

- ART. II.—1. *Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland of Sunnyside.* Written by herself. 1850.
2. *Merkland: a Story of Scottish Life.* By the Author of 'Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland.' 1851.
3. *Harry Muir: a Story of Scottish Life.* 1853.
4. *Katie Stewart.* By Mrs. OLIPHANT. 1852.
5. *The Minister's Wife.* By Mrs. OLIPHANT. 1869.
6. *The Story of Valentine: and his Brother.* By Mrs. OLIPHANT. 1875.
7. *David Elginbrod.* By GEORGE MAC DONALD. 1863.
8. *Alec Forbes of Howglen.* By GEORGE MAC DONALD.
9. *Robert Falconer.* By GEORGE MAC DONALD. 1868.
10. *Malcolm.* By GEORGE MAC DONALD. 1875.
11. *A Daughter of Heth.* By WILLIAM BLACK. 1871.
12. *A Princess of Thule.* By WILLIAM BLACK. 1873.

THE practical character of our busy modern life has done some injustice to the Scottish nation. Not altogether without reason, people have come to regard us in those practical aspects which are least engaging. The typical Scotchman is the keen and pushing man of business who looks closely to the main chance, seldom misses a profitable occasion, and takes religious care that in his dealings with his neighbour he shall never fail in his duty to himself. Whatever sterling qualities he may possess, there is supposed to be the minimum of poetry in his composition. The Scots have now more than their share of wealth and honours all over the British possessions, and the virtues by which they command success have made them less liked than respected. Their peculiarities of speech and manner lend themselves easily to ridicule. Their constitutional reserve and caution tend to repel easy intimacy; and superficial observers have been slow to appreciate the amiable qualities that lie hidden under a commonplace or chilling exterior. We need hardly wonder, then, that they have seemed to offer unpromising material to the hurried authors of ephemeral novels. These ladies and gentlemen write for their readers; they dash down the vague impressions that glance from the surface of unreflecting minds; their indolence saves them from attempting the discriminating analysis which could only result in lamentable failure, and they dwell either on the trivial or the coarsely emotional life that recommends itself

most to the vulgar fancy. It neither suits their 'genius,' nor is it in their capacity, to remember that it is the stillest water that runs the deepest.

On the other hand, the writing a good Scotch novel demands a technical mastery of difficult and delicate subjects. The more distinctive effects, the most telling points, are to be sought in those humble interiors to which strangers seldom make their way, and which are less familiar than they ought to be even to cultivated Scotchmen of the upper classes. The language and its idioms are serious stumbling-blocks to begin with. In the more primitive districts the peasants speak as their 'forbears' did before them, and their most ordinary words may convey an infinity of shades of meaning which the most elaborate paraphrase could scarcely interpret to the uninitiated. After all, popularity is the ambition of a novelist. He desires to write for the world in general, and to make his work intelligible to all. If he overload his pages with local dialect which sounds sometimes barbarous and sometimes vulgar, his book is likely to be dropped with distaste. We are scarcely surprised, then, that the list of good Scotch novels is a short one; but the fact that it is so leaves an inviting field in these hackneyed times to writers who chance to have the special knowledge and are conscious of the needful gifts.

In reality the genius and disposition of the Scottish people has always tended instinctively to the romantic. It is not only that in the turbulent ferocity of their earlier history they were in the habit, like their neighbours, of translating romance into adventurous action. Rapine and bloodshed are the invariable distractions of unsettled and semi-barbarous societies. But the national poetry of the Scotch, the songs and ballads that pleased their untutored fancy and enlivened their rude feasts, had a romantic character all its own. For all its martial ring, it was no mere celebration of deeds of daring or carnage, of battle and fireraising and bloody deaths. It did not glorify successful guile like the Scandinavian scalds and sagas, or exalt the joys of ceaseless slaughter and debauch as the only heaven for a man of action. The most primitive Scotch minstrelsy was characterised as much by a gentle grace and touches of tender pathos as by fire and spirit. Through it all there ran a deep vein of the imaginative, which sometimes, in such wild legends as 'Tamlane,' became as fantastic as any Teutonic *märchen*. Even in warlike lays like the fight of Otterburn, where the death-struggle of the Douglas and Percy appealed to inveterate national animosities, the minstrel played on the heartstrings of his audience like the immortal Timotheus

in 'Alexander's Feast.' He turned from the shivering of lances and the shouts of victory to the softer and nobler emotions. And love was as favourite a theme as battle; witness the plaintive blending of sorrow, passion, and malignant revenge in fair 'Helen of Kirkconnel.' What can be more delicately insinuated than the forgiving bye-struggle of the poisoned and heart-stricken lover in 'Lord Randal'? What more tellingly impressive than the sharp touches of nature, the terse and vigorous descriptions of storm-scenery and shipwreck, in the 'Grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens'? And instances of the sort might be multiplied indefinitely.

Nor as time went on and Scotland became more peaceful, did the Scottish gentleman undergo much change, although he had to shape his course somewhat differently. He was poor as his country was barren, but his spirit was too high to resign itself to his circumstances, and settle him down into a tame existence, getting his living somehow from hand to mouth. The laird might live on his lands among his people, exercising a rough paternal authority over the tenantry who were bound to him by filial as by feudal ties. Their needy circumstances spurred the ambition of well-born cadets whose ancestors had always followed the profession of arms, and sent them to foreign lands to seek an outlet for their energies. Read the deeds of the Scotch auxiliaries in the pages of Froissart, or the records of the French kings' Archer Guard, their surest safeguard against domestic treason. Scotch seamen of the middle classes went trading and privateering when European commerce was still in its infancy; and chivalrous old captains like Sir Patrick Spens had worthy successors in the Andrew Bartons. The same spirit of adventure has survived to modern times, spreading itself downward through the nation, although it has been regulated by shrewd sense and has been circumscribed by the modern ways of money-getting. Yet there was romance enough in all conscience, for example, in the lives of the *employés* of the North American fur companies, who were recruited from the Highlands almost to a man, and who earned their pay and pensions in perpetual warfare with the savages, with the elements, and with one another. And to come more decidedly within the pale of civilisation, in our Indian dependencies, in the colonies, and even in foreign countries, we find Scotch adventurers holding a disproportionate share of offices of trust, profit, and difficulty, simply because they have the reflection, resolution, and courage which sends the fittest men by natural selection to their fitting places in positions of emergency. We seem to have been betrayed into a panegyric

when we merely meant to indicate an argument. But we have reached the conclusions we desired to draw—that the race, whether abroad or at home, is much the same as it has always been; consequently that the elements of romance and dramatic surprise are to be found in abundance even among those ‘canny’ folk who have seldom strayed beyond their parish bounds, although these may lie hidden under an impassive demeanour which repels the scrutiny of the uninstructed observer.

Perhaps for all purposes of argument, it would have come much to the same thing, had we gone straight to the *Waverley Novels*, which must remain, so long as there is a national literature, the alpha and omega of Scottish fiction. Sir Walter is at once the encouragement and despair of those who have followed or are to follow in his footsteps. He showed all that may be made of the character of his country people, and handled it with a versatility of knowledge and flexibility of touch that at once invite and defy imitation. He had in him all that was needful to do them the most complete poetical justice—a poet’s nature and sympathies, intuitive powers of perception, intense but enlightened patriotism, a sense of humour as goodnatureedly alive to their failings as it keenly appreciated their native wit, and an artistic discrimination which rejected what was coarse, while it could throw a halo of romance over the homely. An aristocrat by nature and a high Tory in politics, he never enjoyed life more heartily than when mixing with the rough farmers of the dales. He had the key to the hearts of humble retainers like the Purdies, and drawing instinctively to sympathetic and sterling worth, he stepped lightly over social barriers without breaking them down. The secret of the sparkling realism of his pictures was his lifelong familiarity with the people he dashed on to his canvas. He reproduced what rose naturally before him, scarcely drawing on memory, far less on fancy. An enthusiastic boy absorbed in the perusal of old romances, he had been sent for the benefit of his failing health to the seclusion of a border farmhouse. He had basked out on the hillsides in the summer day, among sturdy shepherds familiar with lays and legends of the Tweed and its tributaries; and in the cool evenings had drawn in his stool among the good people who gathered round the ‘ingle nook’ for the nightly gossip. As a lawyer’s apprentice going on business errands beyond the Highland line, his observation was straying in fields more congenial than jurisprudence, and his imagination was unconsciously assimilating all he heard and all he saw. Afterwards when the sheriff, as he told Lock-

hart, 'had many a grand gallop along these braes when 'thinking of Marmion,' he would often draw rein to find a welcome among the hospitable Dandie Dinmonts of the 'Forest.' He goes a cruise with the Commissioners of Northern Lights along the eastern coast and in the northern islands, and it is not only in the 'Pirate,' the immediate fruit of the expedition, that you may trace his course by the information he gathered. Thenceforth he shows a wonderful familiarity with the seafaring population he had merely got glimpses of, and his marine pieces are painted with the hand of a master.

Like all great artists, he closely followed nature, and availed himself to the utmost of the wide range of his personal observations. But the winning man of the world and indefatigable student of manners was a poet before everything; his genius refused to be fettered, and notwithstanding his fidelity to nature, which was the spell with which the wizard worked his marvels, he occasionally departed from inartistic realities and took bold liberties for the sake of his art. It was not that he did it of deliberate purpose. The man who threw off page after page of his great fictions with the swift regularity of an office drudge, probably seldom paused to reflect, never hesitated as to how he should express himself. He wrote from inspiration; his matter naturally arranged and expressed itself in the most telling forms; and such is the glamour he throws over his works that criticism is charmed into silence, or forgets to carp at details. Poetic expression is the very soul of Scottish fiction; for like all earnest and strongly self-contained peoples, the feelings of the Scotch, when they do break out, are apt to seek vent in poetic language, and there is an eloquent dignity in their rudest lamentations. It is the same with the inhabitants of the Basse Bretagne for example—a race who have much in common with the Scotch—and whose heaths and woodlands have a ballad literature as rich and passionate as that of the Scottish border. To our mind the prose Scott places in the mouths and cottage scenes of the humblest of the Scotch is more exquisite poetry than anything in the 'Lady of the Lake,' or 'Marmion.'

