

turn of mail or coach, Vince's 'Refutation of Atheism,' you will greatly oblige me. It is not in Edinburgh. Unless, however, you can send it immediately, it will be useless to me.

"I have no time to write. We have ten days of vacation, and I resume my lectures on January 2d. I have delivered thirty lectures, and am now advancing to the moral division of my course. As far as I can learn, my friends highly applaud, and my worst foes are dumb or sulky. The public, I believe, are satisfied. I need not say that my labor is intense. Direct to me at No. 53 Queen street, where I send for my letters every day; and if you have time, tell me how you are, and what doing. Yours very truly,
"JOHN WILSON."

CHAPTER X.

THE PROFESSOR AND HIS CLASS.

It was no temporary enthusiasm that glorified the name of "the Professor" among his students, and still keeps his memory green in hearts that have long ago outlived the romantic ideals of youth. One of the most pleasing results of my labor has been to come upon traces everywhere of the love and admiration with which my father is remembered by those who attended his class. That remembrance is associated in some instances with sentiments of the most unbounded gratitude for help and counsel given in the most critical times of a young man's life. How much service of this sort was rendered during an academical connection of thirty years, may be estimated as something more to be thought of than the proudest literary fame. So, I doubt not, my father felt, though on that subject, or on any claims he had earned for individual gratitude, he was never heard to speak. Of his merits as a teacher of moral philosophy I am not speaking, and cannot pretend to give any critical estimate. I leave that to more competent hands. What I speak of is his relation to his students beyond the formal business of the class; for it is that, I think, that constitutes, as much as the quality of the lectures delivered, the difference between one teacher

and another. Here was a poet, an orator, a philosopher, fitted in any one of these characters to excite the interest and respect of youthful hearers. But it was not these qualities alone or chiefly that called forth the affectionate homage of so many hearts; what knit them to the Professor was the heart they found in him, the large and generous soul of a man that could be resorted to and relied on, as well as respected and admired. No man ever had a deeper and kindlier sympathy with the feelings of youth; none could be prompter and sincerer to give advice and assistance when required. Himself endowed with that best gift, a heart that never grew old, he could still, when things were no longer with him "as they had been of yore," enter into the thoughts and aspirations of those starting fresh in life, and give them encouragement, and exchange ideas with them, in no strained or formal fashion. No wonder that such a man was popular, that his name is still dear, and awakens a thrill of filial affection and pride in the hearts of men who once knew him as their preceptor and friend.

I should have liked much, had I been able, to give some account of the Professor's lectures,* and his appearance in his class. But I

* The following is the Syllabus of his course, drawn up by the Professor for the *Edinburgh University Almanac*, as delivered in the session 1833-4, apparently the same in arrangement as originally determined on in his consultations with his friend Blair. In what year he remodelled his course, having previously remodelled his views on the great question of the nature of the Moral Faculty, I have not ascertained. It was at least subsequent to the year 1837, to which Mr. Smith's sketch refers. In later years he began in his first lecture with the subject of the Moral Faculty, the discussion of which extended, Mr. Nicolson informs me, over thirty-seven lectures, occupying the time from the commencement of the session in November to the Christmas recess:

"MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

"*This Class meets at Twelve o'clock.*

"MORAL PHILOSOPHY attempts to ascertain, as far as human reason can do so, the law which must regulate the conduct of Man as a moral being. Inasmuch as it does not derive this law from any authority, but endeavors to deduce it from principles founded in the nature of things, it takes the name of a science. It may be called the Science of Duty.

"The first object, therefore, will be to find those principles on which this law of duty must be grounded. For this purpose we have to consider—1st, The nature of the human being who is the subject of such a law; and 2d, The relations in which he is placed; his nature and his relations concurring to determine the character of his moral obligations.

"When the nature of man has been considered, and also the various relations of which he is capable, we shall have fully before us the ground of all his moral obligations; and it will remain to show what they are, to deduce the law which the principles we shall have obtained will assign. But when we shall have gone over the examination of his nature, the mere statement of his relations will so unavoidably include the idea of the duties that spring from them, that it would be doing a sort of violence to the understanding to separate them; and therefore the consideration of his Duties will be included in the Second Division of the Course.

"But the performance of duty does not necessarily take place upon its being known. There are difficulties and impediments which arise in the weaknesses, the passions, the whole character of him who is to perform it. Hence there arises a separate inquiry into the means to which man is to

am saved the risk of attempting to describe what I have not seen, and cannot be expected to be skilled in, by the sketches with which I have been favored from men well able to do justice to the subject, so far as any sketch can be supposed to do justice to an eloquence that required to be heard in order to be appreciated. Of

recourse, to enable him to discharge his known obligations. There must be a resolved and deliberate subjection of himself to the known Moral Law; and an inquiry, therefore, into the necessity, nature, and means of Moral Self-government, will furnish the *Third* and last Division of the Course.

"In the *First* Division of the Course, then, we consider the constitution of the Human Being. He has a **PHYSICAL NATURE**, the most perfect of any that is given to the kinds of living creatures, of which he is one, infinitely removed as he is from all the rest. He has an **INTELLIGENCE** by which he is connected with higher orders of beings; he has a **MORAL NATURE** by which he communicates with God; he has a **SPIRITUAL ESSENCE** by which he is immortal.

"All these natures and powers, wonderful in themselves, are mysteriously combined. The highest created substance Spirit, and Matter the lowest, are joined and even blended together in perfect and beautiful UNION.

"We begin by treating generally of his **PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION** and **POWERS**, and showing that much of his happiness—it may be of his virtue—is intimately connected with their healthful condition, as there is a mutual reaction between them and his highest faculties. The **APPETITES** are explained, and the phenomena of the **SENSES**; and pains taken to put in a clear light the nature of **SIMPLE SENSATION**, before proceeding to illustrate the **THEORY OF PERCEPTION**.

"The impressions received through the senses would be of no use; they could not become materials of Thought, if the mind were not endowed with a power of reproducing them to itself in its internal activity; and this power we consider under the name of **CONCEPTION**, and very fully the laws by which its action is regulated, the **LAWS OF ASSOCIATION**.

"We are then led to inquire what is the **FACULTY OF THOUGHT** itself; and if the different operations of **JUDGMENT**, **ABSTRACTION**, and **REASONING** may all be explained as Acts of this one **FACULTY OF INTELLIGENCE**.

"**IMAGINATION** itself seems to admit of being resolved into the union of this Faculty, with certain Feelings, under the Law of Association; and here an inquiry is instituted into the sources of the **SUBLIME AND BEAUTIFUL**, an attempt made to define **GENIUS** and its province, and illustrations are given of the **PHILOSOPHY OF TASTE**.

"Looking on Man's **MORAL NATURE**, we seem to see one Principle presiding over and determining the character of all the rest; distinguished by different names, but which no other, perhaps, so well describes as that which expresses it to the common understandings of men—**CONSCIENCE**. Is it **SIMPLE** or **COMPOSITE**? **NATURAL** or **ACQUIRED**? In endeavoring to answer these questions, we must take a review of all the most celebrated Moral Systems in which it has been attempted to explain its origin, its composition, its growth, and its power.

"From the consideration of this **MORAL PRINCIPLE**, to which our whole mind is subjected, we pass on to those various **POWERS OF PASSION AND AFFECTION** which are placed under its jurisdiction, and which, in their endless complexity and infinitely diversified modifications, constitute the strength of the human mind for action, and are the sources of the happiness, the sorrows, and the unfortunate errors of human life. These numerous principles, which have been classed in different manners by Ethical writers, but of which no classification is adequate to represent the variety, are very fully treated of under such great and simple divisions as serve to mark them out for separate discussion; an arrangement and order, which, whether metaphysically just or not, appear to afford facilities for analyzing the processes of nature.

"In treating of Man as a **SPIRITUAL BEING**, we consider the doctrines of the **IMMATERIALITY AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL**—doctrines so important and interesting that no argument can be lost that serves to impress them more deeply, and so elevated, that merely to contemplate them, does of itself tend to spiritualize the affection and imagination.

