

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH—1848-9.

If Asmodeus possessed the power to unroof every house in Edinburgh, we doubt if he would bring to light any great amount of hidden talent. All our little celebrities put together are hardly fit to sustain the literary credit of the Modern Athens. As for our great ones—Jeffrey himself is, not to speak evil of dignities, *un peu passé*. The honourable Lord still dresses well, adjusts himself admirably to the niche in which he stands enshrined, and recognizes on all occasions the homage naturally offered at the altar of his literary fame. He frankly and courteously discharges all the duties of his position, and, with equal facility, extends his hospitality to the illustrious literary stranger, and exostulation to the unfledged aspirant after literary renown. Dickens, when last in the Scottish metropolis, was Lord Jeffrey's guest. And we have repeatedly seen instances in which Lord Jeffrey generously and humanely took the trouble to consider and criticize volumes of youthful poetry not the most promising. But, save on the judicial bench, his Lordship seldom makes public appearances. Once a year, perhaps, he presides over the distribution of prizes at the Association for Promotion of the Fine Arts. But we hear of little, if anything, from his pen beyond his full and frequent notes on an advising *in presentia dominorum*. The *Judex damnatur* of the blue and brimstone cover of the *Edinburgh Review* has become with Lord Jeffrey something more than a figurative, and has proved itself a prophetic, expression. On the bench of the First Division of the Court of Session, Lord Jeffrey occupies the extreme left of the Lord President Boyle; Lord Mackenzie, the son of "the Man of Feeling," and probably the most esteemed of the Scottish Judges, intervening; whilst Lord Fullerton is seated on the President's right hand. Lord Jeffrey incessantly takes notes and asks questions. The habits of the critic have accompanied him to the bench, and admirably serve to tease the ingenuity of the learned counsel at the bar.

We have never given much for Wilson, since first the Professor, a few years back, took shelter within the panoply of a Mackintosh; for though our contemporary has since renewed his youth, and, in his mood of venerable eld, now no longer fictitious, is still as good for a jest or witticism as ever, still the original induing of such defensive habiliments was all unworthy of the wild spirit of Ellerlay; and Christopher has never been himself again. What! the man who was wont to face the fiercest elements that ever encountered sage or sophist, struggling up the Earthen Mound in the direction of *Alma Mater*, buttoned only in his invulnerable dress coat of black; the low flat surface of his shovel hat standing up against the gusty wind, like the dark point of a rock amidst a furious sea—*he*, encased in the veritable manufacture of Cross-basket—tell it not in Gath! Wilson is by nature a lion, and will be to the end of the chapter. His stalwart figure, unbenumbed by age, passes along our streets the image of Triton amongst the Minnows. The long flowing hair, slightly grizzled by the enemy, escapes

from beneath the broad eaves of his beaver, and descends like the snake-wreathed locks of an antique Jupiter over the snowy petals of shirt collar that flank the breadths of his ambrosial visage—giving altogether a peculiar and picturesque aspect to the head and its arrangements. This massive capital, elevated on Atlantean shoulders, and the almost gigantic bulk, borne along with speed and firmness of step, bespeaking dauntlessness and decision of character, sufficiently mark the man. Excepting conversationally, we do not know that the Professor has lately made much exertion of his powers. In his class, he goes through the old routine of the moral philosophy lectures; and, as a member of the Faculty, may sometimes be seen—occasionally *sine toga*—pacing the boards amongst his brethren of the long robe. Some conversational criticisms, which have been repeated, harmless, though personal, would do for verbal repetition, but not to print—so that we are fain to refresh ourselves with the collected scrap-work of the "Recreations" of North—or the scattered poems, amongst which are mainly to be had in remembrance the two leading pieces, so unlike, yet so characteristic of the poet, "The City of the Plague," and "The Isle of Palma"—or the exquisite prose of the "Lights and Shadows," and "Margaret Lyndsay," the grave fictions on which the author founded his title of philosopher. Professor Wilson's philosophy, his learning, his genius, have lately taken a new direction, and merged into a practical philanthropy, annually illustrated by his exordium to the popular session of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. His admirers and flatterers—for, like all lions, he has his jackals—indeed we should say that his "lion's providers" rather superabound—may hold that the Professor's career as a philanthropist could be antedated. We, however, think not. We know of no phase in which the advocate of that aristocracy which, under the guise of good-old-English-gentlemanism, erected its jovial barriers of class and caste upon the necks of a dependant peasantry little elevated above agrarian serfdom, could be regarded as a man of the people, prior to his appearance on the platform of this popular institute. We have heard it whispered, however, that in adopting this conspicuous step, the Professor nobly set at nought the conventional restraints imposed on themselves and their brethren by the haughtier members of the *Senatus Academicus*, by whom the delivery of a popular lecture is deemed equivalent to "such an act as blurs the modesty and grace of nature" in Brahminical eyes, when a member of any of the rigid sects of oriental superstition, forgetting their rules and observances, lose caste. The Professor of Botany, it is said, however, anxious to give a popular course of that beautiful and interesting study, has not the courage to brave the papal ban of his exclusive brethren. But Wilson has not only come forward in aid of the popular "march of intellect;" he has come forward as its ostensible head and front. His introductory discourses, each session, tend more and more to a dis-

covery of the latent philosophy lurking in the popular mind—to illustrate the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties and disadvantages—to prove the onward tendency and ultimate triumph of self-culture amongst the middle and lower classes in the country—and to show (ultimately, but not yet,) by what title the power of a million of intellects is to assert its supremacy over the long-endured domination of a few more fortunate or more privileged, by whom has so long been preached the spurious doctrine of poor stupid “Noll Goldsmith,” that “they who think must govern those who toil;” as if there were anything to prevent those that toil thinking as well as, or better than, those that idle! In his future initial discourses in Queen Street Hall, Wilson has promised some further developments of the intellectual phenomena of the social mind, which may be looked for with interest, because the inquiry derives not its curiosity from the inquest, but the inquirer.