Others, of course, struck into the rich vein Scott had been working, and the conspicuous absence of effort in his writings possibly made imitation seem comparatively easy. Nothing gives more decided proof of his power than the comparative failure of very capable contemporaries. Both Lockhart and Wilson were men of real genius, and the latter especially could boast many of the qualifications by which Sir Walter attained success. Wilson knew his countrypeople well, and had an

intense sympathy with the humbler classes ; he had the eye of an artist and the soul of a poet. Perhaps the redundant poetry of his temperament proved a snare to him. It is certain his works, abounding as they do in beautiful descriptions, and overabounding in elaborate pathos, showed little of the nervous and manly tone of Christopher North the trenchant essayist. Neither in his 'Margaret Lyndsay' nor his 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life,' nor yet in the 'Adam Blair' of Lockhart, is there the well-balanced handling and lifelike versatility of their great prototype. Wilson over-refined in overwrought sentiment—Lockhart introduced a dramatic and theatrical element, almost anticipating in scenes in the Highland glens something of the hazardous social sensationalism of the French romances of later generations.

Galt struck into another line altogether, and succeeded all the better that he always went on the maxim, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*. A shrewd, clear, self-made Scot of the middle ranks, he described with inimitable accuracy the manners, feelings, and motives of action of the class of which he came. His provincials have but a dim idea of the world that lay beyond their parochial horizons, but their sight is keen enough within the range of their everyday vision. Although sufficiently neighbourly, and the readier to do a good-natured action that it cost them little but words or time, perhaps their most conspicuous quality is reputable selfishness. The author's peculiar humour delights in following them into the most trivial details of their daily life, and in analysing those petty motives of conduct that we are all conscious of, though we take pains to conceal them. His ministers are godly and kindly men, but we see them in their manses, troubled by their parochial cares, divested of the dignity of their sacred office, though seldom insensible to its high responsibilities. The most trifling local incidents are the same to them as the public events that may sway the fortunes of kingdoms—a subscription to a parish charity is more welcome than the news of a decisive national victory ; and even when they are ministering to the sick and suffering in spiritual sympathy, the associations that cling to them are of the earth, earthy. His laymen are of similar stamp. His provosts and baillies are really 'bits o' bodies'—very decent in their way, but eaten up by a sense of their personal consequence, and extraordinarily adroit in shaping a self-seeking course in accordance with their lax interpretation of the moral law. They are as likely to be elected to the kirk session as to the town council ; but you feel that nature never could have meant them for higher spheres than the council chambers of

their own burghs. Galt, in short, gives an unjust impression of his countrypeople, while keeping very strictly to the truth. You are compelled to admit the striking likenesses in a portraiture which brings foibles and meannesses into the light, while it leaves more engaging qualities in impenetrable shadow. But you are led into generalising as to the character of the nation from the delineation of a class which morally and æsthetically is decidedly one of its least favourable specimens. We have called attention to these points because some of our contemporary writers are inclined to imitate him in these respects. You have only to compare Galt's characters with Scott's, the ministers of the one with those of the other—and Scott had no partiality for the Presbyterian Church—or Baillie Nicol Jarvie with 'the Provost,' and you may judge of the artistic merits of their respective methods of treatment by the very different impressions they leave behind. The writer of genius studies the use of shadow as well as of light. He knows where to eliminate and where to idealise.

We may pass at once from Galt to the writers of our own time, for we find nothing characteristic enough to arrest us between; and among three of the most distinguished of these whom we single out for review, giving place to the ladies, we begin with Mrs. Oliphant. Mrs. Oliphant, moreover, has been writing for many years—her 'Margaret Maitland,' if we are not mistaken, made its appearance more than a quarter of a century ago. Since then she has laboured indefatigably, and of late has laid her scenes, for the most part, out of her native country. She has acquired great literary experience, has cultivated her style, ripened her judgment, and greatly extended her knowledge of the world, while losing little of her early freshness. But perhaps she has never written anything more simply enjoyable than her maiden novel, though the 'Minister's Wife'—which we shall notice by-and-bye—is as admirable in its way, and far more finished. Mrs. Oliphant, we may say at once, is in no way amenable to the imputations we have brought against Galt. She turns for choice to the more graceful sides of human nature, and never overlooks anything that is picturesque in the homeliest of the scenes she embodies in her pages. It is evident that she has gone to nature for her men and women: in her female creations, in particular, we cannot doubt that she has freely drawn inspiration from an examination of her personal idiosyncrasy. But though she must have borrowed largely from her own experience, we can never trace any decided self-portraiture. From the first she has shown herself both original and enterprising

in her search after studies, and the play of her imagination introduces marked variations even in types she is somewhat fond of repeating. In examining into an individual, writers like Galt never care to penetrate far beneath the surface, though they reflect to us very clearly all they have seen, so far as they have gone. Mrs. Oliphant invariably dives far deeper, giving us glimpses besides at those mysterious tides and currents which insensibly influence the course of human existences.

We said that all the most successful Scotch novels have been written from personal knowledge and close observation, and 'Mrs. Margaret Maitland' is an instance in point. We know nothing of Mrs. Oliphant's early life, but we suspect that much of it must have been passed in the retirement of a rural parish. So her first story suggested itself naturally to one who had a natural impulse to writing. There is a truthful and old-world simplicity about it which perhaps can only be fairly appreciated by residents in Scotland who have passed middle age. Pasturelands, although within hearing of the distant murmur of 'the great city' of Glasgow, was yet entirely secluded. There were no railways then with branch lines, developing traffic, stimulating enterprise, bringing in patent manures and machinery, and exciting the country folk with unfamiliar ambitions. Where they were born the parishioners were contented to die, and even the lairds lived among their own people. There was a 'great house' in the parish, inhabited by 'the Earl'; but to the parish in general, and indeed to the author in particular, it is altogether an unfamiliar region. The peer, his family, and his guests are drawn so fancifully as to throw their quieter neighbours out into more effective relief. Although they lived in Pasturelands, they were not of it—'a pleasant country place, where there was 'neither stir nor bustle, but a quiet kirk to preach in, and a 'godly congregation to minister to.' Pasturelands is by no means exempt from sin and scandal, even as it is idylled in Mrs. Oliphant's pages. The heritor of most consequence, next to the earl, seems at one time likely to bring reproach on his honourable family. Subsequently when he goes in impulsively for rash parochial reforms, he unintentionally fosters a deal of violence and rascality. But the general tone is 'douce' and pious: public opinion establishes a strong but benevolent rule of morality; and the clergyman exercises a friendly authority on a flock who hang on his pulpit utterances, and listen respectfully to his affectionate rebukes. The predominating religious feeling is not opposed to innocent merrymaking; on



the contrary, the spirits of the young generation are the more buoyant that they have been unembittered by dissipation and consequent remorse.

The subdued tone is preserved throughout. The local colouring is clear but soft. The simplicity of style is so carefully sustained that it is difficult to do the book justice by quoting from it. There is no striving after effects, although quiet effects are perpetually being produced; but they arise out of the intrinsic charm of the narrative, and almost steal upon you unawares. The scenery of Pasturelands is illustrative of the manner of the book. We have no glowing descriptions for the best of reasons, that there was nothing grand or romantic to describe. We gather that it was one of those lowland parishes whose general features have nothing distinctive about them. No doubt much of it was moorland; there was a dearth of ornamental timber; the farmers made the most of the land under tillage, and would remorselessly have grubbed up hedgerows had there been any. We are told of the stinginess of the heritors, and we take it for granted that the church was a bald edifice on a bleak hill; the village had been built strictly with an eye to the utilitarian; and even the manse, although it must have been sheltered from the bitter blasts by embosoming trees, for there were no such flowers anywhere else in the countryside, must have been unattractive as usual, if it were not muffled up in creepers. Yet out of these unpromising materials Mrs. Oliphant brings such bright impressions and sweet associations, as many a clever artist might fail to produce, with the range of the most luxuriant of southern landscapes. It is all done apparently by insinuation or incidentally. Here we have a glint of sunshine between showers falling among the sheep that are feeding on the hillside. There a waft of the fragrance of the sweetbriar in the manse garden, or a regretful allusion of the country pastor to the bonny flowers and the old-fashioned flower-beds he has been driven to abandon for conscience' sake.

Mrs. Margaret herself is just the old lady you would look to find among such surroundings. She is a very favourite type of Mrs. Oliphant's, though we may safely say she has never been improved upon in any subsequent story. She is strong-minded as well as simple-minded. Brought up in contentment from her cradle, and always cheerful, she has been at once chastened and elevated by the memory of an early disappointment. That sorrow of hers has given her a wonderful capacity for entering into those feelings of the young and the hopeful which has scarcely yet died away in herself. She has the gentle but

formal manners of a lady of the old school, who owes little to education, or at least to book-learning. She is come of an old covenanting family, who for generations have furnished clergymen to the church, and have established a sort of hereditary claim to the cosy living of Pasturelands. Her introductory mention of her father and his flock gives an admirable idea of the style of the book.