"The *Second* Division of the Course comprehends an inquiry into Man's **RELATIONS AND DUTIES**. His first **RELATION** is as a creature to the **MAKER AND GOVERNOR OF THE WORLD**, and

these various reminiscences I shall give three, in the order of the dates to which they respectively relate, viz., 1830, 1837, and 1850, interposing first two characteristic records of earlier relations between the Professor and his students.

therefore it becomes necessary to consider, in the first place, what we are able to know of the Attributes of that Great Being to whom he owes his **FIRST DUTY**,—a duty which is the foundation of all others.

“The utmost powers of the human mind have always been directed upon this great object. Its Intelligence desires to know the Origin of all things. Its Moral Understanding impels it to seek the Author of all order and law. Its Love and Happiness carry it towards the *Offer* of all good.

“The chief doctrines which are held concerning the Being and Attributes of Deity, men have conceived might be established by two methods; the first is that which deduces them from the absolute necessity of things, prior to all consideration of the effects in which they are manifested,—the **ARGUMENT OF DEMONSTRATION *à priori***. The other method is that to which nature continually constrains us, which may be going on in our minds at every moment, an evidence and conviction collecting upon us throughout life. It deduces the Existence and Attributes of God from their effects in his works, which our Reason can ascribe to no other origin. It reasons from effects to the cause, and is therefore termed the **ARGUMENT *à posteriori***.

“The great points established by both these modes of argument are, in the first place, the Existence of God, his Power, and his Wisdom. These may be called the Attributes which our Intelligence compels us to understand, and for which that faculty is sufficient. But there are other perfections which as nearly concern us, and to the contemplation of which we are called by other faculties of our being—His Love, Justice, and Righteousness.

“And here it appears necessary to vindicate the argument of the Evidence of Design from the misrepresentations and sophistries of certain writers by whom it has been impugned, and to expose the unphilosophical and impious spirit of their skepticism.

“When we have considered the grounds on which our natural reason is convinced of these attributes, the *relations* of Man to God are manifest, and his *Duties* rise up in all their awful magnitude to our minds.

“From this part of the Second Division of our Course, which belongs to Natural Theology, we go on to consider the **RELATIONS AND DUTIES OF MAN TO HIS FELLOW-CREATURES**.

“The division of these relations, with their duties, is determined upon two grounds, being opposed to each other, in one respect, as they are **PUBLIC** or **PRIVATE**, and, in another, as they are simply **NATURAL**, or of **HUMAN ADOPTION AND INSTITUTION**.

“By the private relations, we understand those by which a man is united to the members of his own family, household, and kindred, as a son, a father, a brother, a kinsman, a master, a servant, a friend. Under each of these relations, the particular circumstances attending it, which constitute the grounds of obligation, are considered, and the duties arising from them explicitly and fully stated, under the head of **HOUSEHOLD LAWS**.

“By the **PUBLIC RELATIONS**, we are led to consider him as a Member of a Political Body. There is here a twofold relation—that of **RULERS AND SUBJECTS**. We shall have to treat of the **DUTIES** belonging to both; as of Rulers, their first and especial duty to maintain the **INDEPENDENCE** of the Community among other States, and **GOOD GOVERNMENT** within their own; as of subjects, the duties of **ALLEGIANCE** and **OBEDIENCE**; and here will have to be stated the grounds of obligation on rulers and subjects, namely, **MUTUAL BENEFITS**; and their duty to their Common Country.

“In the course of these inquiries, questions of vast importance arise as to the **ORIGIN AND GROUNDS OF GOVERNMENT**; the **PRINCIPLES OF LEGISLATION**; the **PRINCIPAL FORMS** which **POLITICAL GOVERNMENT** has assumed among different nations; and their various adaptation to the essential ends for which they were constituted.

“In this Division of the Course, all those various Theories are strictly examined, which have been offered at different times, of the Nature of Virtue, and the Grounds of Moral Obligation—from Plato and Aristotle, to Stewart and Brown; and especial attention is paid to the Moral Philosophy of Greece.

About a year after he had entered upon his new duties, the Professor was rambling during vacation-time in the south of Scotland, having for a while exchanged the gown for the old "Sporting Jacket." On his return to Edinburgh, he was obliged to pass through Hawick, where, on his arrival, finding it to be fair-day, he readily availed himself of the opportunity to witness the amusements going on. These happened to include a "little mill" between two members of the local "fancy." His interest in pugilism attracted him to the spot, where he soon discovered something very wrong, and a degree of injustice being perpetrated which he could not stand. It was the work of a moment to espouse the weaker side, a proceeding which naturally drew down upon him the hostility of the opposite party. This result was to him, however, of little consequence. There was nothing for it but to beat or be beaten. He was soon "in position;" and, before his unknown adversary well knew what was coming, the skilled fist of the Professor had planted such a "facer" as did not require repetition. Another "round" was not called for; and leaving the discomfited champion to recover at his leisure, the Professor walked coolly away to take his seat in the stage-coach, about to start for Edinburgh. He just reached it in time to secure a place inside, where he found two young men already seated. As a matter of course he entered into conversation with them, and before the journey was half over, they had become the best friends in the world. He asked all sorts of questions about their plans and prospects, and was informed they were going to attend College during the winter session. Among the classes mentioned were Leslie's, Jameson's, Wilson's, and some others. "Oh! Wilson; he is a queer fellow, I am told; rather touched here" (pointing significantly to his head); "odd, decidedly odd." The lads, somewhat cautiously, after the manner of their country, said they had heard strange stories reported of Professor Wilson, but it

"In the *Third* Division of the Course, which runs into the Second, it is attempted to explain some of the chief Means by which Individual and National Virtue and Happiness may be strengthened and guarded: and to point out some of the most fatal causes of the Decline and Fall of Nations.

"At the commencement of each Session several Lectures are delivered, containing a Prospectus of the whole Course, which contains a hundred Lectures.

"Each alternate year the Professor delivers a Course of Fifty Lectures on Political Economy. He follows, in a great measure, the order observed in the *Wealth of Nations*; and, in explaining the doctrines of SMITH, compares them with those of RICARDO."

was not right to believe every thing; and that they would judge for themselves when they saw him. "Quite right, lads; quite right; but I assure you I know something of the fellow myself, and I think he is a queer devil; only this very forenoon at Hawick he got into a row with a great lubberly fellow for some unknown cause of offence, and gave him such a taste of his fist as won't soon be forgotten; the whole place was ringing with the story; I wonder you did not hear of it." "Well," rejoined the lads, "we did hear something of the sort, but it seemed so incredible that a Professor of Moral Philosophy should mix himself up with disreputable quarrels at a fair, we did not believe it." Wilson looked very grave, agreed that it was certainly a most unbecoming position for a Professor; yet he was sorry to say that having heard the whole story from an eye-witness, it was but too true. Dexterously turning the subject, he very soon banished all further discussion about the "Professor," and held the delighted lads enchained in the interest of his conversation until they reached the end of the journey. On getting out of the coach, they politely asked him, as he seemed to know Edinburgh well, if he would direct them to a hotel. "With pleasure, my young friends; we shall all go to a hotel together; no doubt you are hungry and ready for dinner, and you shall dine with me." A coach was called; Wilson ordered the luggage to be placed outside, and gave directions to the driver, who in a short time pulled up at a very nice-looking house, with a small garden in front. The situation was rural, and there was so little of the aspect of a hotel about the place, that on alighting, the lads asked once or twice, if they had come to the right place? "All right, gentlemen; walk in; leave your trunks in the lobby. I have settled with the driver, and now I shall order dinner." No time was lost, and very soon the two youths were conversing freely with their unknown friend, and enjoying themselves extremely in the satisfactory position of having thus accidentally fallen into such good company and good quarters. The deception, however, could not be kept up much longer; and, in the course of the evening, Wilson let them know where they were, telling them that they could now judge for themselves what sort of a fellow "the Professor" was.

Another anecdote of holiday-time relates to a later period, when maturer years had invested the Professor with a more patriarchal dignity and sedateness. True to his love for spring, he had selected

that season for an excursion to the pastoral vales of Yarrow and Ettrick, where glittering rivers,

“Winding through the pomp of cultivated nature,”

attracted more than one poet's admiration; for if Wordsworth sang in verse, Wilson uttered in prose, how “in spirit all streams are one that flow through the forest. Ettrick and Yarrow come rushing into each other's arms, aboon the haughs o' Selkirk, and then flow Tweed-blent to the sea.” In the month of May, he sent an invitation to his students resident in the south of Scotland, to meet him at “Tibby Shiels's,” where they were to wander a day with him “to enjoy the first gentle embrace of spring in some solitary spot.” Where could it have been better selected than at St. Mary's Loch? It was said that the meeting was one of unspeakable delight; the hills were adorned with the freshest green, and the calm, quiet lake reflected the surrounding verdure in its deep waters, and they beheld

“The swan on still St. Mary's lake,
Float double swan and shadow.”