Favourers of popular movement, from the opposite extremes of “the electric chain that binds” the strange mixture of intellectual elements in the society of Modern Athens, the brothers Chambers, Mr. James Simpson, the Advocate, and Mr. George Combe, emerge on our notice in a group. By a series of successful adventures in the literature of popular progress, which have been self-rewarding, the former have elevated themselves, unaided, save by the tide of public approbation, to eminence so considerable, that a vacancy for the chief magistracy of the Scottish metropolis can scarcely occur, or be talked of, without one or other of the brothers being brought forward as eligible to the office. The merit of the publications of these gentlemen is mediocrity. But mediocrity, when once it wins its way, retains its hold. Addressed to comparative ignorance, or the unexcitable temperaments of impassive intellects, it never recedes. The literature of mediocrity, never bad enough to merit condemnation, carefully weeded even of the shadow of reproach, tolerably faultless in its construction, calculated just to impart the semblance without the severity of essential information, loses nothing that may be forfeited by time, chance, or change. Unlike the rash scintillations of superior genius, it incurs no risk of elevating and exciting the minds of its votaries, to give force and contrast to the dash of disappointment where its brilliancy flags or fails. The steady, equable quality of this kind of writing—imitating the dull proprieties of accurate prose, sparingly indulging in any vein of poetry, recording only facts with zest, and drawing fictions from the memory—forms the excellence of Chambers’ Journals, Miscellanies, Informations, Histories, Educational and Juvenile Series. Irreconcilable as these in their variety may seem, a family likeness pervades the whole, and soothes them down into their regular monotony. The wise man prayed that he might neither be visited with poverty nor riches. If he seek for his children the same happy medium of intelligence as of circumstances, he will have them educated upon “Chambers’ Educational Course.” Their minds will not fare sumptuously; neither will they starve. With doctrinal questions, and alleged objections to the matter of these cheap

and, for the most part, useful productions, we have nothing at present to do. Enough for us that their manner—generally easy, and always agreeable—more than anything, stamps their value. The price of knowledge reduced, by works like these, the commodity becomes palatable as well as accessible; and thus the great secret of their success is twofold—knowledge is cheapened and stimulated at once. The head of the firm, though seldom committed to any popular movement, has long professed liberal principles. The “ragged schools” have been greatly indebted to his philanthropy; and the “faggot votes” have recently recoiled beneath his assault. The one cause he has advocated in “the Journal,” and personally promoted in various parts of Scotland; the other enormity he has attacked from the platform—but with the disadvantage, less applicable to him than to others, of doing so as the partisan of a faction as deeply implicated in the evil as any other. Let that pass. William Chambers, without any great distinguishing marks as a man of letters, as a popular leader, or a party debater, is a man of energy and action, of perpetual movement, and indomitable courage, and has had, unquestionably, the spirit to carve out his own fortunes. As a *litterateur*, and latterly as a *savant*, Robert Chambers has been the more distinguished. Less a man of business and more a man of letters, the author of the “Rebellions” and the “Picture of Scotland,” has dedicated the few last years of his life to scientific researches connected with absorbing questions of physical science, and particularly the phenomena exhibited on the earth’s varied surface. He seldom draws conclusions. He states facts. He is a mere reader of the book of nature; and a clever as well as careful translator of its obvious passages. Take his recent work on “Ancient Sea Margins.” Here is a work in which the eye, as from a pinnacle, scans with new ideas the great map of nature, and sees not features, but facts traced out over hill and valley—margins of seas stretched up towards the Alpine summits, and traces of a flooded world recorded imperishably upon the monumental mountain pyramids, amidst the crumbling and decay of the things of time. What strange ideas that book delineates beyond the scope of imagination, and literally chiseled out in granite heaps as hard immutable truths! From the low coast lands and corses, the lower ancient sea margins emanate step by step to the sublimest altitudes. Oscillations in the shift of relative level betwixt sea and land—the last of them, perhaps, within the human period—unfold such a tale of time and change tangibly portrayed before the wondering eye, as geology in all its quaint discoveries or strange imaginings has never before disclosed. In these there may be illusion where conjecture supplies the form of monstrosities extinct and incompatible with present conditions of existence. In those there can be none. We have local researches and descriptions undertaken with persevering and painstaking exertion—scenes in the vale of Tay, in Fife, Strathspey, Glenmore, Lochaber, the Basin of the Forth, the Vale of Tweed, and Basin of the Tay—all conjured up and strikingly arrested in diagrams of strange fidelity,

though cast with the help of some excusable freedoms into the theoretical form of the supposed sea margins. The author has traversed all these scenes, and many more. His mind has dwelt upon their terraced aspect, and become imbued with the convictions of their character and origin; till the resistless reader, forced to yield to the endless multiplicity of facts, surrenders his convictions also to an author who avowedly has no theory to propound. In this way we are led to inspect visibly the Delta of the Ribble, the Mersey, Chester, Bristol, Bath, London, Sussex and Hampshire, Devonshire, France, and Ireland, and even the terraces and markings in Switzerland, Scandinavia, and North America. The contemplative power and sagacity of observation, conspicuous throughout these researches, tend not only to amass a collection of facts and materials for speculation, but facts and materials already sifted and prepared for an inevitable deduction. Mr. Chambers has carefully elicited in every instance the attendant circumstances of the natural appearances presented to his gaze, and so discriminated betwixt them as nearly to arrive at a chronology of the ancient beach-markings. He has traced out even the recession, accession, and second recession of waters; and furnished quite a new light in which to read the mighty page outspread upon the surface of a country. Some people, who would dispute the originality of anything, have doubted the originality of these researches. There is intrinsic evidence, however, of the author having visited in person, and observed for himself, the majority of the appearances he details. The magnitude of his labours is well characterised by the boundless inference with which he sums up their induction, viz., that "he must believe that very great lapses of time have passed since the sea stood at our highest terrace."

"In several places of Scotland," he continues, "I have found the points or promontories of terraces bearing the faint markings of forts which had been erected by our savage forefathers for their protection. History scarcely hints at the age of these remains, so lost is it in the long night of antiquity. But great as is the time that has elapsed since these rude defences were erected, it is nothing to what seems requisite for producing the phenomena now under our attention. When, moreover, it appears that the species of shell-fish have not changed in this immense series of millenniums, a new and highly interesting consideration arises. Species had in earlier times undergone repeated changes. If each change were attained in a lapse of time equal to a greater than that here shown to have passed without any change, what a vast multiple of this part must be the entire cosmical chronology!"

Such is the summary of the last-published researches of Robert Chambers. The concluding observation, by the way, reminds us that he has obtained "vestiges" of a reputation beyond what he aspires to in this treatise on "Ancient Sea Margins;" but if the secrets of the cloister are impenetrable, those of the *bureau*, to us, at least, shall be sacred.