‘My father was minister of the parish of Pasturelands; a pleasant country place where there was neither stir nor bustle, but a quiet kirk to preach in and a godly congregation to minister to. My father was a man of bye-ordinary mildness, and just in an uncommon manner fitted for his charge. His session also were douce, grave, elderly men, who had a perception when to draw the rein tight and when to let it slucken; and of the folk themselves, I have often heard the minister my father say, that among them there were fewer of the dross and more of the salt of the earth than is to be found often in this weary and wicked generation. They were mostly farmers and farm servants, with a sprinkling of country tradesmen, and here and there a laird and a laird’s family, with lady-daughters brought up in Edinburgh, and bringing their fine garments to put foolish notions of pride and gentility into many a young head, no excepting my own; for I was just like my neighbours and thought much of the shining vanity of apparel, the purple and fine linen of the world.’

‘Aunt Margaret,’ however, as she is affectionately called by the young people, is not Mrs. Oliphant’s heroine; but Grace Maitland, who is brought up from childhood in Mrs. Margaret’s charge, is nearly as original in her way. The precocious but engaging child grows into a fascinating woman, whose gentle nature has strength enough to determine her own future in spite of the evil influences of her nearest relations. We fancy we can hear Mrs. Maitland telling the story of her introduction to her little charge:—

‘The bit little, thin, genty-looking bairn, with a face no to be forgotten, though I could not say it was bonnie. There was no colour in her cheeks, and she had dark hair; but the eyes! I never saw the like of them. The little face was like a shady corner when they were cast down, and when she lifted them it was like the rising of the stars in the sky; no that they were sharp, but like a deep stream flowing dark and full. Truly my spirit was stirred within me there, standing at the gate of Sunnyside, with the bairn’s hand in mine and her eyes shining into me, as if she was reading my very heart; the bit little thing, with the spirit within her that would never die; and I resolved within myself from that day that the bairn the Lord had sent to my lone and quiet house should be to me as my own blood and kin.’

If she could not say that the little Grace was bonnie, she had no difficulty about affirming it later of Miss Maitland the

grown-up heiress. Grace and her bosom friend Mary Maitland, niece of Mrs. Margaret, and daughter of the manse, were both blessed with great good looks and pursued by the addresses of ardent admirers. The unselfish old spinster renews her griefs and sighs in silence as she finds herself again in an atmosphere of love-making, and is made the confidante of attachments that threaten to be unfortunate. There is nothing in any of Mrs. Oliphant's works prettier than some of these love scenes and love confidences, slight as they often are; and through the whole of them she never loses once sight of her leading purpose and her central character. The influences that radiate from the beauties of Mrs. Maitland's single-minded nature pervade the whole story; even when she is not present in the flesh, she is the good genius of both the girls who are brought up near her, and even the wild and high-spirited young man, who turns afterwards into a devoted husband and valuable member of society, has her to thank, in great measure, for being converted to marriage from the folly of his ways. Thus 'Mrs. Margaret Maitland' is not only a charming picture of a peaceful and beneficent life, but almost perfect art, so far as it goes, in its compact and simple construction. Nor while full of earnestness and pathos, is it at all wanting in humour. But the humour is more diffuse than epigrammatic, and we are sorry we have no room for the tender interview, when the elderly schoolmaster makes Mrs. Maitland an offer of his heart and hand, on the occasion of his receiving the presentation to the kirk of Pasturelands, in place of the lady's brother, who had resigned on occasion of the disruption.

'Merkland,' though more ambitious, more nearly resembles the ordinary novel, and may be dismissed much more briefly. Strathroan, where the scenes are laid, is a picturesque counterpart of Pasturelands; the subject is far more sensational than the 'Passages from the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland' or 'Sunnyside,' a precise old-fashioned title, which admirably expresses the manner and method of the contents. Merkland lies in a mountain district among wild hills and lochs, the *dramatis personæ* are the members of old Highland landed families, and the interest mainly turns on a mysterious murder that casts its shadow over the lives of many of them. Mrs. Catherine Douglas stands for Mrs. Margaret Maitland; the beneficent female genius, unattached, always ready to give anyone a helping hand. But, except in their kindness and generosity of nature, there is little in common between the haughty, wealthy, dictatorial *chatelaine* of the Tower, and the

retiring unassuming mistress of Sunnyside. Mrs. Margaret is nature itself; Mrs. Catherine, with her grand airs and high-flown language, is nature of the kind one is apt to associate with fiction, if not with the stage. Yet the plot is laid with skill, and worked out with patient ingenuity. Some of the episodes are highly dramatic, and the Highland gentlemen and the ladies of their families play their parts with great *vraisemblance*, although they strike us as decidedly more shadowy than those inhabitants of Pasturelands we came to know so intimately. In 'Merkland' too, as in 'Mrs. Margaret Maitland,' Mrs. Oliphant shows herself very much abroad in those circles of society that lie beyond these Scottish parishes. The southern lord, who establishes himself in the hereditary halls of the Sutherlands, is a person as improbable as he is decidedly unpleasant; the lad he is leading astray, the Honourable Giles Sympelton, is in Dickens' feeble style of caricature, and the hanger-on Lord Gillravidge employs as his envoy is a simple monstrosity. But there are stirring scenes rising out of the high-handed proceedings of these eccentric aliens; and with her foot set down on her native heath, describing the ejection of the hapless MacAlpines from their cottages, Mrs. Oliphant regains all her natural vigour.

We greatly prefer 'Harry Muir' to 'Merklands.' It brings out most effectively the poetical side of a hard-working and poverty-stricken life in a great manufacturing city. It is a touching romance of the domestic affections, pushing out their delicate shoots and tendrils in a blighting and uncongenial atmosphere. It shows Mrs. Oliphant's habit of making the best of everything and everybody; of treating human weaknesses with something of angelic consideration; and it moves one's feelings with a melancholy story, without leaving the sting of painful impressions. Harry Muir is the idol of the little group of women who surround him; they suffer in silence from the faults they conspire to throw a veil over, as they watch him with painfully unselfish anxiety while he runs a course of thoughtless and selfish folly; and when he comes at last to his untimely end, he ends so that he is only mourned for as one mourns a heavy family bereavement. The moral of the book is practical and admirable. It does not make light of sin; it dwells on the bitterness inseparable from the fleeting pleasures of dissipation; it demonstrates their baleful effects on a captivating and joyous nature that has never been in the habit of controlling its impulses; but at the same time it shows the power of patient and gentle family influences in saving the offender from the depths of degradation, and shielding him

from the worst consequences of his faults. Harry Muir's careless goodnature brings out the shining qualities of his self-sacrificing wife and sisters, and you cannot help liking the man they are so devoted to. The family belongs to a class that, as we are happy to know, has never been very rare in Scotland. They live in penury; they toil with their hands for their daily bread; neither from their upbringing nor their education can they well be ranked among gentlefolks; yet when an unlooked-for inheritance raises them to affluence, and throws them into good county society, they take their places with perfect propriety and composure in their new set of acquaintances.

'They themselves were of an order peculiar to no class, but scattered through all; without any education worth speaking of, except the two plain, indispensable faculties of reading and writing. Harry Muir and his sister, knowing nothing of the world, had unconsciously reached at and attained the higher society which the world of books and imagination opens to delicate minds. They were not aware that their own taste was unusually refined, or their own intellect more cultivated than their fellows, but they were at once sensible of Cuthbert's superiority, and hailed it with eager regard—not without a little involuntary pride either, to find that this, almost the most highly cultivated person they had ever met, was, after all, only equal to themselves.'

Martha, the eldest, and the finest if not the most taking of the characters, is especially Scotch. She had been schooled into outward sternness by a life of self-denial and privations, and from early childhood had been a thoughtful woman. But the wearing cares that engrossed her time and thought had only intensified her fondness for the family that Providence had entrusted to her charge.

'To raise them—these children—to that indefinite rank and honour which exists in the fancy of the young who are poor—to win for them exemption from those carking cares amid which her own youth, a strong plant, had grown green and flourished. Such hopes were strong in the heart of the passionate girl when people thought her only a child; and when dark necessities came,—when following many little pilgrims, the father and mother went away, leaving her the head of the sadly diminished family, her strong desire, intensified by great grief, possessed her like a fiery tormenting spirit.'

In that blending of hopeful dreams for the future of her charges, with the unremitting and unromantic drudgery to which she uncomplainingly condemned herself for their sakes, she is the representative of many a humble Scotchwoman who outwardly seems commonplace and unprepossessing enough.

That university education, invariably described in George Mac Donald's pages, which is to prepare the humble student for possible destinies which otherwise he could never have pretended to, is the fruit of such self-denying aspirations and such sublime self-sacrifice. But we have said enough to indicate the especial merits of 'Harry Muir,' and must hurry on, without calling attention to its lighter beauties, or indulging in other extracts we had marked for quotation. Yet before leaving it we must single out, for notice, as in sober keeping with the cheerful contentment of the hard-working family living among noisy neighbours in a dismal suburb, that picture of 'Nature, which is beautiful in every place,' with which the Muirs refreshed themselves when they could spare themselves the time:—

'The distant traffic of the "port," to which the canal is the sea, the flutter of dingy ship-sails, and a far-off prospect of the bare cordage and brief masts of little Dutch vessels delivering their miscellaneous cargoes there, gave a softened home-look, almost like the quiet harbour of some little seaport, to a scene which close at hand could boast of few advantages. But the air was light with the haze of sunset, and in the east the sky had paled down to the exceeding calmness of the eventide, lying silently around its lengthened strips of island-cloud like an enchanted sea. Dull and blank was the long level line of water at their feet, yet it was water still, and flowed, or seemed to flow. . . . These were homely sights, but the charmed atmosphere gave a harmony to them all.'