The Professor spoke of the love of nature, and his words impressed them all, and of the poet of Altrive, “our own shepherd, dear to all the rills that issue, in thousands, from their own recesses among the braes; for when a poet walks through regions his genius has sung, all nature does him homage, from cloud to clod—from the sky to green earth—all living creatures therein included, from eagle to the mole. James knows this, and is happy among the hills.” And was that little company then assembled by the “dowie holms,” not happy too? Wilson was in his brightest mood; no one was overlooked; joyously and pleasantly passed the day; and before evening laid its westerling shadows into gloaming, he called his students around him, and, rising up, “he shook his wild locks among them, blessed them, called them his children,” and bade them adieu. Surely a kindly recognition of these young men in manner such as this would bring benefit with it not less lasting, than when, in graver state, he prelected, *ex cathedra*, to his assembled class.

We get an idea of what that class was from the following recollections, which Mr. John Hill Burton has kindly sent to me. He says:—

“I first saw and made the acquaintance of Professor Wilson

when I joined his class in 1830. The occasion was of much more interest to me than the usual first sight of an instructor by a pupil. I do not know if there be any thing of the same kind now, but in that day there was a peculiar devotion to *Blackwood's Magazine* among young readers in the north. All who were ambitious of looking beyond their class exercises, considered this the fountain-head of originality and spirit in literature. The articles of the last number were discussed critically in the debating societies, and knowingly in the supper parties, and the writing of the master-hand was always anxiously traced. To see that master, then, for the first time, was an epoch in one's life.

“The long-looked for first sight of a great man often proves a disappointment to the votary. It was far otherwise in this instance. Much as I had heard of his appearance, it exceeded expectation, and I said to myself that, in the tokens of physical health and strength, intellect, high spirit, and all the elements of masculine beauty, I had not seen his equal. There was a curious contrast to all this in the adjuncts of his presence—the limp Geneva gown, and the square, box-shaped desk, over which he seemed like some great bust set on a square plinth—but I question if any robes or chair of state would have added dignity to his appearance.

“On a very early day in the session—I forget whether it was quite the first—we suddenly came to an acquaintance, on my having occasion to speak with him at the end of the lecture. When he found that I was an Aberdonian, he asked me if I knew Tarland, ‘a place celebrated for its markets.’ To be sure I did; and Tarland was in those days not a place to be easily forgotten. On the border of the Highlands, it had been a great mart for smuggled whiskey; and though the reduction of the excise duties had spoiled that trade, custom continued it for a while in a modified shape, and the wild ruffianly habits it had nourished were still in their prime, and not likely to disappear until the generation trained to them had passed away. The Professor had seen and experienced the ways of the place. He hinted, with a sort of half-sarcastic solemnity, that he was there in the course of the ethical inquiries to which he had devoted himself; just as the professor of natural history or any other persevering geologist might be found where any unusual geological phenomenon is developed, or the professor of anatomy might conduct his inquiries into some abnormal structure

of the human body. His researches might lead him into trials and perils, as those of zealous investigators are often apt to do. In fact, he had to draw upon his early acquired knowledge of the art of self-defence on the occasion, and he believed he did so not unsuccessfully. Here there was a sparkle of the eye, a curl of the lip, and a general look of fire and determination, which reminded one of

‘The stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel.’

“He described the market-day as a sort of continued surge of rioting, drinking, and fighting; and when darkness was coming on, he had to find his way to some distance among unknown roads. A lame man, very unsuited for that wild crowd, had in the mean time scraped a sort of acquaintance with him, and interested him by the scholarship interspersed in his conversation. He was the schoolmaster of a neighboring parish; and as their ways lay together, he was to be the guide, and, in return, to get the assistance of the stalwart stranger. The poor schoolmaster had, however, so extensively moistened his clay, that assistance was not sufficient, and the Professor had to throw him over his shoulder, and carry him. With the remainder of the dominie’s physical strength, too, oozed away that capacity for threading the intricacies of the path, which was his contribution to the joint adventure. Assistance had to be got from some of the miscellaneous Highlanders dispersing homewards; and as all were anxious to bear a hand, the small group increased into a sort of procession, and the Professor reached his abode, wherever that might be, at the head of a sort of army of these lawless men.

“A history of this kind was calculated to put a young person at ease, in the presence of the great man and the Professor of Moral Philosophy. We now sailed easily into conversation, and went off into metaphysics. That he should seriously and earnestly talk on such matters with the raw youth was, of course, very gratifying; but there was a sort of misgiving, that he took for granted my knowing more than I did. This was a way of his, however, to which I became accustomed; he was always ready to give people credit for extensive learning. There was no mere hollow courtesy or giving the go-by in his talk on this occasion. He helped me at once to the root of many important things connected with the studies I was pursuing. A point arose, on which he would speak

to Sir William Hamilton, who knew all about it; he did afterwards speak to him accordingly, somewhat to my surprise, as I thought he would be unlikely to remember either me or my talk—and I thus made an acquaintance which afterwards strengthened into an admiring friendship for that great man. Then another point came up, on which De Quincey might be consulted, and would give very curious information, if he could be caught. He was then dwelling with the Professor—as much as he could be said to dwell anywhere. Suppose then I should come and dine with them? That would be my best chance of seeing De Quincey. That it was quite right to take advantage of this frank invitation, and, an obscure stranger, to catch at an opportunity of thrusting myself on the hospitalities and the family circle of a distinguished man, may be questioned. But most people will admit that the temptation was great. It was too much for me, and I accepted, with immense satisfaction.

“I went to Gloucester Place accordingly. The poet’s residence did not represent the traditional garret, nor his guests the eccentric troop familiar to Smollett and Fielding, although I had gone there to meet one who had the reputation of bringing into the nineteenth century the habits of that age in their most grotesque shape. Him, however, I did not see. The Opium-Eater was supposed to be somewhere about the premises, but he chose neither to appear in the drawing-room nor the dining-room, and years passed before I became acquainted with the most peculiar man of genius, in Britain at least, of the age. Otherwise, there was good company, handsomely housed, and entertained with hospitality thoroughly kind, easy, and hearty, but all in perfect taste and condition.

“It was a sort of epoch to myself, and therefore I remember pretty well who were present. We had Professor Jameson, then at the zenith of his fame as a mineralogist, Lawrence M’Donald, the sculptor, and John Malcolm, then a popular poet and writer of miscellanies, whose fame, though considerable then, has probably been worn out ere this day; he was, as I knew him afterwards, a pleasant, gentle, meditatively-inclined man, though I think he had seen military service, and knew the mess-room of the old war,—a different thing from that of the present day. Youngest, as well as I remember, of these seniors, was a Captain Alexander, whom I take to be the traveller, Sir J. E. Alexander.

“Among my own contemporaries were some representatives of young Edinburgh, of whom a word or two presently, and a Pole, who happened to be the only guest with whom I had any previous acquaintance. His formal designation was Leon Count Lubinski. Seeing a good deal of him afterwards during the five months session, I formed a great idea of his abilities. He had nothing of the imaginative, or of the æsthetic—a term then coming into use from Germany; but for an eye to the practical, and a capacity for mastering all knowledge leading in that direction, it did not happen to me to find his equal among my contemporaries. With all the difficulties of language against him, he carried off from young Edinburgh the first prize in the civil law class. After having astonished us throughout the session, he left us at the end, and I never could discover any thing of a distinct kind about his career, though I have turned up the initials of his name in the many biographical dictionaries of contemporaries which seem to be a specialty of the present day. I heard, many years since, a vague rumor that he had risen in the Russian service. He was just the man, according to the notions of this country, to be useful to such a government, if he would consent to serve it. I feel certain, however, that he was a man who could not have escaped being heard of by the world, had his career in practical life lain elsewhere than in a close despotism.