James Simpson, as an educational theorist, had once a name which, though we seldom hear it now, is still adequately and eloquently represented in the

private life of our northern metropolis by an eloquent, warm-hearted old gentleman, of more than average candour and cordiality of manner. Superseded by systems, we rejoice to think, more in accordance with the spirit of the age, a tolerant but pious spirit of religion void of fanaticism, Mr. Simpson has yet lived to see some triumph granted to his educational views, in the general adoption of what the Presbyterian Reports—when there were Presbyterian reports on education—termed "the intellectual system of instruction—a system addressed to the understanding and even to the heart." The practical schemes of David Stow, of Glasgow, and the general improvements on education, in combination with religious culture, introduced by the active zeal of the Free Church of Scotland, have outstripped as well as outbidden Mr. Simpson's plan. Yet he was the apostle of a cause which, when at its ebb, owed him for negative evils, who shall charge them much; and on the author of so much real good in his day and generation?

Next comes George Combe, the most remarkable of a sect which, though now less ostensibly than at one time, still exercises considerable influence over the press and the people of Edinburgh. To the opinions of the author of "The Constitution of Man Considered," we all know what tendency has been imputed. And we must say, that the sect of which we recognise him for the leader cannot, in any acceptation of the term, be called a religious sect. Whatever may be Mr. Combe's opinions on these and other subjects, "uttered or unexpressed," it is with pleasure that we acknowledge, on occasion of his last appearance at the Glasgow Athenæum soirée, a disposition to resist the imputations that are frequently cast at the disciples of phrenology. Though mingled with local reminiscences of personal triumph in the cause, so many had prejudged, there was an intelligible assertion of the great leading truths of faith put forth on that occasion by the master, which ought to form a striking lesson to all his followers. But it is ever the case that leaders are transcended in their most extreme notions by the zealous in their train.

Dr. Moir, of Musselburgh, and De Quincey, of Lasswade, may be grouped together as occasional accessions to Edinburgh literary society. Everybody knows the literary *calibre* of "Delta," and most people that of "The English Opium Eater." The one is a living illustration of the poetry of the domestic affections. His exquisite "Casa Wappy," the lament of a father for a lisping darling—is no less pleasing than true. The other also illustrates his career by his compositions. A calm, sedate, and sensible mind is "Delta's." The best appearances at the Glasgow Athenæum were decidedly his and Combe's; his unpremeditated—Combe's elaborated. "Delta" spoke with so much genial sympathy for the good sense of his audience, that he laid for himself, at that single stroke, a lasting regard in the popular mind. A volume of his collected poems, just announced, will be treasured for many a sparkling gem that, if taste and justice are exercised, must inevitably stud his pages. The muse of the author of "Mansie Waugh" is as staid and sober as his

humour is broad and pungent. Some ill-natured critic lately accused him of nonsense—a serious charge against a poet of any reputation—and quoted the following lines in proof of the assertion; which, however, we may premise, are, in our estimation, pretty and pictorial, besides being perfectly intelligible to any one who will take the trouble of glancing at the glorious panorama of the southern shore of our Forth, as seen from its pure and placid bosom—not now—but in high summer—or, better still, can pause to study it while having a quiet pop at the rabbits of Inchkeith warren, or the Divers on the water, watching the lazy things emerge :—

“Traced like a map the landscape lies
In cultured beauty stretching wide—
There Pentland's green acclivities ;
There ocean with its azure tide ;
There Arthur's Seat ; and, gleaming through
Thy southern wing, Dunedin blue !
White in the orient, Lammer's daughters,
A distant giant range, are seen ;
North Berwick Law, with cone of green,
And Bass, amid the waters.”

Perhaps ten years ago, Dr. Moir edited a work, or collection, in two volumes, the first of which he occupied with a memoir of the late Dr. Macnish, of Glasgow. There is quite as much of “Delta” in this book as of Macnish, and yet it is without egotism. In the exuberance of the writer's heart, he has inscribed on the title-page what no impartial biographer would care to do, viz., that the life is by a “friend”—and he has felt bound, in the course of executing his task, to authenticate his acquaintance with the facts, as the lawyers do with witnesses—“*Causa scientie patet* ; and all which is truth,” &c. We are reminded of this revelation by—what does the reader think—the cholera, which, in its former visitation, seems to have approximated the stars of Moir and Macnish. It may not be amiss, at the present juncture, to quote what then passed betwixt these medico-philosophic poets :—

“With the concluding months of this year,” says Delta, “and the commencement of 1832, the health of Mr. Macnish continued to improve ; his body strengthened, his mind lightened up, he went through his professional duties with cheerful alacrity, and his inherent love for intellectual exertion again exhibited itself in several pleasant as well as powerful compositions.

“It was about the middle of January that the Asiatic Cholera, which had been imported into Sunderland, made its progressive way from Berwick to Musselburgh, and there seemed to take up its head-quarters—raging with pestilential violence, and prostrating alike the young and the old. So sudden and fearful was the mortality, that the burials within three weeks exceeded the average annual number of deaths, and this out of a population approaching to 9,000. I had formed no preconceived theory regarding the mode in which the disease was propagated. I knew that the great majority of the Indian practitioners reckoned it simply epidemic—but a week's narrow and scrupulous investigation of its mode of attack convinced me thoroughly of its purely contagious character. To this belief I adhere as confidently as to my own existence ; and until it is universally acted upon (which I never expect to see) by the medical profession, Europe must from time to time be laid waste by the ravages of this terrible and soul-subduing pestilence.

“From the numerous inquiries made at this period from all parts of the United Kingdom, regarding the nature and treatment of this new and fearful scourge of our race, I was induced, in my capacity of Medical Secretary to the Board of Health, at Musselburgh, to publish, on the spur of the moment, a pamphlet entitled ‘Practical Observations on Malignant Cholera’—of which, from the then absorbing nature of the subject, a second edition was demanded by

the public in the course of a few days. These circumstances are mentioned here in reference to several things shortly to be alluded to. After a thorough investigation of the subject, I was glad to find that Mr. Macnish strongly entrenched himself on the side of the contagionists ; and from a careful scrutiny of the disease as it wandered apparently ‘at its own dire will from place to place, he furnished me with a variety of facts and reasonings undisputed and conclusive. In writing to him at this time I find the following passage :— ‘The medical men here and at Edinburgh are all at logger-heads about contagion and non-contagion ; but the success of my pamphlet has been a sore thorn in the side of the latter doctrinists. I do not know what may be its merits, but it ought not to have many, having been written within the week, and in the midst of scenes of misery, as I bustled from one death-bed to another, the like of which I never saw before, and trust will never see again. The eve after a battle-field may be a sad thing ; but here all excitement was absent, and death was literally cold and repulsive. I am sure I am within the mark when I say that the pamphlet never had a sitting of half-an-hour at a time, by day or by night.’ ”