'Katie Stewart' was published in 'Blackwood's Magazine' nearly a quarter of a century ago. It may be more properly styled an historical *novelette*—compact and light, abounding in action, and overflowing with feeling and passion. It takes us back to the generation that was excited in 'the '45' by the chivalrous exploits of the young Pretender. The scenes are shifted between the family mansion of the noble Erskines, Earls of Kelly, and the dwellings of their humbler neighbours and dependents. Katie Stewart, the daughter of the miller, is almost the adopted sister of the Ladies Erskine. Bewitching in mind as in person, made half indifferent from habit to the love and admiration that are lavished on her, she has had the gift of winning all hearts from her childhood. In the natural pride of her fascinations she takes very kindly to her new position, and had there been less of warm impulsiveness and earnestness in her heart, her happiness might have been wrecked in her ambition, and she might have been betrayed into an unfortunate *mariage de convenance*. But a genuine love lays hold of her in time, and she discovers somewhat

regretfully that her heart has been ravished away by a handsome young seaman in her own original station. The perils and misfortunes of her lover keep her true to him through a suspense that might well have shaken an ordinary constancy, and we have a delightfully piquant tale of alternating hopes and fears, that end in a prospect of unclouded happiness.

The 'Minister's Wife' takes a more ambitious range. In place of a quiet narrative of every-day feelings and incidents centring very much in a single family, we have the throbbing sensation of one of those great waves of religious agitation which from time to time will stir to its depths the fervid earnestness of the Scottish people. The Spirit is abroad in a Highland parish; single-minded fanaticism believes itself charged with inspired messages to a sinful generation; the ignorant in their terror hang eagerly on the lips of the self-commissioned apostles, and the moderate and cool-headed people who resist the contagion are confounded and denounced with the scoffers and the indifferent. In the revival at Loch Diarmid we see the germs of the great religious schism that severed the Kirk; and as they are forced in the warmth of an unnatural atmosphere, it seems as if you were examining their growth through the lenses of a microscope. No one could have attempted to describe that course of thought and feeling who had not an intimate acquaintance with the habits of mind of an undemonstrative people, and who had not been herself subjected in her youth to the influences of Presbyterian teachings. Nor is the actual life of the minister's wife as uneventful as the title would imply. A young and lighthearted girl, she is scarcely caught up in the vortex of the devouring spiritual agitation around her. Yet she becomes the innocent instrument of deciding the fate of others, and her spirits are sobered prematurely by the scenes passing around her. Her mind, besides, is tempest-tossed from the first by personal doubts, fears, and troubles. She forms in her innocence an unfortunate attachment; friends and circumstances save her when her happiness has almost made shipwreck; and she glides into contented tranquillity at the manse with the minister, only to be cast out again by a mysterious crime into a more stormy sea than before. Under the chastening of misfortune she is strengthened and purified. Struck down by her sudden and bitter reverses, she emerges from her trials sadder and better; and although the course of her education seems natural enough as you follow it, yet you can barely recognise the gay Isabel of the opening chapter in the sorrow-stricken mother who only struggles against despair from her sense of

religion and her devotion to her only child. The turmoil of her conflicting feelings is highly dramatic, when she discovers that that first love of hers to whom she has bound herself in second nuptials was the murderer of the fond and generous husband who had taken her to his bosom, to cherish in the manse.

In the prelude to our article we remarked on the unsuspected veins of feeling and passion in those quiet Scotch people who spend their uneventful lives in their native parishes. We appeal to the 'Minister's Wife' in illustration of our remarks. Intense local excitement had made the parishioners of Loch Diarmid forget their self-consciousness and cast off their reserve. In a succession of thrilling scenes we have them brought out in dramatic lights, which we feel notwithstanding to be perfectly natural. Among all those who are troubled about their spiritual state, one mind at least remains blessedly tranquil. Margaret, the elder sister of Isabel, lying in the last stage of a decline, is joyfully expectant of the end that is approaching. The whole parish recognises her for a saint, and because her hold on heaven is so evidently assured, it comes into the heart of Ailie Macfarlane, the inspired prophetess, to bid the invalid arise and walk, that she may take her share in the work of revival. The one thing needful is faith on the part of the sufferer. Ailie burst into the chamber of the dying girl, followed by a troop of devotees and curious inquirers, all eager to be present at the working of the miracle. With Ailie there comes a certain Mr. John Diarmid, a converted profligate who is now amongst the prophets, and who had once made dishonourable advances to Margaret. On the other side of the sick-bed are grouped the relatives, with the worthy minister of the parish. Though they would gladly keep her last days undisturbed, they are overmastered by the earnestness and impetuous faith of the intruders. The contrast of the peace breathing from the death-bed, with the tender earthly anxieties, on the one side, and the fanatical turmoil on the other, are painfully impressive. Ailie makes her appeal with the authority of one with a mission, but the convictions she counted on to work the miracle are paralysed by Margaret's assured and enlightened resignation. A chilling doubt will creep to her heart that her fancied power and message may be a delusion; and half with the idea of reassuring herself, she breaks out in a final passionate appeal:—

"You're not to think your prayers refused," said the sick girl. "I'm near to the gate, and I can hear the message sent. It says, 'Ay, she shall be saved; ay, she shall rise up; not in earth but in heaven.'"



“No,” said Ailie passionately, “it’s no a true spirit of prophecy; it’s an evil spirit come to tempt you. No! oh ye of little faith, wherefore do you doubt? Is the Lord to be vexed for ever with the generation that will not believe? Listen to His voice. Arise, arise, shake off the bonds of Satan. Rise up and stand upon your feet. Margaret, let not God’s servants plead in vain. Oh, hearken while I plead with you, harder, far harder than I have to plead with God. Why will ye die, oh house of Israel? Rise up and live: I command you in the name of the Lord!”

Even the calmer onlookers are half carried away by Ailie’s fervour, and for the moment would scarcely be surprised if the wild appeals proved effectual.

“Oh, if ye would but try! Oh my Maggie, will ye try?” sobbed Isabel, clasping her sister closer and gazing with supplication beyond words in her face. And the minister lifted his face from his hands and looked at her; and little Mary, who had stolen in, came forward like a little wandering spirit and threw herself with a cry on Margaret’s shoulder in a wild attempt to raise her up.

We have Ailie wrestling afterwards in the hillside in anguish that is almost despair; we have Mr. John writhing in agonies of grief and self-humiliation in the heather, under the windows of the dying girl. Such scenes would be impossible to Scotch temperaments in ordinary times. No one but the minister or some godly neighbour would venture to intrude on the sanctity of a dying chamber; no peasant maiden would forget her sex, her station, and her ignorance like Ailie; no laird would make a parish spectacle of himself like Mr. John, careless of opinion. But we know from the actual annals of these revivals that all that Mrs. Oliphant has imagined might happen, when Scottish folk intoxicate themselves with religious hysteria, as eastern dervishes get drunk with bang. The power of her art lies in the dramatic purpose to which she has turned these contagious outbreaks, and the vigorous discrimination with which she has laid bare the working of the people’s minds as they fall into moral convulsions in such ‘seasons of awakening.’ And such a novel flashes a strong side-light on some periods of Scottish history. It helps you to understand how the stern Cameronians suffered the spoiling of their goods, torture, and death, rather than submit to the arbitrary edicts of the Government on secondary points of faith or forms. Then the obvious arguments and retorts of the fanatics, the temporisers and Erastian Gallios among the farming people who gather nightly ‘for their cracks’ round the village forge, have a quaint, reverential, religious humour about them that we should be loth to pass over in silence, were it not that we

shall come on something even better of the kind in examining the novels of Mr. George Mac Donald.

After an interval of several years, we come to the last of Mrs. Oliphant's Scottish works. Indeed, 'Valentine: and his 'Brother' appeared only the other day in the pages of 'Blackwood's Magazine.' We remark in it especially the progress the author has made in the experience of life in its various phases. Now she shows herself as much at home in the aristocratic society of the county of Mid Lothian as she has always been in the homes of the lairds and the manses of the clergy. She dedicates the book to her boys at Eton, and she writes of the Eton 'fellows' with a fullness of knowledge that is wonderful in a woman. That, however, although deserving of notice, is a very subsidiary merit. The story is an admirable specimen of the constructive and dramatic art; and if the foundation of the plot is bold almost to extravagance, we are ready to forgive anything that is improbable in it, in consideration of the telling situations evolved. The heir of the noble house of Eskside, in his inexperienced but virtuous youth, has fallen a victim to the charms of a beautiful gipsy. He has married her, and bitterly regretted the *mésalliance* when he finds himself mismated in every way. Cold, though clever, the very stuff out of which you make a polished diplomat, adapting himself easily to cosmopolitan society, amusing his elegant leisure with æsthetic pursuits, he has nothing in common with the child of nature he has chosen. They drift apart, and their paths in life lie widely separate. While the Honourable Richard Ross is shining at foreign courts, Myra Forrest has gone back to her gipsy camp fires, and is carrying his twin children about on the tramp. At last she decides to do one of the children justice, and to perform a grand act of restitution. She drops the younger of the boys at the doors of the ancestral halls, and the old folks at home, Lord Eskside and his wife, recognising the features of their heir in the little waif, eagerly welcome him as their missing grandchild.