“Such was the outer circle of guests; within was the Professor’s own family. And so hither I found myself transferred, as by a wave of an enchanter’s wand, a raw, unknown youth, with claim of no kind in the shape of introduction, with no credentials or testimony to my bare respectability; no name, even of a common friend, to bring our conversation to an anchor with. This success seems far more surprising when looked back upon than it was felt at the time. Young people read in novels of such things, and therefore are not astonished by them; but in after life they become aware of their extreme uncommonness. Nor was it a mere casual act of formal hospitality; I received afterwards many a cordial welcome within those hospitable doors.

“It is possibly its personal bearing that makes me now remember pretty distinctly a good-humored and kindly pleasantry of the Professor’s at that first dinner. I have mentioned that there were some representatives of young Edinburgh present. I do not know

what precise position towards the rest of the human race the youth of Edinburgh may now claim, but it appeared to me, when I came among them at the time I speak of, that they considered it beyond any kind of question that they were superior to all the rest of the world. To one coming from the common hard drudgery of our classes in the North, where we did our work zealously enough, with plenty of internal rivalry, but thought no more of claiming fame outside the walls than any body of zealous mechanics, it was a great novelty to get among a community, where the High School *dux* of 18—, or the gainer of the gold medal in the — class, was pointed out to you; nay, further, to meet with lads of your own standing, who were the authors of published poems, had delivered great and telling speeches at the Speculative, or had written capital articles in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, or the *University Album*. Whether it were the inheritance of the long hierarchy of literary glory which Edinburgh had enjoyed, or arose from any other cause, this phenomenon was marvellous to a stranger, and rather disagreeably marvellous, because a youth coming into all this brilliant light, out of the Bœotian darkness of Aberdeen, was conscious of being contemplated with compassionate condescension. We had, however, at the University of Edinburgh at that time, a considerable body of Aberdonians, pretty compactly united. At our head was William Spalding, the first among us in learning and accomplishments, as well as in the means of using them. He well justified our expectations by his subsequent career, sadly impeded as it was by bodily ailments, which brought it to an untimely close. I have got into an episode in mentioning him here, but it is not entirely inappropriate, for the Professor was, as I believe he has been in many other instances, the first who, from a high place, took notice of Spalding's capacity.

“Well, emboldened and elated, I suppose, by being brought into social equality with them, it came to pass that, in our after-dinner talk, I threw down the gauntlet to the representatives of young Edinburgh then present, and stood for the equality, at least, if not the superiority of Aberdeen in all the elements of human eminence. In such a contest, a good deal depends on the number of names, in any way known to fame, that the champion remembers; and Aberdeen possessed, especially if one drew on the far past, a very fair stock of celebrities. As I was giving them forth, amidst

a good deal of derisive laughter and ironical cheering, the Professor, tickled by the absurdity of the thing, threw himself into the contest, on my side, and tumbled over some of my antagonists in an extremely delectable manner. This was a first revelation to me of a power which I afterwards often observed with astonishment,—a kind of intellectual gladiatorship, which enabled him, in a sort of rollicking, playful manner, to overthrow his adversary with little injury to him, but much humiliation. I can compare it to nothing it so much resembles as a powerful, playful, good-natured mastiff taking his sport with a snarling cur. As I shall have to mention more especially, this was a powerful instrument of discipline in his class. He never had to stand on his dignity. When it was worth his while, he tumbled any transgressor about in a way that made him, though unhurt, thoroughly ashamed of himself, and an example to deter others from doing the like. On the occasion referred to, it was possibly visible to the bystanders, and had I possessed more experience, might have been known to myself, that I also had been gently laid sprawling in the attacks that seemed directed entirely against my adversaries; but I happily saw only their discomfiture, and rejoiced accordingly. All that was done for me was, however, entirely neutralized by a random shaft from the Pole, finding mark he never meant, and piercing more effectually than all the artillery of my opponents. Looking with an air of intense gravity on the whole discussion, he broke in with the inquiry, whether he was right or not in his supposition, that ‘Apperdeen was verry illoustrious for the making of stockings?’ After this, there was no use of saying more on either side.

“I wish I had tried to Boswellize, or could now remember the talk of that, as of many other evenings. One little incident I remember distinctly, but I am sure I shall be unable to tell it to any effect. Some priggish remarks having been made by some one on the power of exhaustive analysis, the Professor fell to illustrate it by an attempt, through that process, to send a hired assistant, name unknown, for a fresh bottle of claret. He began calling to him by the ordinary names, John, James, William, Thomas, and so on, but none hit the mark—the man standing by the sideboard, in demure contemplation, as if inwardly solving some metaphysical difficulty. The Professor then passed on in a wild discursive flight through stranger names. At last he seemed to have hit the right

one, for the attendant darted forward. It was, in fact, in obedience to a sign by a guest that he was wanted, but it came in immediate response to a thoroughly unconventional designation,—Beelzebub, Mephistophiles, or something of that sort; and the fun was enhanced by the man's solemn unconsciousness that he had been the object of a logical experiment.

“But to come back to the class. It was one that must have been somewhat memorable to the Professor himself, when he looked back upon it in after years. Not only was his son John in it, but it included John Thompson Gordon and William Edmondstoune Aytoun, so that unconsciously the Professor was instructing the future husbands of his daughters. There were others to give it interest and repute—as Archibald Swinton, now Professor of Civil law; the clever Pole I have already referred to; John Walker Ord, who showed poetic powers which promised a considerable harvest; and Thomas Todd Stoddart, who had won laurels, and thoroughly enjoyed them, too, in his published poem of ‘The Death Wake.’

“The powers of Wilson, as an instructor and a public speaker, will, of course, be described by others. I may simply say that attendance at his class, at the same time that it was an act of duty, rewarded the student with what duty seldom brings, the enjoyment of an oration alive with brilliant and powerful eloquence.

“Saturday was a great day of enjoyment of a more egotistic kind. Then he spoke on the essays he had received. He gave us a breadth of topics, and allowed us wonderful latitude in the handling of them—but he certainly read them all—and what a mass of trash he must have thus perused! In criticising them, he was charitable and cordial to the utmost stretch of magnanimous charity. I can hardly say what an exciting thrill it imparted to the youth to hear his own composition read out from that high place, and commented on with earnestness, and not without commendation. The recollection of these days sometimes also recalls Boswell's garrulous account of his first symposium with Johnson. ‘The Orthodox and High Church sound of THE MITRE; the figure and manner of the celebrated Samuel Johnson; the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced.’ But *our* elevation proceeded from entirely intellectual sources,

without the aid of the other stimulants which contributed to Boswell's glory. Altogether, that class was a scene of enjoyment which remains in my mind entirely distinct from even the pleasanter portion of other work-day college life.

"The class was a very large one. I have referred to the Professor's peculiar power of preserving discipline, or rather of keeping up good-humor, gentlemanly fellowship, and order, without the necessity of discipline. An instance occurred during the session, when he exercised this power in a matter not peculiar to his own class, not indeed showing itself within the class, but general to the students at large, as a portion of the inhabitants of Edinburgh having a common tie. There was a great snow-ball riot in that session. This is a thing peculiar to Edinburgh, and not easily made intelligible to those who have not witnessed it. As a stranger it surprised me much. In the north we had our old feuds and animosities, often breaking out in serious violence and mischief. But that a set of people—most of them full-grown—should, without any settled feud, utterly change the whole tenor of their conduct, and break into something like insurrection, merely because snow was on the ground, appeared to be a silliness utterly incomprehensible. This snow-ball affair became so formidable-looking that a mounted foreign refugee, with his head full of revolutions, galloped through the streets (I forget if he was in any way armed) calling out 'Barricade—shoot!'

"After it was pretty well over, the Professor made a speech to us on the conclusion of his daily lecture. He did not condemn or even disparage snow-balling; on the contrary, he expressed glowingly his sense of its sometimes irresistible attractions. These he illustrated by what had once occurred to himself and a venerable and illustrious friend; we thought at the time that he meant Dr. Chalmers. In a spring walk among the hills, and in the middle of a semi-metaphysical discussion, they came upon a snow-wreath. By a sort of simultaneous impulse, borne on the recollection of early days, the discussion stopped, and they fell too to a regular hard bicker. After working away till they were covered with snow, panting with fatigue and glowing red with the exertion, they both stopped, and laughed loud in each other's face; just such a laugh as he must have then expressed, did the Professor force upon his class. Then came his contrast between such a scene and a fracas in the dirty streets, where low-bred ruffians took the opportunity

to get out some bit of petty revenge or of mere wanton cruelty, or of insolence to those whose character and position entitled them to deference; and so he went on, until there could not be a question that every one in the class who had been concerned in the affair felt ashamed of himself. His practical conclusion was that they should have their bicker, certainly, but—adjourn it from the college quadrangle and the street to the Pentland hills.