Although it is digressing, we cannot resist giving the account of the outbreak of the disease in Glasgow, by Macnish (15th February, 1832) :—

“Cholera has now fairly appeared among us. I saw a case yesterday, and one the day before, both of which proved fatal in a few hours. Every case hitherto has died. They were probably not seen till the stage of collapse had come on ; and it is possible that the removal to the hospital has been injurious. The people have a dreadful antipathy to any person being sent to the hospitals : they stupidly imagine that they are murdered (burked!) by the doctors ; and last night, when they were conveying a patient there, they were attacked by the mob. It is truly a dreadful disease. I have been compelled to give over visiting any of the cases, in consequence of the clamour of my own patients, who will not hear of it, so great is their terror of infection. Hitherto it has been confined to the lowest classes, and it will probably remain there.”

Delta's memoir of Macnish is valuable to us in another respect : De Quincey, whom we have also now in hands, is often mentioned in it ; and if we are adjured, “tell me not what I have been, but tell me what I am,” we must answer that, in this case, there will be found no change in the subject. We find him then, as now, in the midst of all sorts of literary projects. Dr. Moir says (11th May, 1829) :—

“Our new ‘Literary Gazette’ starts on Saturday, and I will cause them to send the numbers to you. It is, I believe, to contain an introduction by De Quincey, and a review of the ‘Hope of Immortality,’ by your humble servant, and two little poems of mine ; No. 2 will have, ‘Life of Galt,’ by me, and review of Dugald Moore's poems ; No. 3, ‘Life of Wilson,’ by De Quincey ; No. 4, ‘Life of Hogg,’ by me ; No. 5, ‘Life of Coleridge,’ by De Quincey ; No. 6, ‘On the Genius of Wordsworth,’ by me ; and so on.”

But alas ! not even the medical skill of Dr. Moir, and all these alternations of *meum* and *tuum* with De Quincey, sustained “Edinburgh Literary Gazette” in life. He shortly explains :—

“I had promised to the proprietors of the ‘Edinburgh Literary Gazette’ to give them some aid at starting, understanding that De Quincey was to be their Magnus Apollo, when lo ! and behold ! the eloquent chow of opium takes sick in Westmoreland ; and up to this hour (June 3) has done little or nothing for them.”

Akin to this is Moir's query to Macnish (22d October, 1831) : “Have you lately heard of that curious production of genius, De Quincey ? I suppose still writing for —, at the rate of a quarter of a page per day.” And eke the following, dovetailed into the text of the memoir—“I (Delta) remember Mr. Blackwood, many years ago, telling me of his occasionally having received from De

Quincey long, elaborate, and admirable letters—perfect articles in themselves—apologising for his not being able at that time to write an article.”

The savants who now flourish in Edinburgh form rather an extensive cluster; *œ. gr.*—Sir John Graham Dalzell, Sir William Jardine, Professors Forbes, Kelland, Smyth, Simpson, Low, and Balfour, Rev. Dr. Fleming, Hugh Miller, Charles McLaren, Dr. Greville, David Milne; and, forming the *gemini* of a separate constellation, Dr. Martin Barry and Dr. Samuel Brown.

We shall discuss this gallery of scientific stars in admirable disorder, by beginning with the last. Dr. Martin Barry and Dr. Samuel Brown are grouped together, because they both very narrowly missed a professor's chair from similar causes—through pretensions to marvellous discoveries never yet verified. The cases are parallel in that respect, but in none other. Dr. Martin Barry, a member of the Society of Friends, was the victim of University Tests. His medical discoveries, which had excited surprise, could not escape suspicion; and professional jealousy, by impugning them, rendered it better for him never to have breathed them. Dr. Samuel Brown, who, besides the professorship, has also been in danger of becoming a popular lecturer, fell a prey to professional antagonism also. It was not very fair of the Baron von Liebig, or the Baron Liebig, to write him down on the strength of one of his pupil's experiments. But Justus did it. The Baron himself never experiments. His faculty reminds us of Chatham's eulogy on the sagacity of Cromwell, which, without his having spies in every Cabinet of Europe, afforded him a perfect knowledge of diplomacy. Liebig is not like the immortal Squeers, who held the opinion in regard to scientific study, that, “when he knows it, he goes and does it;” or, in other words, that botany is only to be studied by practically going into the garden and weeding the onions. He leaves all that, however, like Squeers, to his pupils; and on their hint he speaks. Brown may not have resolved the unity of matter, or the transmutation of substances; but with what propriety can Liebig maintain the impossibility of repeating his experiments? Failing in getting any man of eminence to repeat and authenticate his delicate and elaborate researches by experiment, Brown resigned his pretensions to the chair, but not to his discoveries, which he is understood still to prosecute in his private laboratory, whilst he does not omit to bestow his sparkling talents, and eloquent, as well as amusing powers, on the literary coteries that welcome his presence. It is understood, however, that Dr. Samuel Brown will, in future, decline to take a place upon the popular platform.

Sir John Graham Dalzell is favourably known both as an antiquarian and a naturalist. Acute indisposition obliges the accomplished baronet to live in comparative seclusion, or at least retirement. He has lately soothed his hours by the production of a work in two quarto volumes, with 110 plates, neatly drawn and coloured from living or recent specimens of the “Rare and Remarkable Animals of Scotland.” The Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh has for a few years been all but in abeyance.