The boy, with much of the warm gipsy blood in his veins, turns out all that his fond grand-parents could desire. The only drawback to their pride in him is the fear that he may betray the wild tendencies of his maternal race; and then there is the shadow of a cloud hanging over his origin. Gossips will talk of the 'randy beggar wife' who brought him to the doors of Rossraig and then vanished on the night of the great storm. But these reports about the handsome, spirited youth have been well-nigh forgotten, when they are maliciously

revived in the height of a contested election. The secret blow has been dealt by the father of Valentine's lady-love and distant cousin—a gentleman who is heir presumptive, failing this unlucky foundling, to the honours and estates of the Eskside. Hence much trouble and excitement, and many openings for effective and suggestive writing, of which Mrs. Oliphant has not been slow to avail herself. Distracted between her family and her lover, Violet Pringle has bitter times of it. As for Valentine and his grand-parents, they experience surprise on surprise, and sustain shock on shock, although these sensations follow naturally enough on the extravagantly romantic origin of the novel. Valentine had stumbled by accident on his mother and missing brother, was instinctively attracted to them, and had patronised them magnificently in unconsciousness of the relationship. It is much of a mystery how Myra the gipsy woman should have preserved, through her wandering gipsy life, the lady-like refinement of manner and feeling that had captivated the Honourable Richard Ross. It is more intelligible that, with such a mother, 'Dick Brown,' who is really Richard Ross the younger, should have been 'brought up so respectable' as to be quite ready to turn into a gentleman. And the scenes arising out of discovery, recognition, and the coming together of the strangely assorted family under the influences of common interests and anxieties are admirably devised and depicted. Violet and Valentine are of course made happy in the end. Dick has a sublime opportunity of evincing his gratitude to his brother and benefactor; even the polished secretary of legation, after being woken up from his long lethargy of feeling, is sent back to his legation a better and happier man; and there is a promise of cheerful closing days for the old Lord Eskside and his warm-hearted Lady. But 'Valentine: and his Brother' do not shake us in our preference for our old acquaintance 'The Minister's Wife.' The conception of the latter is more simply natural; the analysis of minds and feelings more searching and profound; the work is more perfect in its finish and in its general harmony of idea. 'Valentine: and his Brother,' on the other hand, is rather a *tour de force*; having seized on a striking and sensational plot, its author succeeds in absorbing us afterwards so as to make us forget to be incredulous and critical. It shows great literary talent on every page, and an extraordinary fertility of resource and invention; while nothing can be more enchanting than the description of that woodland scenery on the romantic banks of Esk, with which very few Scotchmen are unfamiliar. Mrs. Oliphant writes indefatigably, and, as it seems

to us, she is generally in the habit of driving at least a couple of works abreast. But so long as her fancy grows with what it feeds upon, and her execution improves with increased experience, we at least shall take no exception to her prolificness.

George Mac Donald's works have much in common with those of Mrs. Oliphant. The subjects are very similar, although Mr. Mac Donald takes his favourite heroes and heroines from a somewhat humbler grade. He goes to the cottage and the farmhouse, rather than to the laird's mansion or the manse. In both the religious element is largely predominant, but Mr. Mac Donald is more of the metaphysician and theologian, and searches into the inner nature of his creations with a more discriminating refinement of analysis. Everyone knows that the Scotch are an eminently religious people; but the impression is that theirs is too often the selfish and narrow-minded sectarianism that shuts its eyes to the sins they are inclined to, while it is intolerantly observant of Levitical laws and ceremonies. Mr. Mac Donald admits there is some truth in that view, but he sets himself to do them justice while he does not gloss over their faults. He ridicules hypocrisy and inconsistency, and the complacent self-conceit that catches at biblical forms of speech while it can give little reason for the faith that is in it. But he shows that a good deal of hypocrisy and bigotry is really a tribute to that moral and religious tone which is so favourable to solemn thought and genuine piety. He delights in depicting the working man, who in independent communing with his Creator and himself, has shaped out for himself a more catholic creed he scarcely dares to confess to, and has brought his intelligent benevolence into embarrassing conflict with his orthodoxy. He may be apt to over-refine and idealise in his 'David Elginbrod.' But it is impossible to doubt that, even in his 'David Elginbrod,' he must have followed nature very closely; that he must have had opportunities of familiarising himself with the quaint phraseology which is made the vehicle for most original forms of thought—phraseology that often borders apparently on irreverence in its familiar handling of sacred subjects. A determined enemy to Calvinistic exclusiveness, nothing rouses him to righteous indignation like the suggestion that the Supreme Ruler of this beautiful world can be anything else than the fountain of love and mercy. Æsthetically speaking, it is fortunate for his readers that he is so earnest an advocate of muscular Christianity, that he believes firmly that man was made for the purpose of innocent enjoyment. For discussions and disquisitions that would otherwise seem dull are enlivened by

abundance of dry drollery—the gravest of mortals show frequent flashes of fun in the grey eyes under the shaggy eyebrows, and give utterance to excellent things they are more than half ashamed of—and then he has the hearty sympathy of a man who has been young himself, with the overflowing spirits and even the practical jokes of boyhood. Mr. Mac Donald, indeed, is constantly going back to his youthful days, and living his school and village life over again in the persons of his youthful heroes. So that his works are not only extremely realistic, but have a certain mannerism about them, with a slight smack of the schoolmaster. He is fond of taking the boy young, and passing over no detail of his development and education—the education, we mean, that comes of thought and self-examination rather than from parents and teachers. Throughout, his work is an analysis of living humanity, to which the interest of the plot is altogether subordinated. Mr. Mac Donald is a poet, and a good poet. His descriptions of Scotch scenery in light and darkness, snow-storm and sunshine, are often exquisite. Sometimes he breaks away from a strain of abstract speculation into fanciful eloquence as farfetched as anything in his ‘Phantastes,’ or he falls into a vein of sentimentalism that rather tempts one to smile than to weep. Yet he is even too honest and conscientious in representing Scotch life as he has seen and known it, and it says much for his peculiar powers that he makes his works so attractive as they are. It is true he writes for thoughtful readers. But even they may feel that he is sometimes unnecessarily didactic—that they are kept dwelling too long on matters that in themselves are by no means light or easy reading. In the boyhood and youth of a raw Scotch lad there must be much that is decidedly dull and prosaic, however striking may be the transformation scene, when the beauties of his moral nature are bursting out in full brilliancy; and a dreamy, boyish passion is but an indifferent substitute for hopeful and heart-felt love-making in the ordinary manner. He sticks closely to what we presume is his native country—north-eastern Scotland. To those who know it as well as we do, nothing can seem more minutely truthful than his descriptions, and there is scarcely a page that does not recall to us associations that are linked with pleasant memories. He sets off to the utmost the cold charms of somewhat forbidding landscapes, and does ample romantic justice to the homely but kindly people. But even to a native of these parts the dialect of the people sounds uncouth and almost coarse, and instead of imitating Scott in departing from something that resembles colloquial English

as slightly and as seldom as he conscientiously can, he has a mania for making everyone go out of their way to discourse in the very broadest Scotch. Robert Falconer and Alec Forbes have both mastered English early, and as a matter of art they should be encouraged to speak it, by way of contrast with the people about them, who all express themselves in the primitive Doric. But they seldom miss an opportunity of going back to the old vernacular. Even a highborn lady in 'Robert Falconer,' who has long been resident in England, catches the infection, and does not content herself with those stray Scotticisms which used to give a pleasant piquancy to the talk of contemporaries of her birth and station. But when all has been said of them in the way of detracting criticism, Mr. Mac Donald's works must take very high rank for the most elevating qualities of fiction. They paint the noblest forms of religious and intellectual life with the fidelity of deep experience. They set up an exalted standard of excellence, and brace their readers for the battles of life by dwelling invariably on the heroic virtues of resolution, patience, self-reliance, and self-sacrifice. They encourage one under inevitable failures and disappointments, by showing that the bitters of existence may be the best of stimulants, and become positively pleasant in the after-taste.

'David Elginbrod' is unmistakably the work of a remarkable man, but it exaggerates both the faults and the beauties of the author. The fanciful element is extremely strong, even when he does not seek the excitement of his plot in the mystical and supernatural. Hugh Sutherland, the hero, is human enough; David, the stalwart old peasant-patriarch, with his almost celestial tenderness for the weaknesses of his frail fellow-creatures, his original notions of the great mysteries of the religious government of the world, and his shrewd critical insight into the hidden meaning of such mystic poets as Coleridge, is barely conceivable; but Margaret, his angel-daughter, seems to us altogether the dream of a Fra Angelico's half-inspired fancy. Heaven, as it made her, taught her her first lessons, and under the hands of her fond father she grows in grace and moral beauty. With all her natural gifts, it strikes us as extravagant that a Scotch peasant girl, who has just quitted the paternal cottage, should develop so suddenly into the refined lady in every sense of the word. The young Scotch maid not only wins Hugh Sutherland's heart and reverence, which perhaps was natural enough, but she establishes a spiritual ascendancy over the various inmates of the English household she has been received into. She not only clothes beautiful

thoughts in a rare dignity of language, but, in characteristic contrast to Mr. Mac Donald's usual practice, she forgets her Aberdeenshire patois for the purest English. We admire her, in short, as we admire the sweet creation of some fairy tale, rather than as a being of like passions with ourselves, although she is made archly womanly in the bit of wooing that winds up the volumes and settles her for life:—

“What is the matter, dear—Hugh?” she said, rising and laying her hand on his shoulder.

“Hoot, lassie,” broke in her mother; “are ye makin' love till a man, a *gentleman*, before my very een?”

“He did it first, mother,” answered Margaret with a smile.

As for the supernatural machinery—ghosts' walks, haunted chambers, mesmeric and spiritual influences, the quack Funkelstein, &c.—Mr. Mac Donald has discarded everything of the kind in his later books, and very wisely. It is indifferent art, as Scott proved in his ‘Monastery,’ unless you plunge at once over head and ears into allegory like *La Motte Fouqué*, to bring supernatural sensationalism to bear on the doings of the every-day world; and his shadowy revelations and visitations from the spirit-world seem strangely out of keeping with the conscientious realism of Mr. Mac Donald's reproductions of every-day life.