“We naturally, among ourselves, talked over any little instances illustrative of the remarkable power of making any one whom he had to rebuke or correct feel foolish. For instance, there used to be a set of dusky personages who then stood at the corner of certain streets, and annoyed the passenger by stepping up right in front of him, like an established acquaintance, and saying, ‘Any old clothes?’ It was said that the way in which the Professor on such an occasion turned round on the intruder, and said, ‘Yes; have you any?’ had such an effect, that the word was passed through the tribe, and he never was again addressed by any of its members.

“I remember a very strong negative testimony to this peculiar power, in the circumstance of his entire freedom from the persecutions of two licensed tormentors, who were the terror of all the rest of the professors. They were men of venerable years and weak intellect, who had established a sort of prescriptive right to attend such classes as they might honor with their presence. It was not of course their mere presence, but the use to which it was put by tricky students, that made the standing grief of the professors. One of them was called Sir Peter Nimmo, a dirty, ill-looking lout, who had neither wit himself, nor any quality with a sufficient amount of pleasant grotesqueness in it to create wit in others. I believe he was merely an idly-inclined and stupidish man of low condition, who, having once got into practice as a sort of public laughing-stock, saw that the occupation paid better than honest industry, and had cunning enough to keep it up. He must have had a rather hard time of it, however, in some respects, for it was an established practice to get hold of the cards of important personages—especially if they were as testy as they were important—and to present them to Sir Peter with a request that he would favor the person indicated with his company at dinner. He always went, pretending simplicity, and using a little caution, if he saw symptoms of strong measures. I suppose he sometimes got a meal that way,

following an old Scottish saying about taking 'the bite with the buffet.' He always called himself *Sir Peter*. It was said that a man of high title had professed to knight him in a drunken frolic. He wandered about sometimes endeavoring to establish himself as a sponge in country houses. Strangely enough, he thus got the ear of Wordsworth, who showed him attention. He used the Professor's name, and Wordsworth, as I heard, talked of him as a Scotch baronet, eccentric in appearance, but fundamentally one of the most sensible men he ever met with. The Professor remarked that this compliment was no doubt owing to Sir Peter having judiciously preserved silence, and allowed Wordsworth to pour into his ear unceasingly the even tenor of his loquacity.

"The other of this strange pair was a rather more interesting creature. He was called Dr. Syntax. He had of course another name, but of that the public knew nothing. The Tour of Dr. Syntax in search of the picturesque, with its doggerel rhymes and extravagant illustrations, had not then quite lost the great popularity it enjoyed. The representations of the hero were intended to be gross caricatures, but the structure of his namesake was so supernaturally protracted and spidery as closely to approach the proportions of the caricature. His costume, probably by no design of his own, completed the likeness. This being, if seen in the street, was always marching along with extreme rapidity, with his portfolio under his arm, as if full of important business, unless, indeed, he had just got a present of a turban, a yeoman's helmet, or some other preposterous decoration, when he would stand exhibiting himself wherever a crowd happened to pass. He honored the various professors and clergy of Edinburgh with his attendance at their lectures and sermons. He always chose the most conspicuous place he could find. There, with his long, demure, cadaverous face, on which a stray smile would have been at once frozen, he proceeded to business and spread out his portfolio. He sometimes took notes of what was said, at others took the portrait of the speaker; it may be presumed that in church he limited himself to the former function. If it grew dark, he would solemnly draw from his pocket a small taper and strike a light, determined not to be interrupted in his duties, and in the centre of the general gloom a small disk of light would distinguish his countenance, which was as solemn as the grave, yet shed around a degree of restless mirth which spoiled many a lecture,

and must have sadly jumbled the devotions of the church-goers. I believe every professor received a full share of this man's attentions except Wilson. His literary ally, the Professor of Civil law, a man endowed with a great fund of humor, which, however, he could not convert like him into defensive armor, suffered dreadfully from Syntax, and when the pale face was visible in the highest desk, we knew that a day was lost, the poor lecturer having enough to do in keeping down internal convulsions of laughter, which seemed as if they would explode and shatter his frame to pieces.

“Both these tormentors, of whom I have, perhaps, said too much, stood in wholesome dread of Wilson. It was, I have no doubt, by effectually treating them according to their folly, that he earned this exemption, in which his brethren must have greatly envied him.

“Before that session came to an end, an event occurred momentous to all of us—the Reform Bill was brought in. We youths had previously indulged in no politics, or if in any, they were of a mild Aristides and Brutus kind, tinged perhaps by De Lolme and the Letters of Junius. Now, however, we were at once separated into two hostile forces. To the liberals, *Blackwood's Magazine*, ceasing to be the guiding-star of literature, had become the watchfire of the enemy. The bitterness of the hostility felt at that time by the young men of the two opposite political creeds cannot easily be understood by those in the same stage of life at the present day. The friendship must have been fast indeed that remained after one friend had become a reformer and the other an anti-reformer. We used to make faces at each other as we passed; and if a few words were exchanged, they were hostile and threatening. I suppose our hostility was a type of a stage of transition between the ferocity of times of civil war and the mild political partisanship of the present day.

“The Professor was known to take his stand against the Bill with great vehemence, but I never knew more than one instance of an approach to an ebullition of it upon any of his friends on our side. There had been many Reform meetings of all kinds, sometimes assembling vast multitudes, when it occurred to attempt a Tory meeting—the word Conservative had not then been invented. A question arose among us whether they should be allowed to have it their own way, and, since they called the meeting public, whether our party should not go and out-vote them. The tactic of public meetings, as simply one-sided demonstrations of the strength of a

party, was not then understood, and they were confounded with meetings of representative bodies, where strength is tried by discussing and voting. A friend of the Professor's, older than the youngsters of his class, but a good deal younger than himself, was known strongly to favor an invasion of the meeting from our side. He called on the Professor presently before the meeting; it was a friendly visit, but partially, I presume, for the purpose of sounding the Professor on the exciting question. Just before leaving, he expressed a hope that there would be no disturbance. The Professor, drawing himself up, answered, as well as I can remember having heard, in this wise: 'What any set of blackguards may be prepared to attempt in these days I cannot predict; but I *can* say, that if I see any man who is on terms of acquaintance with *me* go to that meeting to meddle with it, I hope I may be the first—(a pause)—to kick him out into the street.' And the visitor said the Professor looked as if he were so close on the point of rehearsing this performance on the spot, that he involuntarily started a good pace back.

"Though politics entered deeply into our social and literary intercourse at that time, yet the Professor was strong enough in his other elements of distinction to keep himself aloof, and remain untouched in his other relations by the influence of party, without in the least degree putting in question the sincerity of his attachment to his own side. He made in the class just one allusion to politics, and it was emphatic. An ambitious student, in one of his essays, finding his way to the characteristics of democracy, made some allusions to passing events in a tone which he no doubt thought likely to secure the favor of the Professor. We never would have known of this effort had it not been read out in full to us in the class, and followed by a severe rebuke on the introduction of politics to a place where party strife should be unknown."

Another student,* who attended the class seven years later, fortunately preserved his notes, and sends me the following vivid recollections of the winter session of 1837:—

"Of Professor Wilson as a lecturer on Moral Philosophy, it is not easy to convey any adequate idea to strangers,—to those who never saw his grand and noble form excited into bold and passionate action behind that strange, old-fashioned desk, nor heard his

* The Rev. William Smith, of North Leith Church.

manly and eloquent voice sounding forth its stirring utterances with all the strange and fitful cadence of a music quite peculiar to itself. The many-sidedness of the man, and the unconventional character of his prelections, combine to make it exceedingly difficult to give any full analysis of his course, or to define the nature and grounds of his wonderful power as a lecturer. I am certain that if every student who ever attended his class were to place on record his impressions of these, the impressions of each student would be widely different, and yet they would not, taken all together, exhaust the subject, or supply a complete representation either of his matter or his manner. There was so much in the look and tone, in every aspect and in every movement of the man, which touched and swayed the student at the time, but which cannot now be recalled, described, or even realized, that any reminiscence by any one can be interesting only to those whose memories of the same scenes enable them to follow out the train of recollection, or complete the picture which it may suggest.