But an attempt has been made this winter to revive it by placing Sir John at its head; and he will probably exert himself to do so: at least we have the experience of the stimulus which his presidency of the Society of Arts, several years ago, imparted to a similar body, now of a very flourishing complexion. Of Sir William Jardine, of Applegarth, who is, we believe, a denizen of Inverleith Row, we need but say that this distinguished naturalist has contributed as largely to our scientific literature, chiefly in capacity of editor of “Lizars' Naturalists' Library,” as any man of his day. Professors Forbes and Kelland, and, for that matter, Mr. David Milne, shine in the Royal Society, the frigid aristocracy of which is scarcely to be thawed by the genial common-sense and graphic diction of the Rev. Dr. Fleming, but is formally and formidably represented by the other trio. Mr. Forbes is a clever man in spite of his coldness. To see him go through with a demonstration, be it mathematical, algebraical, or a mere diagram of the composition and resolution of mechanical forces, you must believe that there is something more hearty in the great expositor of the “Theory of Glaciers” than snow and ice. But education has been at fault. The son of the well-known Edinburgh banker, Sir William Forbes.—the Bill Forbes of the jolly tar who presented a five-pound note at the bank counter as “a tickler,” and intimated that he would take it up in trifles, as he did not like to affront him before the lads—has been reared in isolation and upon a pinnacle. He labours under a deficiency of social sympathies. Yet he is communicative, and covets fame. Why else should he publish or expound? The Rev. Philip Kelland and Mr. David Milne are precisely of the same school. Mr. Kelland being an English, and, we fancy, a High Church divine, might wear this exterior with less challenge than the others. But, in truth, he is the most demonstrative of the three. Mathematical studies are little calculated to warm the human breast. Mr. Kelland has, however, a charm in his manner, which atones for the abstraction into which his peculiar position doubtless casts him. Mr. Milne, a practising counsel, commenced his scientific career as a prize essayist of the Highland and Agricultural Society, of which, as a country gentleman, he is now a leader. His essays were geological, and to that science he has chiefly devoted his attention; although he has also published Investigations on the Poor-laws, the Potato Disease, and other questions of social economy.

Professor Low, in like manner, is identified as an author with the Highland and Agricultural Society. His works are well known. It will be found that most of them are habitually cast in the form of lectures, and framed to demonstrate rather than instruct. The best and most popular of them is his work on “Domestic Animals.” But the influence of his writings on improving the management of land has been incalculable.

The Rev. Dr. Fleming, author of the “Philosophy of Zoology,” but better known by his “History of British Animals,” has rendered himself formidable by the freedom with which he wields the scourge against “pretence.” The worthy divine was formerly minister of Flisk, in Fifeshire, and holds at pre-

sent a professorship in the new College of the Free Church in Edinburgh. In the preface to his *Natural History* he at once proceeded to draw a distinction, which marked him out as a devotee of original observation:—

“It” said he, “anatomy and physiology be regarded as the basis of zoological science, the history of species will include a description of their structure and functions along with their external characters. If anatomy and physiology be discarded as foreign to the subject, and the professed naturalist acknowledge, without a blush, his ignorance or his contempt of both, then the history of species will be chiefly occupied with the details of external appearance.”

Such different conditions he asserted to have prevailed in the study of the science in this country, and to have divided it into two great eras. Passing every panegyric on the golden age of Ray, Willoughby, Lester, and Sibbald, as the physiological era, he consequently upholds their natural method, and denounces the artificial method of Linnæus—according all praise, however, to the Swedish Aristotle individually, and only incensed at the conduct of his “blind admirers.” In the compilation of this work the Rev. Doctor showed so lively an acquaintance with the truths of natural history and the facts of literature, that it stands without exception the best text book of zoology yet produced. Disdaining to quote such authorities as the compilation of Gmelin, which frequently supplies the place of the 12th edition of Linnæus, and thus occasions the absurdity of quoting his authority for the names of species established subsequent to his decease, the Doctor went back in every instance to the best and most perfect edition of the various writers on natural science; and thus succeeded in giving things their proper names, discoveries their exact positions, and disentangling much of the confusion of zoological writings.

Decidedly the greatest of our scientific writers or discoverers is Simpson, the author of the original treatise on chloroform. Strange to say, the popularity and singular efficacy of this extraordinary pain-subduing agent has not exempted it or its author from the ordinary modicum of envy and obloquy attendant on a scientific triumph. Simpson has indeed had less of the prejudice of the outer world to combat than of those who should know better—the members of his own profession. But he is more than a match for them at the literary small sword; and if he does not “seek the battle,” he invariably observes the counterpart of Macpherson’s couplet, by not “shunning it when it comes.” His prowess as a controversialist is sufficient to establish the reputation of any theory or practice, however bold the innovation; and woe to the dull ass that brays in arrear of Simpson’s march of improvement, and “will not mend his pace for beating.” No sooner was his anæsthetic system impugned, than Professor Simpson throw himself tooth and nail into the conflict; and his adversaries, after experiencing about as severe punishment as men could stand up and receive, are now beginning to understand their position. He appealed at once to the most venerable authorities—Dioscorides, Pliny, Apuleius, Theoderic, Paré, and others, to prove that he was not guilty of advancing any new thing, as some of these authorities had long ago described,

and some of them apparently practised, the induction of anæsthesia previous to operations, both by giving their patients narcotic substances to swallow and narcotic vapours to inhale. The merit of its application in his own particular walk of practice was, however, all his own; the first instance in which it was adopted having occurred in Edinburgh on 19th January, 1847. For this innovation Simpson has had incredible assaults to sustain and repel. Ether-inhalation was the mode employed; and the case answered all his anticipations. The inhalation of ether procured for the patient a more or less perfect immunity from conscious pain and suffering, whilst it did not diminish the strength and regularity of the muscular contractions. He had not before this time, nor for a month afterwards, dared, however, to keep a patient in the anæsthetic state for more than half-an-hour. It was during the experience of the next three weeks he discovered that anæsthetic action could safely be kept up for one, two, three, or more hours. Subsequent cases to the first anæsthetic case of Dr. Simpson were shortly reported at London, Bristol, and Dublin. In about a week, however, after the first case occurred in Edinburgh, the practice had been tried in France. It was later adopted in Germany; and even America, the country whence the first knowledge of anæsthetic effects in surgery emanated, did not employ ether in obstetric practice until after its use in Europe. The ether required to be exhibited in large quantities to keep up its action, and in November, 1847, an impulse was given to the practice of anæsthesia in this class of cases by the introduction of chloroform as a substitute for sulphuric ether. The bulk of ether required, its inconvenience for carriage, and the size of apparatus believed necessary for its effectual exhibition, had prepared the practitioner heartily to discard it; when it was superseded by the discovery of Simpson, portable in a case of the size of an ordinary cigar case, and capable of being effectually applied by a few drops inhaled from a pocket-handkerchief! This most wonderful of the achievements of modern science was met with the most dreadful denunciations—“cerebral effusions,” “convulsions,” “hydrocephalus,” “idiocy,” were the mildest of the imputations and predictions hurled against the effects of chloroform, and imagined to be hatching for the infant generation. Simpson has answered them all by a fearless investigation of the results to the mothers and to the children. And although it may be deemed a delicate subject into which to be led, even by scientific philanthropy, these results are so important to society that we cannot help saying that he has—in a “Report on the Early History and Progress of his Great Discovery,”—the motto of which, from “Measure for Measure,”

