as monstrous and profane. But, unlike the others, they have a strong hold on human nature, and exert a powerful control over its hopes and its fears. Men may build up an artificial religion as they build up a house, and the same age may see it begun and completed. Natural religions, on the contrary, are, like the oak and the chestnut, the slow growth of centuries;

their first beginnings are lost in the uncertainty of the fabulous ages; and every addition they receive is fitted to the credulity of the popular mind ere it can assimilate itself to the mass. The grand cause of their popularity, however, consists in the decidedly human character of their gods; for it is according to the nature of man as a religious creature that he meets with an answering nature in Deity. The gods of the Greek and Roman were human beings like themselves, and influenced by a merely human favoritism. The devotion of their worshippers was but a mere reverential species of friendship; and there are perhaps few men of warm imaginations who have become acquainted in early life with the Æneid of Virgil, or the Telemaque of Fenelon, who are not enabled to conceive, in part at least, how such a friendship could be entertained. The Scandinavian mythology, with the equally barbarous mythologies of the East, however different in other respects, agree in this main principle of popularity, the human character of their gods. The Virgin Mother and the many saints of the Romish Church, with its tangibilities of pictures and images, form an indispensable compensation for its lack of the evangelical principle; and it is undoubtedly to the well-defined and easily-conceived character of Mohammed that Allah owes the homage of the unreckoned millions of the East.

Now, it is according to reason and analogy that the true religion should be formed, if I may so express myself, on a popular principle; that it should be adapted, with all the fitness which constitutes the argument of design, to that human nature which must be regarded as the production of the common author of both. It is indispensable that the religion which God reveals should be suited to the human nature which God has made. Artificial religions, with

all their minute rationalities, are not suited to it at all, and therefore take no hold on the popular mind; natural religions, with all their immense popularity, are not suited to improve it. It is Christianity alone which unites the popularity of the one class with the rationality, and more than the purity, of the other; that gives to the Deity, as man, his strong hold on the human affections, and restores to him, in his abstract character as the father of all, the homage of the understanding.

The change which must come to all was fast coming on William Forsyth. There was a gradual sinking of his powers, bodily and intellectual; a thorough prostration of strength and energy; and yet, amid the general wreck of the man, the affections remained entire and unbroken; and the idea that the present scene is to be succeeded by another was continually present with him. Weeks passed in which he could no longer quit his bed. On the day he died, however, he expressed a wish to be brought to a chair which stood fronting a window, and the wish was complied with. The window commands a full view of the main street of the place; but though his face was turned in that direction, his attendants could not suppose that he took note any longer of the objects before him; the eyes were open, but the sense seemed shut. The case, however, was otherwise. A poor old woman passed by, and the dying man recognized her at once. "Ah, yonder," he said, addressing one of his daughters who stood by him, "is poor old Widow Watson, whom I have not seen now for many weeks. Take a shilling for her out of my purse, and tell her it is the last she will ever get from me." And so it was; and such was the closing act of a long and singularly useful life; for his death, unaccompanied apparently by aught of suffering, took place in the course of the

evening, only a few hours after. He had completed his seventy-eighth year. All the men of the place attended his funeral, and many from the neighboring country; and there were few among the assembled hundreds who crowded round his grave to catch a last glimpse of the coffin, who did not feel that they had lost a friend. He was one of nature's noblemen; and the sincere homage of the better feelings is an honor reserved exclusively to the order to which he belonged.

Mrs. Forsyth survived her husband for eight years. And after living in the continued exercise of similar virtues, she died in the full hope of the same blessed immortality, leaving all who knew her to regret her loss, though it was the poor that mourned her most. Their three surviving children proved themselves the worthy descendants of such parents. There is a time coming when families of twenty descents may be regarded as less noble, and as possessing in a much less degree the advantages of birth; for, partly, it would seem, through that often marked though inexplicable effect of the organization of matter on the faculties of mind, which transmits the same character in the same line from generation to generation, and partly, doubtless, from the influence of early example, they all inherited in no slight or equivocal degree the virtues of their father and mother. A general massiveness and force of intellect, with a nice and unbending rectitude of principle, and great benevolence of disposition, were the more marked characteristics. Catherine, the eldest of the three, was married in 1801 to her cousin Isaac Forsyth, banker, Elgin, the brother and biographer of the well-known tourist; and, after enjoying in a singular degree the affection of her husband and family, and the respect of a wide circle of acquaintance, she died in the

autumn of 1826, in her fifty-seventh year. Isabella continued to reside in her father's house at Cromarty, which maintained in no small degree its former character, and there cannot well be higher praise. None of Mrs. Forsyth's old pensioners were suffered to want by her daughter; and as they dropped off, one by one, their places were supplied by others. She was the effective and active patroness, too, of every scheme of benevolence originated in the place, whether for the benefit of the poor or of the young. She was married in 1811 to Captain Alexander M'Kenzie, R. M., of the Scatwell family, and died in the spring of 1838, in her sixty-eighth year, bequeathing by will three hundred pounds to be laid out at interest for the behalf of three poor widows of the place. John, the youngest of the family, quitted his father's house for India, as has been already related, in 1792. He rose by the usual steps of promotion as resident at various stations, became a senior merchant, and was appointed to the important charge of keeper of the Company's warehouse at Calcutta, with the near prospect of being advanced to the Board of Trade. His long residence in India, however, had been gradually undermining a constitution originally vigorous, and he fell a victim to the climate in 1823, in the forty-fifth year of his age. He had married an English lady in Calcutta, Miss Mary Ann Farmer, a few years before, and had an only daughter by her, Mary Elizabeth Forsyth, who now inherits her grandfather's property in Cromarty. His character was that of the family. For the last fifteen years of his life he regularly remitted fifty pounds annually for the poor of Cromarty, and left them a thousand pounds at his death. The family burying-ground fronts the parish church. It contains a simple tablet of Portland stone, surmounted by a vase of white marble, and bearing the

following epitaph, whose rare merit it is to be at once highly eulogistic and strictly true: —

William Forsyth, Esquire,
DIED
the 30th January, 1800, in the 78th year of his age;
A Man loved for his benevolence,
honored for his integrity, and
revered for his piety.
He was religious without gloom;
cheerful without levity;
bountiful without ostentation
Rigid in the discharge of his own duties, he was
charitable and lenient in his judgment of others.
His kindness and hospitality were unbounded;
and in him the Destitute found a Friend,
the Oppressed a Protector.

On the 7th August, 1808, aged sixty-six, died
Elizabeth,
His beloved Wife,
in obedience to whose last desire
this Tablet is inscribed to his Memory,
which she ever cherished with tender affection,
and adorned by the practice of similar virtues.
With characteristic humility
she wished that merely her Death should be recorded
on this stone;
and to those who knew her no other memorial was wanting,
nor is it necessary, even if it were possible,
to delineate to the passing stranger
the beauty of her deportment,
the strength of her understanding,
and the benignity of her heart;
but rather
to admonish him, from such bright examples,
that the paths of godliness and virtue lead
to happiness on earth,
and the assurance of joys beyond the grave.

Of their children, they survived PATRICK, who died at the age of 20 in the East Indies; and JAMES, ISABELLA, MARGARET, WILLIAM, and ELIZABETH, who, with their parents, were buried in this place.