“I attended his class in session 1837-8. It was the session immediately succeeding the loss of his wife, the thought of which, as it was ever again and again re-awakened in his mind by allusions in his lectures, however remote, to such topics as death, bereavement, widowhood, youthful love, domestic scenes, and, above all, to conjugal happiness, again and again shook his great soul with an agony of uncontrollable grief, the sight of which was sufficient to subdue us all into deep and respectful sympathy with him. On such occasions he would pause for a moment or two in his lecture, fling himself forward on the desk, bury his face in his hands, and while his whole frame heaved with visible emotion, he would weep and sob like a very child.

“The roll of papers on which each lecture was written, which he carried into the class-room firmly grasped in his hand, and suddenly unrolled and spread out on the desk before him, commencing to read the same moment, could not fail to attract the notice of any stranger in his class-room. It was composed in large measure of portions of old letters—the addresses and postage-marks on which could be easily seen as he turned the leaf, yet it was equally evident that the writing was neat, careful, and distinct; and, except in a more than usually dark and murky day, it was read with perfect ease and fluency.

“In the course of lectures which I attended, he began by treating of the desire of knowledge; the feeling of admiration; sympathy; desire of society; emulation; envy; anger; revenge; self; self-esteem; the love of fame or glory, and the love of power.

“The most memorable points in these lectures were: (1.) a highly wrought description of Envy, founded on Spenser’s picture of *Lucifera* riding in the gorgeous chariot of *Pride*, and preceded by six Passions (the fifth of which is Envy) riding each on an appropriate animal; (2.) a very minute and purely metaphysical analysis of the idea of Self; and, (3.) a highly poetical illustration of the workings of the Love of Power. This last display I can never forget; and sure am I that no one present can ever forget it either. It appeared to have been a lecture whose place in the course and powerful eloquence were previously not unknown to fame. For when I went to the class-room at the usual hour on the last day of November, I found it already overcrowded with an audience, comprising many strangers of note and several professors, all in a high state of expectation. Conspicuous in the centre of the front bench was the new Professor of Logic, Sir William Hamilton, eager with anticipation as the others. At length the door of the retiring-room was thrown open, and with even firmer step and longer stride, and more heroic gait than usual, the Professor, with his flowing gown and streaming locks, advanced to the desk and began the lecture. After a hasty recapitulation of the subjects discussed in previous lectures, he proceeded somewhat thus; I can give but the feeblest sketch of the lecture:—

“Towards the close of yesterday’s lecture we came to the consideration of another active principle, “The Love of Power,” and we remarked on the frequent corruption and melancholy degradation of genius through an inordinate love of power. The origin of this love of power is found in the feeling of pleasure which uniformly, and in a proportionably greater or less degree, attends the consciousness of possessing power. Even in lower creation we see this feeling of pleasure shown. The eagle evidently enjoys a deep sensation of pleasure as he cuts his unmarked path through the storm-tossed clouds. The horse also, when in the fulness of his strength he hastens o’er the course, outstripping all his rivals, is a supremely happy as well as an exquisitely beautiful animal. The child too attains a never-failing source of pleasure on his first con-

sciousness of possessing powers, and he is overwhelmed with grief and vexation when he meets with any obstacle which presents an insurmountable obstruction to his free and unfettered exercise of these powers.

“All the principles which the human being possesses have been given to him for the purpose of enabling him to fight his way through scenes of trouble, and difficulty, and danger, and it has been also wisely decreed that the exercise of these principles or powers, when crowned with success, should afford him pleasure. The woodsman who is engaged in felling pines in the awful depths of the American forest, derives pleasure from the consciousness of power, as he sees giant after giant laid low at his feet by the prowess of his own unaided arm, at the same time that he is usefully employed in clearing out a domain for the support, it may be, of his wife and family. The lonely hunter feels a pleasure in his powers as he brings down the towering bird of Jove by his unerring ball, or as he meets a boar in deadly conflict, and drains the heart's blood of the brute with his spear. The savage fisherman of the far north, as he goes in his frail canoe to pursue the most perilous of all enterprises, feels a pleasure in his powers, as he triumphs by the skill of his rude harpoon over even the mightiest denizens of the deep. The peasant from his conscious feeling of manly power in every muscle of his stalwart frame derives pleasure, and, at the same time, the ability to sustain all the trials and conquer all the difficulties which cross him on his toil-worn path. The life of the scholar is as much a life of difficulty as the life of the traveller who plods on his way through unknown countries, and requires in a high degree the sense of power to cheer and sustain him on his course; for we all know that conquests in the kingdom of intelligence are not to be won by one day's battle. . . .

“If the mind needs support in its search after virtue, it must much more need it in the ordinary business and pursuits of life.

“To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering. . . .

“It has often occurred to us that the most debased and humiliating state in which human nature could be found, is that where men have calmly bowed themselves under the disadvantages in which nature has seen fit originally to place them, without a single stout-hearted effort to relieve themselves from them; as, for instance,

in the case of the inhabitants of New Holland, as they were described by those who first visited the island. And what a contrast is visible between their character and that of the North American Indians, vanquishing the feeling of pain in their breasts by the strength of their unconquerable wills; "The Stoics of the wood, the men without a tear."

"Let us picture to our mind's eye a pampered Sybarite, nursed in all the wantonness of high-fed luxury, dallying on a downy sofa, amid all the gorgeoussness of ornamental tapestry, listening to the soft sounds of sweetest music playing in his ears; his eyes satiated with pleasure in contemplating the enchanting pictures that decorate the walls, and the beautiful statues which in pleasing variety fill up the distant vistas of his palace; whose rest would be broken, whose happiness would be spoiled, by the doubling of the highly scented rose-leaf that lies beneath him on his silken couch. Let us by the magic power of imagination transport this man to the gloomy depths of an American forest, where the dazzling glare of a bright fire instantly meets his eye. If he does not forthwith ignominiously expire at the first view, suppose him to survey the characters who compose or fill up the busy scene around it. The barbarous savages of one tribe have taken captive the chief of another engaged in deadly hostilities with them. They have not impaled him alive. That would be to consign him too speedily to unhearing death. But they have tied him fast with bands made of the long and lithe forest grass, which yields not quickly to the fire. They have placed him beside the pile which they kindle with fiendish satisfaction, and feed with cautious hand, well knowing the point or pitch to raise it to, which tortures but not speedily consumes. They have exhausted all their energy in uttering a most diabolical yell, on witnessing their victim first feel the horrid proofs of their resentment, and now, seated on the grass around, they look on in silence. The chief stands firm with unflinching nerve; his long eye-lashes are scorched off, but his proud eye disdains to wink; his dark raven locks have all perished, but there is not a wrinkle seen on his forehead. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot his skin is one continued blister, but the courage of his soul remains unshaken, and quails not before the tormenting pain. The Sybarite has expired at the mere sight; his craven heart has ceased to beat. The Indian hero stands firm. There is even a smile on his sadly marred cheek, and it is not the

smile which is extorted by excruciating pain, and forms the fit accompaniment of a groan, but he smiles with joy as he chants his death-song. He thinks with pride and joy on the heroic deeds he has performed; how he has roamed from sunset to sunrise through the forest depths, and changed the sleep of his foemen into death. He beholds on all sides dancing around him the noble spirits of his heroic ancestors; and nearest to him, and almost, he imagines, within reach of his embrace, he sees the ghost of his father, who first put into his hand and taught him the use of the scalping-knife and tomahawk; who has come from the heavens far beyond the place of mountains and of clouds to quaff the death-song, and to welcome to the land of the great hereafter the spirit of his undegenerate son. The chief is inflamed with a glorious rapture that exalts him beyond the sensation of pain, and conquers agony. "He holds no parley with unmanly fears."

"The son of Alcnomon has ceased to endure;
He consented to die, but he scorned to complain."

"It seems a duty incumbent on us all to think well of ourselves and of our powers. But then comes the question, Where falls the limit to be fixed at which this feeling must cease? We answer, Nature and the real necessities of life discover to a man the actual extent of his powers. Nature, reality, and truth, are the only tests. . . .