“I do think you might spare her,
And neither heaven nor man grieve at the mercy,”

is alleged to have been contributed by an English lady—proved that there has been found a means of mitigating indescribable human agony, removing those anxieties which the dread anticipation of

these sufferings have occasioned, and thus in many respects benefiting the patients, besides producing a great saving of human life, in respect of the increased number of children born alive. Professor Simpson adverts to the opposition encountered by the greatest modern improvements in practical surgery and medicine—such as the ligature of arteries, the discovery of vaccination, and the first employment of antimony, ipecacuanha, chinchane bark, &c. The London physicians, he states, have, on several occasions, specially distinguished themselves by their determined and prejudicial opposition to all innovations in practice not originating among themselves. When Robert Talbor, of Essex, removed to London in the 17th century, and employed chinchane bark in the cure of the common agues of the metropolis, “he found,” says Simpson, “that as he gained the favour of the world, he lost that of the physicians of London; and apparently their persecution of him was such that the king at last was obliged to interfere, and in the year 1678, King Charles II. sent a royal mandate to the College of Physicians, commanding the president, Dr. Micklethwait, ‘and the rest of the College of Physicians, not to give Talbor molestation or disturbance in his practice.’” Sydenham, Harvey, and other illustrious names, are mentioned amongst the obstructives on this occasion. In a previous instance, the president had actually sent Groenvelt, the discoverer of the use of cantharides, to Newgate, for using his remedy. In like manner, a member of the London College of Physicians, in 1805, urged the propriety of putting down “the beastly new disease” of cow-pox; and in September, 1848, the “London Medical Gazette” suggested, whether the practice of relieving women by anaesthetics should not “be considered criminal according to law!” Dr. Simpson has thus had to combat objections, religious and moral as well as medical, to his practice. Some parts of the controversy, had we not the pile of printed pamphlets before us, might be even thought preposterous. He has had to show cause against an alleged attempt to disturb the permanence of the primeval curse: He maintains that the disputed word “sorrow,” *Etzeb* (in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children), does not in the original Hebrew really signify the sensation of pain; and he has had to answer, in detail, the plea of allowing “nature” to conduct the case. Amongst his antagonists, one has challenged the Professor to single combat. This unhappy man is a Dr. Collins, of Dublin; who, “like that great goose, Cato,” as Tom Hood has it, has fallen on his own sword. He has ventured to oppose Simpson upon data, which turn out to be in reality the data of Dr. Collins himself—namely, some 16,000 cases in the Dublin Maternity Hospital; only, Simpson shows as clear as day that all this experience has not enabled the worthy Doctor to draw a single accurate deduction! Collins, in fact, is convicted of the most enormous Irish ball on record; and Simpson’s drollery in proving the untenable absurdity of his opponent’s position is about as amusing a thing as could be perused. Dr. Collins complains, that by not stating his practice to be “the most successful on record,” Simpson has

done him wrong; and adds, “I believe you would not intentionally *pluck the laurel off my brow.*” But the Professor has not only the cruelty deliberately to substantiate that there is *no laurel to pluck*, but that a much more successful practice being on record, Dr. Collins must surrender the laurel.—Oh horror! to the female practitioners; or, as Simpson writes it, the “real petticoated midwives” of the London Maternity Hospital.

“You accuse me,” says Simpson, “of the atrocious crime of youth. Every day I get older, and every day I feel more and more the vast amount of work that yet remains to be done by us all; and I would fain excite you, if I could, to expend more of your abilities and talents upon the real advancement of that branch of medicine which you and I practise. Further, you seem to suppose that the seeing an enormous number of cases is the means by which this advancement is to be accomplished, and that my want of experience (as you choose to term it) is enough to prevent me aiding in this good work. But I beg you again to remember that it is not a mere mass of cases seen that has ameliorated or will ameliorate the state of midwifery. In your hospital upwards of 150,000 women have been delivered, under the charge of different masters. If we except, however, the names of Auld and Clarke, I cannot at this moment recollect that any one of your other physicians, when acting as masters, has added a single new fact to obstetric science, or propounded a single new principle in obstetric practice.”

Along with the Rev. Dr. Fleming, Mr. Hugh Miller and Professor Balfour united in contributing in the course of last year to a volume projected by Mr. James Crawford, junior, W.S., and entitled “The Bass Rock.” There were other contributors to this volume—the Rev. Thomas M’Crie, who possesses no little of the style and spirit of his venerated relative, the biographer of Knox; and the Rev. James Anderson, an industrious rather than illustrious compiler of biographies. As we have no anxiety, however, at least in the present article, to review the book, we must limit ourselves to Mr. Hugh Miller and Dr. John Hutton Balfour. The former is a popular and graphic party writer, who has struck out his path from the bottom of a quarry to the top of a tower, through a mass of red sandstone; his “Walks,” his “Cromarty,” and, finally, his “First Impressions of England,” sufficiently explain what we mean. The geological regions before noticed, which he has invested with a charm, through the mere felicity of language, are now assigned peculiarly as his province; and no one need dispute the sway he has established over his empire. In combination with a peculiar line of reading, both in poetry and romance, and a partiality for the older writers of the last half-century, Mr. Hugh Miller supplies an amusing occasional chapter, of the character of a melange, to our present stock of publications. He lives in comparative seclusion, and does not mingle much in society; and, from the details of chance conversations in railway and stage coaches, frequently repeated for the benefit of his readers, we should judge that he had much yet to acquire from social intercourse. He is editor of the *Witness*; but most of the successful papers from his pen have evidently rather been designed for separate publication than for the columns of a newspaper. Pro-

essor Balfour, again, seems to observe the maxim very strictly, *no sutor ultra crepidam*. His rencontre with the Duke of Atholl in Glen Tilt has brought up his name in connection with the popular movement of "the right of way," with which we believe, however, he has little to do: and, indeed, the Professor's labours are confined almost exclusively to botanical science, in which he is fortunately an enthusiast. His "School Botany," which the Messrs. Griffin of Glasgow are about to produce, will be the most practical work of instruction that has yet appeared. We had almost forgot that the Professor is one thing more than a botanist. He is a philanthropist; and his philanthropy is directed in a diagonal line betwixt religion and education. The "ragged schools," and other schemes of social elevation, have had the free gift of the learned Professor's exertions; but he usually takes along with him Dr. Greville, Captain Grove, and other members of the Rev. Mr. Drummond's (Episcopal) congregation, of which all these benevolent gentlemen are office-bearers. Dr. Greville we ought to mention as the most accomplished cryptogamic botanist of the age, as well in the description as in the delineation of plants and species, and favourably known as a translator of some of the most learned German scientific treatises.