‘David Elginbrod’ is evidently the work of an original mind, we may say of an original genius. But ‘Alec Forbes of Howglen,’ while avoiding most of its blemishes, is a far more finished story. The harmonies of conception are preserved throughout; the drawing of character is never exaggerated. After reading the book, an intelligent foreigner, who knew nothing whatever of Scotland, might carry away as clear an idea of the country and the people as he could have gathered from a short sojourn among the middle classes in a rural parish and a provincial tour. Alec himself goes through much the same course of training as Hugh Sutherland or Robert Falconer. Though somewhat better born and bred than his school-fellows, he is sent with them to the parish school, there to prepare for the neighbouring university, where he hopes to pay his way by gaining a bursary (scholarship). *Mutatis mutandis*, his is the story of many a Scotch lad; although Alec not being made prematurely thoughtful by seeing his family stinting itself to forward him in the world, is as careless as an ordinary schoolboy ought to be, and vents his spirits in frolic and mischief. Thanks, less to his better position than to those nascent qualities that stamp the leaders of men, he is acknowledged as chief among his rough and rugged companions,—a trying

position, and pretty sure to spoil any but a boy of generous nature. Nor is the parish schoolmaster the man to keep him straight. Mr. Malison is one of the best studies in the book. He is one of a class that is less common now than formerly. Like many another parochial teacher, after studying divinity and taking orders, he falls back in the meantime on the schoolmaster's desk, looking forward later to presentation to a parish. By the way, the story of how he became a 'stickit minister'—that is, how he broke down ignominiously in the pulpit, while trying to dispense with the use of manuscript—is told with admirable drollery. Meantime Malison is the petty tyrant of the schoolhouse, and his unlucky scholars lead miserable lives within doors, though the habit of being maltreated has become second nature with them, and they forget their sorrows when they break loose for the day. It is characteristic of the stern notions of discipline of their really affectionate parents, that the fathers do not interfere, though the mothers may be resentful. An old man brings his grandchildren to place them under Mr. Malison's charge:—

'There had come to the school about a fortnight before two unhappy-looking twin orphans, with white thin faces and bones in their clothes instead of legs and arms, committed to the mercies of Mr. Malison by their grandfather. Bent into all the angles of a grasshopper, and lean with ancient poverty, the old man tottered away with his stick in one hand, stretched far out to support his stooping frame, and carried in the other the caps of the two forsaken urchins, saying as he went in a quavering, croaking voice, "I'll just tak' them wi' me, or they'll no be fit for Sawbath within a fortnicht. They're terrible laddies to blaud (spoil) their claes." Turning with difficulty when he had reached the door, he added, "Noo, ye just give them their whaps weel, Maister Mailison, for ye ken that he that spareth the rod blaudeth the bairn."

'Thus authorised, Malison certainly did "gie them their whaps weel."

Brutal severity of this kind would have gone far towards spoiling Alec Forbes, by exciting angry passions and a sense of injustice, had not his spirit been too high to be easily broken. As it is, it develops his manly qualities by making him the generous protector of the feeble, especially of a certain charming little Annie Anderson, who ends by marrying the champion who was the object of her childish adoration. What helps to save Alec also, besides the influence of his excellent mother, is familiar intercourse with some of the godly working men. Their excellent hearts and their narrow opinions are always dragging them in opposite directions. There is one Thomas Crann, a stonemason, and a pillar of the local dissenting chapel. He cannot deny that Alec Forbes is a vessel of wrath at



present, but he sees promise and almost assurance of a blessed future for him. Thomas never neglects the opportunity of speaking a word in season to any of his neighbours, and even the more thoughtless of them being unconsciously inoculated with the serious atmosphere they have been brought up in, have no disrelish for abstract speculation in solemn subjects. They reply to Thomas's warnings with mingled seriousness and badinage, being always pleased to make him trip in an argument or to catch him out in a contradiction. We quote the following conversation at some length as a good specimen of the talk with which they lighten their labours. It came off in the churchyard after a funeral, between Crann the mason and Macwha the wright (carpenter):—

“Hech! it's a weary warl,” said George.

“Ye hae no richt to say sae, George,” answered Thomas; “for ye hae never met it an' foughten wi' it. Ye hae never draan the soord o' the Lord and o' Gideon. Ye hae never broken the pitcher to let the light shine owt, an' I doubt ye hae smo'ed it by this time. And sae when the bridegroom comes ye'll be ill aff for a licht.”

“Hoot, man! dinna speak sic awfu' things in the verra kirkyard.”

“Better hear them in the kirkyard than at the closed door, George.”

“Weel, but,” rejoined Macwha, anxious to turn the current of the conversation, which he found unpleasantly personal; “jist tell me honestly, Thomas Crann, do ye believe wi' a' your heart an' sowl that the deid man—Gude be wi' him!”

“No prayin' for the deid i' my hearing, George! as the tree falleth, so it shall lie.”

“Weel, weel, I didna mean anything.”

“That I verily believe. Ye seldom do.”

“Wad it be a glorified timmer leg he rase wi', gin he had been buried wi' a timmer leg?” asked he.

“His ain leg wad be buried same gate.”

“Ow, ah, nae doubt. An' it wad come happin' ower the Paecefic or the Atlantic to fine its oreeginal stump—wad it no? But supposin' the man had been *wantin'* a leg—eh Thomas?”

“George, George,” said Thomas, with great solemnity, “luik ye efter your sowl, an' the Lord 'll luik efter your body, legs an' a'. Man, ye're no convertit, an' how can ye unnerstan' the things o' the speerit? Aye jeerin' an' jeerin'.”

“Weel, weel, Thamas, . . . I was only takin' the leeberty o' thinkin' that when he was about it, the Almighty might as weel mak' a new body a'thegither as patch up the auld ane. Sae I'se awa hame.”

“Mind ye your immortal pairt, George.” . . .

“Gin the Lord tak's sic guid care o' the body, Thamas,” retorted Macwha, with less of irreverence than appeared in his words, “maybe he winna objec' to gie a look to my puir sowl as weel, for they say it's

worth a hantle mair. I wish he wad, for he kens better nor me how to set about the job."

Removed from such unsophisticated companionship to the university, Alec casts his village slough, though slowly. Mr. Mac Donald goes back heart and soul to his college days with their delightful memories for the hopeful and studious. His description of the primitive life in a Scotch university, with all its drawbacks and advantages, is given with equal truth and spirit. But the newly-arrived student has a fit of romantic musing on the threshold of the world which is just opening before him:—

'Alec stood at the window and peered down into the narrow street, through which, as in a channel between rocks burrowed into dwellings, ran the ceaseless torrent of traffic. He felt at first as if life had really opened its gates, and he had been transported into the midst of its drama. But in a moment the show changed, turning first into a meaningless procession; then into a chaos of conflicting atoms; reforming itself at last into an endlessly unfolding coil, no break in the continuity of which would ever reveal its hidden mechanism. For to no mere onlooker will Life any more than Fairyland open its secret. A man must become an actor before he becomes a true spectator.'

Mr. Mac Donald conjures up before us the old university-town—Old Aberdeen evidently—with the picturesque features brought out in strange contrast by the generally bleak scenery and baldly uninteresting buildings. There is the grey old college with its granite crown, its buttressed quadrangle, its colonnades, and its chapel, owing its foundation to the munificence of times when episcopal dignitaries were the liberal patrons of art. There is the venerable 'Brig of Balgounie,' spanning, as Byron says, its deep black salmon pool, below a reach of the river whose precipitous banks are densely timbered down to the water's edge. Above all, there is the dreary stretch of 'bents' and links lying along the shore of the melancholy Northern Ocean, and yet with a wild beauty of their own. There Alec, although no dreamer constitutionally, naturally delights to wander when he has fallen in love, which he does quickly enough, with a cousin of his own. But, as we have remarked already, the tender passion in Mr. Mac Donald's Scotch works is generally etherealised beyond reasonable prospect of fruition. We knew beforehand that nothing can come of this impulsive boyish attachment, and therefore, though the pangs in the boy's heart may be terrible, our own does not throb sympathetically; and we feel that the practical considerations, which Mr. Mac Donald's lovers ignore, must be paramount after all. For his lovers either set their affections on women

hopelessly above them, while they are themselves penniless and without prospects, or they begin sighing after maidens who are relatively women, before they have even got out of their jackets. Here is Alec hanging on the lips and waiting on the looks of his cousin Kate, while he is beginning his course of college studies, and leading from necessity a life of privation, that reminds one of the Breton Cloarcks of St. Pol de Léon. Clearly the pair can't marry, and they don't. Kate, for all the exaltation of her fanciful and sentimental character, is too womanly to plight herself to him, even had she no other attachment. At the same time, when we see how gracefully Mr. Mac Donald makes the girl half ardently breathe out her undefined yearnings, while honest Alec makes creditable efforts to understand her and answers prosaically wide of the mark, we feel a regret that we are not indulged with love scenes that might possibly end in happy marriages. So in 'Robert Falconer,' Robert, when a mere village boy, plunges ecstatically into a hopeless adoration of a beautiful and accomplished Miss St. John, a mature woman brought up in the ways of English refinement. Of course she only likes him; her unsuspecting praises and caresses draw him on; and what we must call his 'calf-love' becomes the absorbing sorrow of his life. It makes him consecrate himself to benevolent works and become the Providence of the helpless.

Fortunately for himself, Alec Forbes forms friendships as well as attachments. He finds a sage mentor in Mr. Cosmo Cupples, perhaps the very best character of the novel, who first makes Forbes' acquaintance by running up against him in the darkness:—

"'Whustlin'?" said the man interrogatively.

"'Ay, what for no?" answered Alec cheerily.

"'Haud yer een aff o' rainbows, or ye'll brak yer shins upo' grave-stanes," replied the man.'

Poor Cupples himself had broken his shins on a gravestone, whilst fixing his rapt gaze on a rainbow. A lady of noble family had stirred all the depths in a tender and emotional nature, and then turned her back on the poor tutor when he was hopelessly bewitched. With a fine fancy and versatile intellect, he lives the life of a recluse with some chosen books magnificently bound, a pipe, and a jar of spirits for the companions of his solitude. He seems settled into a confirmed drunkard, although his dismal little den is illuminated with fitful flashes of genius. The disreputable, brilliant little man is his own worst enemy. He indulges his pet vice without restraint, but takes special care that his *protégé* Alec Forbes

shall not fall into it; and when at last his example has more power than his precepts, he braces himself up for a sublime effort, and as the reward of his virtue, he saves himself in saving Alec. Mr. Cupples' literary criticisms are pointed and original. On Sterne:—

'The clever deevil had his entrails in his breest an' his hert in his belly, an' regairdet neither God nor his ain mither. His lauchter's no like the cracklin' o' thorns under a pot, but like the nicherin' o' a deil ahint the wainscot.'