"To show that the innate consciousness of power often sustains a person amidst severely trying difficulties, we may relate a well-authenticated anecdote of Nelson. When a very young man in the rank of midshipman, he was returning from India on sick leave, with his health broken by the climate, and his spirits depressed by the feeling that he was cast off from his profession, and that he could never rise further in it. Sitting one day solitarily, meditating on all this, his thoughts reverted to the great naval heroes who had fought and won his country's battles, and gained for England the empire of the deep; when a bright ray of hope seemed to shine before him, that filled his soul with intense pleasure, and made him exclaim: "I will be a hero; England will not cast me off; England's king will be my patron and my friend." He often after spoke of this ray which did indeed blaze forth, and lighted his path to renown, till the noble watch-word of Trafalgar insured his last and crowning

triumph, and the name of Nelson was known as widely as the name of England.'

"This faint sketch taken at the time may serve, with all its imperfections, to give some idea of the substance of this noble lecture, but it cannot convey to any not present the slightest conception of the transcendent power and overwhelming eloquence with which it was delivered, or of its electrifying effects upon the audience. The whole soul of the man seemed infused into his subject, and to be rushing forth with resistless force in the torrent of his rapidly-rolling words. As he spoke, his whole frame quivered with emotion. He evidently saw the scene he described, and such was the sympathetic force of his strong poetic imagination, that he made us, whether we would or not, see it too. Now dead silence held the class captive. In the interval of his words you would have heard a pin fall. Again, at some point, the applause could not be restrained, and was vociferous. Especially when the dying scene in his description of the North American Indian's virtues reached its glorious consummation, the cheers were again and again repeated by every voice, till the roof rang again, and Sir William Hamilton, not less enthusiastic in his applause than the very youngest of the students behind him, actually stood up and clapped his hands with evident delight and approbation.

"I have heard some of the greatest orators of the day,—Lords Derby, Brougham, Lyndhurst; Peel, O'Connell, Sheil, Follett, Chalmers, Caird, Guthrie, M'Neile; I have heard some of these in their very best styles make some of their most celebrated appearances; but for popular eloquence, for resistless force, for the seeming inspiration that swayed the soul, and the glowing sympathy that entranced the hearts of his entire audience, that lecture by Professor Wilson far excelled the loftiest efforts of the best of these I ever listened to; and I have long come to the decided conclusion that if he had chosen the sacred profession, and given his whole heart and soul to his work, he would have raised the fame of pulpit oratory to a pitch far beyond what it ever has reached, and gained a celebrity and success as a preacher second to none in the annals of the Church.

"The course was continued in lectures on, (1.) Jealousy, which was illustrated by a very splendid and elaborate analysis of the character of Othello, in which the erroneousness of the common idea

of the Moor as a mere victim of the green-eyed monster was very clearly and convincingly exhibited; (2.) The Love of Pleasure; (3.) Hope; (4.) Fear; (5.) Happiness or Misery in this Life arising from the lower principles of humanity; (6.) Association, discussed at great length and with very great metaphysical acumen, as well as copious illustration; (7.) Imagination, treated in nine most interesting lectures; and, (8.) Conscience; which, with a full and particular consideration of the various moral systems propounded by ancient and modern philosophy, occupied thirty lectures.

“In the next division of the course the Affections were explained and illustrated in a series of sixteen lectures, in which all the wealth of poetry and pathos that were at his command had ample scope and glorious display in picturing scenes of domestic and social life, and in drawing from the whole field of literature examples of family affection and heroic patriotism. Thus we had the picture of a family—with all its interpenetrating relations, of the elder members towards the younger, and of the elder towards each other; the strong hold which any absent member retains over the affections of all at home, and the deep reverence and affectionate love with which they all regard the head of the family—set before us in a manner to rivet attention, by connecting with it a very fine disquisition on Burns’s ‘Cottar’s Saturday Night.’ We had the beautiful pictures of filial affection drawn by Sophocles and Shakspeare respectively in *Antigone* and *Cordelia*, extemporaneously, but most effectively and splendidly described. This *extempore* lecture was immediately followed up by another, delivered also without the aid of any notes, and of a very strange and discursive character, as the heads of it will show:—‘*Antigone—Electra—Clytemnestra—Agamemnon—Ægisthus—Orestes—Good old Homer who never nods—Ulysses—Achilles—Peleus—The Meeting of Laertes and Achilles—The Lake Poets—Southey and Wordsworth—Apples and Pears—Apple-pie;*’ but in which the Professor succeeded in demonstrating the vast superiority of the great poets of antiquity, in delineating those simple touches of nature that go to prove the whole world kin. We had then parental affection copiously illustrated in a series of lectures containing highly-wrought pictures of an outcast mother sitting begging by the wayside, of emigrant mothers about to be devoured in a burning ship, and of Virgil’s sketches of *Evander* and *Pallas*, and *Mezentius* and *Lausus*, as contrasted with Words-

worth's sketch of the 'statesman' Michael and his son Luke. One whole lecture was devoted to Shakspeare's character of Constance, as exhibiting the workings of maternal affection, and another to Priam's going to ransom the body of Hector from Achilles. The paternal affections and friendship were next dealt with in the same interesting manner, with illustrative references to the writings of Jeremy Taylor, Lord Bacon, Cicero, Shakspeare, Dugald Stewart, Thomson, and Coleridge. This part of the course was wound up by three very able lectures on Patriotism, during the delivery of the last of which one of the few memorable 'scenes' during the session occurred in the class. The Professor had begun the lecture by a very earnest and powerful defence of nationality or patriotism against the attacks of those who prefer a spirit of cosmopolitanism. In the course of this, he had occasion to refer to the views of Coleridge and Chenevix on the character of fallen nations, and particularly to the very peculiar relation in which Scotland had long stood to England; and in dealing with this latter point he was proceeding with the remark, that 'the great Demosthenes of Ireland, the ruler of seven millions of the finest peasantry in the world, had presumed to say at a public meeting that the reason Scotland had never been conquered was that Scotland had never been worth conquering.' I do not know how the lecture as written would have dealt with this charge, for the remark led to an interruption of its delivery. Some Irish students, resenting the contemptuous tone in which their great hero was mentioned, and especially taking offence, perhaps justly, at the comical way in which the word '*pizzantry*' was pronounced, raised first a hiss, and then a howl, which provoked counter-cheering from the more numerous Conservatives present, till the class-room became for a few minutes something like Babel or a bear-garden. For a little the Professor looked calmly on; but at last, fairly roused by the unusual uproar, he threw his notes aside, and drowning all noise by the stentorian pitch of voice in which he repeated the sentence that had provoked it all, he on the spur of the moment burst forth in a most eloquent and effective denunciation of all demagogues, and of all Irish demagogues in particular, showing in return for O'Connell's contemptuous remark about Scotland, the exact number of English pikemen and archers that had sufficed for the total subjugation of Ireland; and in castigation of those of his students that had hissed him, launching all the shafts of his raillery, and these

were both numerous and sharp, at modern Radicalism, and its cant phrase, 'March of Intellect.' The scene was one not to be forgotten. It was the only occasion any expression of political feeling or bias escaped from him; and yet, though he spoke under great excitement and with merciless severity, he said nothing that made him less respected and admired even by those who differed from him in his political views.*

"The course was concluded by a series of about twenty lectures on Natural Theology, in which that subject was treated in a manner altogether worthy of its vast importance. The great writers, both ancient and modern, were reviewed in a highly philosophical and finely appreciatory spirit. The ability of Hume was fully admitted, and his arguments met as fairly and successfully as they have ever been; but the pretensions of Lord Brougham to authority in the matter were called in question, and some of his views severely criticised. The moral attributes of God; the duties of man to his Maker; religion in the abstract; the immortality and immateriality of the soul; the moral philosophy of the Greeks, and especially the doctrines of Socrates and Plato, were all handled in a way befitting the grandeur and sacredness of these topics, and so as to impress every student with the depth and earnestness of the Professor's religious views and feelings, as well as with the high-toned morality of his whole mind and temperament.