We must now approach "the mob of gentlemen who write with ease"—although there are some to be disposed of previously, who scarcely merit that title. There is Principal Lee, who, perhaps, could not do anything "with ease," because the Principal is rather painstaking in his compositions. His inaugural addresses at the University are decidedly relished by the students, and annually attract a tolerable attendance. The Principal is more celebrated for his knowledge than for his production of books. With the exception of Dr. Irving, late of the Advocates' Library, he is, perhaps, the first biblioplist in the Modern Athens. Yet the stream of his discourses by no means runs deep—a quotation from the Greek or Latin classics, and a commendation of the style of Robertson as an historian, with a few common-places respecting the good behaviour of youth, and the enumeration of the well-thumbed principles, that "virtue is its own reward, and vice its own punishment;" these are the characteristics of the addresses of Principal Lee. The Rev. Dr. Hetherington is a genuine literary man, who has seen the life of a divinity student in all its phases, from tutor and teacher, to professor. His Church History is an able production, and shows that he is capable of great things. The Rev. Dr. William Lindsay Alexander, as a reviewer and pamphleteer, stands deservedly high in public estimation. His sermons on the death of Dr. Chalmers, and of Dr. Russell of Dundee, are amongst the best obituary discourses we have ever read. Mr. John Hill Burton, an author of great ability, universality, and research, merits more than a passing notice; and were not his edition of the "Correspondence of David Hume," and his "Lives of Simon Lord Lovat," and "Duncan Forbes of Culloden," already familiar to our readers, we would assuredly pause emphatically on the merits of John Hill Burton. As a law author he

is known favourably, and even popularly; and his labours in compiling the legal portions of that business annual, "Oliver and Boyd's Edinburgh Almanac," are highly appreciated by the public, and have confirmed the reputation of the work. Messrs. Parker Lawson, and Daniel Wilson, might be added to this category.

In a recent number of the *Witness* we noticed a flourish of trumpets, *apropos* of St. Bernard's Crescent and its origin. It stated that the avenue of elms, which Wilkie had rendered illustrious by admiring, and Raeburn by encasing in a palisade of stone columns, had renewed its glory by having become the abode of literary genius—no less illustrious a personage than Mr. Leitch Ritchie, author of "Schinderhannes, the Robber of the Rhine," having dignified it with his local habitation and his name; whilst Miss Rigby, whose particular literary distinctions we lamentably forget at this moment, and Colonel Mitchell, the translator of "Wallenstein," conspired, along with the aforesaid author of the "Magician," to form a literary coruscation on the banks of the Water of Leith. There is somehow a literary Will o' the Wisp atmosphere about the morass of St. Bernard's Crescent. Many others of the minor *literati* live about the spot—in Carlton Street, Danube Street, and Ann Street, and may be seen imbuing inspiration at the Temple of Health in the adjoining valley by daylight any of these holiday mornings, along with the cream of the morning papers. It is no disparagement to "the party," we have just mentioned, that it is led off by a lord. Yet we must own that the facility of the honourable author of "Leaves from a Journal," and "Gleams of Thought," is more fatal than that of octosyllabic verse with which every one is familiar. Lord Robertson is no longer "a double-barrelled gun—one barrel charged with law and another charged with fun"—for one of his barrels is now charged with matter far more explosive. How his lordship, with Judge Blackmore's "Farewell to the Muse" before his eyes, has adventured up the rugged steep of Parnassus, is more than we can tell. His lordship is a poet of "larger growth," and has essayed a sort of agricultural explanation of the phenomenon:—

"Myself I dare not call a poet sown
By Nature's hand; or if there be a germ
Of poetry within my soul, 'twas cast
On stony ground, or wisely choked by weeds,
And withered as it vainly struggled forth.
In other culture early youth was passed,
And thoughts, amid the whirl of busy life,
Unfitted for its growth, my mind engross'd;
And thus the soil neglected lay. But if,
Since years have scattered silver o'er my head,
The dews have fallen, and by reflection's showers
The seed has sprung to life, 'tis by the warmth
Of southern sun the leaf has budded forth."

In the train of the senator follow other members of the College of Justice—Professor Ayton with his "Lays of the Cavaliers," and Theodore Martin, or, as he is better known, Bon Gualtier, another balladist, who give a fruitful promise of the tribe. Bon Gualtier's ballads are far more of the troubadour caste than those of his brother bard, who nevertheless is alleged to have borrowed from him "The

Great Glenmutchkin"—a story of the Railway Mania, which, in its day, was a lucky hit; but the author has not yet gone and done the like again. Ayton's ballads are eminently descriptive of the passing events and sensations of a point of history, wound up with a piece of moralizing, generally of a transcendental character, and, like a rocket or a comet, leaving the trail of poetic light mostly in the tail, or (technically) "the tag" of the piece. Not so Martin: his ballads are of a uniform equability throughout, and betray the hand of an adept in the joyous science; although destroyed by a levity which might do for *Punch*, and which, from other efforts of the author's extant, we are persuaded has less affinity to his true poetic vein than Ayton's pathos has to his style.