Of Shelley he says:—

'A bonny cratur' wi' mair thoihts than there was room for i' the bit heid o' him. Consequently he gaed staggerin' aboot as gin he had been tied to the tail o' an invisible balloon. Unco' licht heidet, but no muckle hairm in him by natur.'

When in uncontrollable anxiety he makes his way on foot to Alec's house in the country, and there helps to nurse the love-stricken prodigal through a critical illness, Cupples is gradually drawn into free interchange of thought with Thomas Crann and Annie Anderson, although the austere elder and the innocent girl at first regard the elderly scapegrace with some natural repugnance:—

"I was glad to see you at oor kirk, sir," said Thomas.

"What for that?" returned the librarian.

"A stranger wad aye be welcomed to anybody's hoose."

"I didna ken it was your hoose."

"Ow na. It's no my hoose; it's the Lord's hoose. But a smile frae the servin'-lass that opens the door's something till a man that gangs to ony hoose the first time," replied Thomas, who, like many men of rough address, was instantly put upon his good behaviour by the exhibition of like roughness in another. This answer disarmed Cupples.'

The whole book is full of quaint dialogues of the kind, constantly breaking out in sparkles of rustic humour, which must inevitably be spoiled to English people by the language in which they are wrapped up. Everybody must be impressed, however, by Mr. Mac Donald's own descriptions of scenery, and by the passages often pregnant with precious moral lessons, in which he moralises on the character and sources of action of his own creations. And these general criticisms on 'Alec Forbes' adapt themselves almost equally to 'Robert Falconer,' for the works resemble each other very closely, in purpose as well as in plot. It is true that Falconer is represented as a being of much rarer mould than Alec Forbes, who merely shows noble traits in a far more ordinary nature. Falconer's history is carried farther and higher. He is chastened prematurely by that dis-

appointment of the affections we alluded to; he gradually withdraws himself from what is called the world, while living and toiling unceasingly among the needy and miserable. His own various and sad experiences have taught him sympathy with the sins and sorrows of others. And as his nature is finer and more reflective, so his religious opinions are broader and more decidedly his own than those of his prototypes in former works. Goodwill to all men is the doctrine he indefatigably labours to expound and illustrate by his actions. But so far his path lies parallel to that of Alec Forbes. He has been taught in the same way and sent to the same college. He is quite as full of boisterous fun in his juvenile days, though the boy's unusual honesty and independence is well brought out in his respectful opposition to what he feels to be the puritanical tyranny of his old Calvinistic grandmother. The fight he makes for his beloved fiddle—a Cry moany, or a Straddle Vawrious at least—Cremona or Straduarius, as an enthusiastic cobbler amateur describes it—the fiddle whose strains awaken the latent music in his soul, is admirably told. But the man in Falconer matures much more quickly than in Forbes, although, while he is putting off youthful things, and sobering down his buoyant spirits, his feelings lose little of their freshness. His Christianity is muscular as well as charitable, and the fact that he is of stalwart build and notoriously clever with his fists, goes far to facilitate his missionary labours in the rougher districts of poverty-stricken London.

The formation of his character, and the shaping of his career, are worked out with a good deal of quiet sensation. The quick and earnest boy grows up in a gloomy atmosphere. He cannot help thinking. His father has been a scapegrace, who fills the whole thought of his grim old grandmother. Her dominating idea is, that should her prodigal son be still in the flesh, he may yet be snatched like a brand from the burning; and it becomes the fixed intention of young Robert to seek out this lost parent and reclaim him. Then comes Miss St. John to inspire him with a love which soon begins to play its part in his painful education. His high character, too, involves him in heavy responsibilities, which, however, he accepts with submission, as they extend his opportunities of doing good. He is left a large fortune that he may administer it as trustee for benevolent purposes; he leads something of the life of a pious Monte Christo, or of Rudolph in the 'Mysteries of Paris,' acting the Providence to other people, held in consideration by roughs and criminals, and in the most confidential relations with the Metropolitan Police. Robert Falconer, in

short, is a really sublime character, and yet he is thoroughly lifelike throughout, though somewhat fanciful in his speech and most decidedly original in his opinions.

As yet we have not quoted any of George Mac Donald's pictures of scenery, as they are shown to us through the transparent medium of his peculiar mysticism, and yet deeply steeped in local colour. Falconer and a school-fellow have started on a walk to a farm, near the little town where they live:—

'They crossed a small river and entered on a region of little hills, some covered to the top with trees chiefly larch, others uncultivated, and some bearing only heather, now nursing in secret its purple flame for the outburst of the autumn. The road wound between, now swampy and worn into deep ruts, now sandy and broken with large stones. Down to its edge would come the dwarfed oak, or the mountain ash, or the silver birch, single and small, but lovely and fresh; and now green fields, fenced with walls of earth as green as themselves, or of stones overgrown with moss, would stretch away on both sides, sprinkled with busily-feeding cattle. Now they would pass through a farm-steading perfumed with the breath of cows, and the odour of burning peat—so fragrant! though not yet so grateful to the inner sense as it would be when encountered in after years and in foreign lands. For the smell of burning and the smell of earth are the deepest underlying sensuous bonds of the earth's unity, and the common brotherhood of them that dwell therein. Now the scent of the larches would steel from the hill, or the wind would waft the odour of the white clover. . . . Then they clomb a high ridge, on the top of which spread a moorland, dreary and desolate, brightened by nothing save the "canna's hoary beard" waving in the wind, and making it look even more desolate from the sympathy they felt with the forsaken grass. This crossed, they descended between young plantations of firs and rowan trees and birches, till they reached a farm-house on the side of the slope.'

Then, by way of comparison, we may sketch a city scene—in Seven Dials, in place of Aberdeenshire:—

'Here and there stood two or three brutal-looking men, and now and then a squalid woman with a starveling baby in her arms, in the light of the gin-shops. The babies were the saddest to see—nursery plants already in training for the places these men and women now held, then to fill a pauper's grave, or perhaps a perpetual cell—say rather for the awful spaces of silence, where the railway director can no longer be guilty of a worse sin than housebreaking, and his miserable brother will have no need of the shelter of which he deprived him. Now and then a flaunting woman wavered past—a *night-shade* as an old dramatist would have called her. I could hardly keep down an evil disgust that would have conquered pity, when a scanty white dress would stop beneath a lamp, and the gay, dirty bonnet turning round

reveal a painted face, from which shone little more than an animal intelligence, *not* heightened by the gin she had been drinking. . . . The noisome vapours seemed fit for any of Swedenborg's hells. There were few sounds, but the very quiet seemed infernal. A skinned cat, possibly still alive, fell on the street before me. Under one of the gas-lamps lay something long; it was a tress of dark hair torn perhaps from some woman's head—she had beautiful hair at least. Once I heard the cry of murder.'

The one description is as true and pleasing as the other is true and painful. It is the merit of Mr. Mac Donald that he can throw himself with a perfect self-abandonment into all that he has seen or thought: that he has assimilated his own observations and experiences till he has them instinctively at command for the purposes of his art. Imagination comes to the help of memory, although occasionally it will break away out of guiding strings to run riot in the shadowy regions of dream-land.

In 'Malcolm' imagination is in the ascendant, although in the way in which actual localities are introduced there is a realism that reminds a Scotchman of De Foe. The names of towns are so transparently transposed as to be unmistakable to those who are acquainted with the north-eastern counties. Some of the noblemen's and gentlemen's seats—Huntley Lodge, Fren draught, &c.—are introduced with no disguise. Even where the titles of the noblemen are fictitious, those who are familiar with the local recollections of the last generation or two can have no difficulty in identifying such individuals as the Marquis of Lossie. But Malcolm himself is neither an Alec Forbes nor a 'Robert Falconer—nor a George Mac Donald—except in certain of the stronger touches that go to 'a very noble and manly nature. His upbringing has been 'different from theirs'; there is much in his mysterious story that is romantic in the extreme. Natural he may be, and we trust for the credit of human aspirations that he is decidedly possible; but although he is leading the life of a rough fisher-lad when we make his acquaintance, he is made of no ordinary clay, and has been cast in the most muscular yet delicate moulds. It is little to say of him in the common phrase, that he is one of Nature's gentlemen. For involved in a complication of most embarrassing situations; kept stedfastly by circumstances in what seems a false position; constantly brought face to face with ingeniously devised emergencies, the promptings of his head and heart come to him like infallible inspirations. His is one of those hero-natures that neither know fear, irresolution, nor selfishness. He is animated by the very

spirit of self-sacrifice ; the simple dignity of his thought and bearing dwarfs men and women of the world of the highest station and no ordinary capacity. In his consciousness of strength he can control himself under the undeserved insults, which his first fiery impulse is indignantly to resent.