"And now, reviewing generally one's old impressions of the character of the whole course, and qualifying these by the help of subsequent experience and knowledge, there remains a very decided conviction that while the overflowing wealth of poetical reference and illustration, and the somewhat excessive ornamentation of language, were calculated so far to choke and conceal the systematic philosophy of the lectures; to amuse rather than instruct the students; to deprave rather than chasten and purify their style of composition; the high merits and distinguished qualities of the lectures are indisputable, and their tendency to engender free thought, and to encourage large and liberal-minded study of the works of all the

* The obnoxious reference to the "Liberator" appears to have been subsequently omitted from the lecture; but the topic in reference to which it occurred seems to have been one in which the Professor found some difficulty in restraining his contempt for some of the cants of the day about Progress, March of Intellect, &c. Mr. Nicolson gives me the following extract from his notes of the lectures (1848-9), immediately preceding a quotation from M. Chenevix on the benefits of public instruction as the surest basis of stable government:—"These sentiments are not the growth of late years, as some contemptible persons would seem to insinuate."

greatest authors, were of the most decided and purely beneficial nature. It has been the fashion in certain quarters to decry his lectures as loose and declamatory; but only with those whose judgment is based on superficial appearances alone, and who are so destitute of every thing like sympathy, as to be unable to appreciate excellence that squares not in every point with their preconceived idea of it. One indubitable advantage was possessed by all Professor Wilson's students, who had 'eyes to see and ears to hear,' viz., the advantage of beholding closely the workings of a great and generous mind, swayed by the noblest and sincerest impulses; and of listening to the eloquent utterances of a voice which, reprobating every form of meanness and duplicity, was ever raised to its loftiest pitch in recommendation of high-souled honor, truth, virtue, disinterested love, and melting charity. It was something, moreover, not without value or good effect, to be enabled to contemplate, from day to day, throughout a session, the mere outward aspect of one so evidently every inch a man, nay, a king of men, in whom manly vigor and manly beauty of person were in such close keeping with all the great qualities of his soul; the sight at once carried back the youthful student's imagination to the age of ancient heroes and demigods, when higher spirits walked with men on earth, and made an impression on the opening mind of the most genial and ennobling tendency.

"The Professor was not generally supposed to devote much time in private to the business details and work of his class. But all who really worked for him soon discovered the utter erroneousness of this supposition. Every essay given in to him, however juvenile in thought and expression, was read by him with the most patient and judiciously critical care. If any essay afforded proof of painstaking research or of nascent power, its author was at once invited to the Professor's house, to enjoy the benefit of private conversation, and to be encouraged and directed in his studies. I can never forget an evening which I spent alone with him in such circumstances, when, after discussing the subject and views of some essay that had taken his fancy, and favoring me with some invaluable hints on these, he launched out into a long and most interesting discourse on most of the great men of his time; and sent me away at a late hour, not only gratified with his noble frankness of nature and manner, but more than ever convinced of his vast and

varied powers in almost every field of knowledge. Though my intercourse with him was limited entirely to student life, I retain for him the deepest reverence and love.

“I cannot deem thee dead; like the perfumes
 Arising from Judea’s vanish’d shrines,
 Thy voice still floats around me; nor can tombs
 A thousand from my memory hide the lines
 Of beauty, on thine aspect which abode,
 Like streaks of sunshine pictured there by God.”

The following account of his last year’s professional work (the session 1850–1851) is furnished by the medallist of the year:*

“The first thing that every one remarked on entering his class, was how thoroughly he did his proper work as a Professor of Moral Philosophy. This is not generally known now, and was not even at that time. There was a notion that he was there Christopher North, and nothing else; that you could get scraps of poetry, bits of sentiment, flights of fancy, flashes of genius, and any thing but Moral Philosophy. Nothing was further from the truth in that year 1850. In the very first lecture he cut into the core of the subject, raised the question which has always in this country been held to be the hardest and deepest in the science (the origin of the Moral Faculty), and *hammered* at it through the great part of the session. Even those who were fresh from Sir William Hamilton’s class, and had a morbid appetite for swallowing hard and angular masses of logic, found that the work here was quite stiff enough for any of us. It was not till the latter part of the session, in his lectures on the Affections and the Imagination, that he adopted a looser style of treatment, and wandered freely over a more inviting field. But it is not enough to say that he was thoroughly conscientious in presenting to his students the main questions for their consideration; I am bound to add that he was also thoroughly successful. It is well known that his own doctrine (though it was never quite fixed, and he stated publicly to his class at the close of his last session that he had all along been conscious that there was some gap in it) was opposed to the general Scotch system of Moral Philosophy. His

* Mr. Alexander Taylor Innes, who says in reference to that distinction:—“He was specially kind to me, as the youngest who had ever attained that honor, much coveted at that time as coming from *himself*; for when the University offered to give a prize to his class, he declined to discontinue his own, and still year by year awarded ‘Professor Wilson’s Gold Medal,’ giving the other separately or cumulatively.”

Eudaimonism was in fact a sublimed Utilitarianism ; so refined and sublimed that it might have appeared quite a fair course to have avoided discussing those metaphysical and psychological questions which lie at the roots of the general controversy. He did not follow this course. On the contrary, he laid bare the whole question : Whether conscience be a product of experience, or an original and intuitive faculty, with a frankness and fairness which are exceedingly rare, and which impressed most those who most differed from him ; and at the same time with a perception of the *status questionis*, how it bore on all that followed, and how the teaching of each philosopher bore upon it, which makes me regard his lectures as the most comprehensive, and indeed the most *valuable* thing in our language on this particular question, with the single exception of Sir James Mackintosh's Dissertation.

"His appearance in his class-room it is far easier to remember than to forget. He strode into it with the professor's gown hanging loosely on his arms, took a comprehensive look over the mob of young faces, laid down his watch so as to be out of the reach of his sledge-hammer fist, glanced at the notes of his lecture (generally written on the most wonderful scraps of paper), and then, to the bewilderment of those who had never heard him before, looked long and earnestly out of the north window, towards the spire of the old Tron Kirk ; until, having at last got his idea, he faced round and uttered it with eye and hand, and voice and soul and spirit, and bore the class along with him. As he spoke, the bright blue eye looked with a strange gaze into vacancy, sometimes sparkling with a coming joke, sometimes darkening before a rush of indignant eloquence ; the tremulous upper lip curving with every wave of thought or hint of passion, and the golden-gray hair floating on the old man's mighty shoulders—if indeed that could be called age, which seemed but the immortality of a more majestic youth.* And occasionally, in the finer frenzy of his more imaginative passages—

* Of the "discipline in his class" in 1880, alluded to by Mr. Burton, Mr. Nicholson says, twenty years later :—"I shall never forget the foolish appearance presented one day in the class by an unmannerly fellow, who rose from his seat about ten minutes from the close of the hour, and proceeded to the door. He found some difficulty in opening it, and was returning to his place, when the Professor beckoned him to his desk, and stooping down, asked, in that deep tone of his, kindly, but with a touch of irony in the question, 'Are you unwell, sir?' 'No, sir,' was the answer. 'Then you will have the kindness to wait till the close of the lecture.' The experiment of leaving the class before the termination of the hour was not likely to be again attempted, after such an exhibition."

as when he spoke of Alexander, clay-cold at Babylon, with the world lying conquered around his tomb, or of the Highland hills, that pour the rage of cataracts adown their riven cliffs, or even of the human mind, with its 'primeval granitic truths,' the grand old face flushed with the proud thought, and the eyes grew dim with tears, and the magnificent frame quivered with a universal emotion.

"It was something to have seen Professor Wilson—this all confessed; but it was something also, and more than is generally understood, to have studied under him."

CHAPTER XI.

LITERARY AND DOMESTIC LIFE.

1820-'26.

In July, 1819, the following announcement appeared in the Book-lists: "In the press, 'Lays from Fairy Land,' by John Wilson, author of 'The Isle of Palms,' " etc.

"Doth grief e'er sleep in a Fairy's breast?
 Are Dirges sung in the land of Rest?
 Tell us, when a Fairy dies,
 Hath she funeral obsequies?
 Are all dreams there, of woe and mirth,
 That trouble and delight on earth?"

In the Magazine for January, 1820, one of these lays was published, and it seemed as if the formula, "in the press," really meant something was then preparing for publication, which I believe is all that it generally conveys to the initiated. Beyond that, however, the Lays, if ever in the press, did not show themselves out of it.* From dreams of Fairy Land the author had been roused to the un-

* Unless I except a previous poem, "The Fairies, a Dreamlike Remembrance of a Dream," in the Magazine for April, 1818, with the signature of N., evidently his. The subject was a favorite one with him. In one of his Essays there is a very beautiful and fanciful description of a fairies' burial.