Decidedly more natural than Malcolm is the Lady Florimel, who in the advances she makes in her inborn caprice and coquettishness, has so much to do with forming and refining him. Mr. Mac Donald need hardly take such pains to remind us that her nature is an inferior one to his, for his, as we have said, is altogether exceptional. Lady Florimel, moreover, has been a spoiled and petted child, and her father's somewhat turbulent blood flows in her veins ; in all innocence, and the consciousness of belonging to a different order of beings, she makes a plaything of the handsome and intelligent young fisherman. She is so irresistibly bewitching with it all, that from the first his strong sense makes him distrust her intoxicating influence. Gradually, however, he yields more and more to the spells and beauty of the syren. Gleams of fantastical hope will occasionally flash across his mind ; and she on her side acknowledging her master in the man who is so entirely her social inferior, seems sometimes to be bridging the gulf that divides them, and giving him reasonable pretext for his foolish day-dreams. How it all ended we leave our readers to find out ; for the novel being comparatively a recent one, many of them may be in ignorance of a *dénouement* we should be sorry to spoil. If Lady Florimel was half-tempted to stoop from her high estate, there was the better reason for it, that this incomparable Malcolm had established an almost equal ascendancy over her father. The Marquis of Lossie was a veteran courtier and a wary man of the world, yet his respect for Malcolm was only increased when he had persuaded the fisherman to enter his service ; and though he had the high courage of his long-descended race, he admired and esteemed the young man the more, when he had borne with spirited meekness the blow he dealt him on one occasion.

Best of the inferior characters is the venerable piper, who, as it comes out in the end, is only the father of Malcolm by adoption. With the fiery soul of an ancient senachie, his is a pride in no way inferior to that of the noble Marquis ; and in spite of the fierce animosities of race that have grown into a monomania with time, he is as full of tenderness as of lofty chivalry. The Gaelic element in his poetically broken English is brought out in wonderful contrast with the Scottish dialect that is spoken by his neighbours. ' Malcolm,' indeed, is a rare



masterpiece of popular philological discrimination—if we may indulge in long words in defining what reads so simply natural; and the story is so excellent in its execution as far as it has gone, that we are glad its author has imitated for once the objectionable practice of the fashionable French novelists of the day, and under the form of what professes to be a complete work, published an interrupted tale which leaves us anxiously expectant of the promised sequel. In ‘Malcolm,’ as in the rest of Mr. Mac Donald’s novels, the tone is as elevated as the ethics are sound, though the theology is decidedly more free than orthodox, and it is high praise to say of his works that it is impossible to read them without being benefited.

It is difficult to deal with a subject so comprehensive as Scotch novels within anything like reasonable compass. We had meant to say something in commendation of Mr. Gibbon, author of ‘Auld Robin Gray,’ &c., and are reluctantly obliged to give up the intention. But we could not reconcile it to our conscience to close our article without a reference to Mr. William Black. Fortunately, we may be very brief, for this reason, that his novels have been lately in everybody’s hands. The latest of Mrs. Oliphant’s, with the exception of ‘Valentine: and his Brother,’ date from a good many years back. It pleases Mr. Mac Donald to pitch his works on a key which is above the appreciation and intelligence of many of the devourers of fiction, and he dresses them besides in a national garb which is foreign to English ideas of fashion. But Mr. Black’s writings recommend themselves to everyone, and we may say unhesitatingly that he is the most popular of the three. Nor is it any slur on him to say so. He shows himself an accomplished master of the higher branches of his art; he has the gift of powerfully affecting the sympathies, and an instinctive perception of dramatic possibilities. But at the same time he has a very serviceable knack of keeping a finger on the pulse of the public. He makes large allowance for the unsuspected intelligence and susceptibilities that lie latent in those who seem most frivolous and unimpressionable. Yet he neither condescends to write down to them, nor does he try their patience too far. He glides insensibly from mood to mood: even when his thought is grave his touch is light; he treats the theme of love at once with playfulness and tenderness; he writes of field-sports, yachting, and sea-fishing with the pen and knowledge of a devotee; while his soul is always catching fire at the beauties of nature, until his persistent adoration of them becomes almost tedious. There is no doubt as to his manner of treatment. Like Mrs. Oliphant, he seeks out the

good and beautiful, and his most sombre pictures in his wildest scenes are brought out against a background of poetical feeling. Look at his views of the Hebrides in winter storms, or of those dull brown moorlands that lay round the manse of Airlie. See how after making the king of Boroa somewhat ludicrous by the shallow Machiavellism the tiresome old gentleman affects, he makes us part with him on the friendliest terms after all, thanks to the unselfish devotion he shows his daughter.

We greatly admire the 'Princess of Thule.' As you sit of an evening in her little parlour at Boroa, you seem to listen to the howl of the storm and the grinding of the surf; you look out from the casement of a morning on the grey clouds flitting across the 'gurly lift'; and in spite of the odours of spirits and tobacco, you catch the briny odour of the sea-weed that is heaped upon the strand. We could quote description on description of storm or sunshine among the hills and on the lochs, that have affected us so strongly as to recur naturally to our memory, under the suggestion of similar circumstances. But we confess that we prefer his former novel—'A Daughter of Heth.' Away from her native Hebrides Sheila Mackenzie ceases to be natural to us, and gets into a false position. Mr. Black enlists our sympathies in her favour, which says much for his art, but he deals hard measure to her husband. Lavender may have been foolishly imprudent in thinking their marriage would ensure their happiness, but when his folly finds him out in London society, it is unfair to insinuate that he was altogether in fault throughout. We rejoice over the reconciliation at Boroa, but, if Sheila is a creature of flesh and blood, we are assured that the troubles of the couple are by no means at an end, notwithstanding the experience they have bought so dearly.

In 'A Daughter of Heth' there is little of all that, though we might take some exception to such trifles as the behaviour of 'the Whaup' when he makes his *début* in fashionable Glasgow society. Generally the book is as true to nature, and as artfully artless as Coquette herself. We are sorely disappointed by its gloomy ending, because we have come to take such a heartfelt interest in both Coquette and the Whaup; but we have always maintained that an author may exercise his own discretion as to the way he interprets destiny. And the beginning is as amusing as may be, without going at all wide of probabilities. Mr. Black not only finds pleasant sermons in stones, but he gets a great deal of broad fun out of the interior of a Scotch manse that is administered on

the severest principles of the strictest sect of Presbyterian zealots. The very austerity of the discipline is made to heighten the humour. What can be better than 'the Whaup' and his band of brothers: the battle of the garden, where they are surprised by their father, defending the wall against the stoners and slingers from the parish school, on principles of warfare they have borrowed from the pages of Josephus? Or that ponderous volume of Josephus, the only quasi-secular work tolerated by the minister as light reading of a Sabbath evening, round which the youthful students gather with such eagerness, the folio having been ingeniously hollowed out for the accommodation of a couple of white mice? Or 'the Whaup' holding the good boy of the family by the heels, dependent from a bridge with his head over the water, compelling him to compromise his character and conscience by uttering language that seemed to him to be portentously blasphemous?

'The Whaup' himself—by the way Mr. Black, who surely ought to know, asserts that the word is Scotch for the green plover, whereas we have always heard it applied to the curlew—changes wonderfully, yet not unnaturally, in course of the story. The frolicsome, spirited, chivalrous, insubordinate lad settles down into the loving, resolute, chivalrous man. But it is Coquette herself who is the masterpiece, as she ought to be. It was an admirable idea, dropping an innocent, sunny-natured French girl into the dim, religious interior of a Scotch manse. The little she has been taught of the pious duties incumbent on her, appears most heathenish and horrible to these sworn enemies of the Scarlet Woman. Her young cousins shrink from her at first in superstitious repulsion. The ancient servants regard her and her gay manners and her bright ways with holy horror. Her venerable uncle believes she has everything to learn, while treating her with fatherly tenderness; and as for 'the Whaup,' he feels for long as if he were being lured onwards into the snares of a Circe. Then how Coquette steals insensibly on them all, one after another. Her nature is as bright and loving as her wayward manners are winning; and even when love, innocence, and ill-regulated principles together, bring her close upon the brink of sin, she loses nothing of the reader's regard, of the affection of the minister, or the love of his eldest son. We have brought ourselves to feel such an interest in her, that though, as we said, we are willing to concede an author every licence in that respect, yet we can hardly forgive Mr. Black for clouding her bright existence, and taking her from her husband's arms to lay her in an untimely grave.

Looking at it distinctly as a Scotch novel, 'A Daughter of 'Heth' takes a very high place. Mr. Black deals chiefly with such national idiosyncrasies as lie on the surface, and does not profess, like Mr. Mac Donald, to lay bare the intricate metaphysical machinery of the worthies who figure in his pages. But to say nothing of 'the Whaup,' the very personification of a Scotch lad of the middle classes, and of the best sort; the Minister, the Schoolmaster, old Anderson, the Minister's man, and 'Leesiebess' his wife, as Coquette calls her, are all individualities who live in our memories. The chapters are not overcrowded with people or incidents, and the book gains accordingly. We have no intention of closing our article by drawing comparisons. 'Placing' authors always reminds us of the rough and ready practice of guide books, who rank pictures executed in the most different styles according to absolute degrees of merit, and decide off-hand between Domenichino's 'St. Jerome' and Paul Potter's 'Bull.' But at least we may have said enough to show that at this moment we have three living Scotch novelists, each of whom has done more to perpetuate the best traditions of their art than any writer who has appeared since the death of the author of 'Waverley.'

ART. III.—1. *General Report by Captain Tyler in regard to the Share and Loan Capital, the Traffic in Passengers and Goods, and the Working Expenditure, and Net Profits from Railway Working of the Railway Companies of the United Kingdom, for the year 1873: Idem for the year 1874.* Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty.

2. *Du Régime des Travaux Publics en Angleterre.* Par Ch. de FRANQUEVILLE, maître des requêtes au Conseil d'État, secrétaire de la Commission Centrale des chemins de fer au Ministère des Travaux Publics. Paris: 1875.

3. *Annuaire Officiel des Chemins de Fer.* Paris: 1873.

NO event recorded in history has so profoundly affected the relations borne by man to the planet which he inhabits as the discovery which is associated with the name of Watt. Dynastic changes, substitutions of one form of government for another, conquests by the sword, and revulsions in religious opinion, have swept over the world from time to time. But when the storm has passed, man, as to his physical condition, has remained much what he was before. The exigencies of climate,