This class of writers most fitly ushers in the ladies; and we are glad to place them under the escort of the cavaliers. Mrs. Johnstone, Mrs. Crowe, Mrs. J. R. Stoddart, Miss Catherine Sinclair, and Miss Frances Brown, represent the Edinburgh galaxy of female talent at this moment. Not but there are others who might be named, though some, we suspect, had rather not; and indeed their writing anonymously is sufficient cause for not directing the eyes of inquirers their way. The fame of Mrs. Johnstone is long and well established. No female author of the present day has earned a high literary reputation so well, yet borne it so unobtrusively. At present she is not resident in Edinburgh. Mrs. Crowe aspires to be the leader of literary coteries; and unquestionably succeeds. The *Habitues* of the Queen Street Hall attend her; she has all the lions of the den growling round her in their varied and interesting styles. But the authoress of "Susan Hopley," "Lilly Dawson," and, last not least, "The Nightside of Nature," queens it admirably over the zoological group. Sir Walter Scott, we think it is, who avers that all the good ghost stories are unfounded, and the stupid ones only genuine. So far, then, Mrs. Crowe's chance of teaching that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy" was but a poor one. She has, however, contrived to tell all the good ghost stories she could, and to sink the stupid ones; so that she has left truth completely at the bottom of the well. No matter—ghost stories are all the better for being a little incredible; and Mrs. Crowe would have but spoiled her book by improving their veracity. Mrs. J. R. Stoddart, the lady of a W.S., has a literary reputation on the strength of a translation—"The Life of Albert Durer"—an artist's love tale, and a fiction of more power than purpose. As for Miss Catherine Sinclair, we really think this lady a most sensible, sedate, and sober genius. No one else could contrive to throw so much brilliant commonplace into a conversation, or to exhibit the fashions and frivolities of life in Edinburgh in a more faithful form. The "serious world," to which she professes more especially to belong, is most unmercifully shown up in more ways than one; but chiefly, unconsciously, in the original remarks and observations that stud the pages of "Modern Accomplishments," "Modern Society," "The Journey of Life," &c., &c. Of all her productions we like the descriptive ones the best, as

"Hill and Valley," "Scotland and the Scotch," "Shetland and the Shetlanders;" and although we know not what Miss Sinclair had to do with the "Lives of the Cæsars," we believe that a high rank in the order of merit must be assigned, with all her faults and absurdities, to a lady who has written so well, and published so much. Miss Frances Brown has not resided long in Edinburgh. Her story, from its peculiarity, is best told in her own words:—

"I was born," she says, "on the 10th of January, 1816, at Stranorlar, a small village in the county of Donegal. My father was then, and still continues to be, the postmaster of the village. I was the seventh child in a family of twelve; and my infancy was, I believe, as promising as that of most people. But at the age of eighteen months, not having received the benefit of Jenner's discovery, I had the misfortune to lose my sight by the small-pox, which was then prevalent in our neighbourhood. This, however, I do not remember, and indeed recollect very little of my infant years. I never received any regular education, but very early felt the want of it; and the first time I remember to have experienced this feeling strongly, was about the beginning of my seventh year, when I heard our pastor (my parents being members of the Presbyterian Church) preach for the first time. On the occasion alluded to, I was particularly struck by many words in the sermon, which, though in common use, I did not then understand; and from that time adopted a plan for acquiring information on this subject. When a word unintelligible to me happened to reach my ear, I was careful to ask its meaning from any person whom I thought likely to inform me—a habit which was probably troublesome enough to the friends and acquaintances of my childhood: but by this method I soon acquired a considerable stock of words; and when further advanced in life, enlarged it still more by listening attentively to my young brothers and sisters reading over the tasks required at the village school. They were generally obliged to commit to memory a certain portion of the dictionary and English grammar each day; and by hearing them read it aloud, frequently for that purpose, as my memory was better than theirs (perhaps rendered so by necessity), I learned the task much sooner than they, and frequently heard them repeat it. . . . My first acquaintance with books was necessarily formed amongst those which are most common in country villages. 'Susan Gray,' 'The Negro Servant,' 'The Gentle Shepherd,' 'Mungo Park's Travels,' and, of course, 'Robinson Crusoe,' were among the first of my literary friends; for I often heard them read by my relatives, and remember to have taken a strange delight in them, when I am sure they were not half understood. Books have been always scarce in our remote neighbourhood, and were much more so in my childhood; but the craving for knowledge which then commenced grew with my growth; and as I had no books of my own in those days, my only resource was borrowing from the acquaintances I had—to some of whom I owe obligations of the kind that will never be forgotten.

"In this way I obtained the reading of many valuable works, though generally old ones; but it was a great day for me when the first of Sir Walter Scott's works fell into my hands. It was 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian,' and was lent me by a friend whose family were rather better provided with books than most in our neighbourhood.

"My delight in the work was very great, even then; and I contrived, by means of borrowing, to get acquainted in a very short time with the greater part of the books of its illustrious author; for works of fiction, about this time, occupied all my thoughts. I had a curious mode of im-

pressing on my memory what had been read, namely, lying awake in the silence of the night, and repeating it all over to myself. To that habit I probably owe the extreme tenacity of memory I now possess. But, like all other good things, it had its attendant evil, for I have often thought it curious that, whilst I never forgot any scrap of knowledge collected, however small, yet the common events of daily life slip from my memory so quickly that I can scarcely find anything again which I have once laid aside. But this misfortune has been useful in teaching me habits of order."

Commencing with "Baines' History of the French Wars," advancing through "Hume's History of England," and the "Universal History," Miss Brown dates her historical information from her 13th year. This was succeeded by geography—in regard to which she says:—

"In order to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the relative situations of distant places, I sometimes requested a friend who could trace maps, to place my fingers upon some well-known spot, the situation of which I had exactly ascertained, and then conduct the finger of the other hand from the points thus marked to any place on the map whose position I wished to know, at the same time mentioning the places through which my fingers passed. By this plan, having previously known how the cardinal points were placed, I was enabled to form a tolerably correct idea, not only of the boundaries and magnitude of various countries, but also of the courses of rivers and mountain chains."

Poetry, and attempts at original compositions—imitations of everything she knew—from the Psalms to Gray's Elegy, followed, until she first made acquaintance with the *Iliad*, through the medium of Pope. The perusal of this work induced her to burn her first MSS.; and *Childe Harold*, when she afterwards met with it, induced her to resolve against making verses for the future. Soon afterwards, however, she wrote the little story of *La Perouse*, contained in her first published volume; and from contributing to the *Irish Penny Journal*, aspired to the *London Athenæum*. Her published volumes are "The Star of Alteghei," published in London, by Moxon, in 1844, and "Lyrics and Miscellaneous Poems," in Edinburgh, in 1847, by Sutherland and Knox. The latter collection is immeasurably superior to the former. Miss Brown is a psychological phenomenon; and the remarkable perseverance and ingenuity by which she has triumphed over one of the most severe privations of life, require to be known in order to comprehend the strange feeling that pervades her poems,

The summary of Edinburgh Literary Society around this Christmas Log cannot better be summed up than by a phalanx of poets; in whom our ranks are at this time pre-eminently rich. Amongst them we have James Ballantyne, the fine doric author of "The Gaberlunzie's Wallet" and "The Miller of Deanhaugh," and all the songs and sentiments that appertain to these genuine national volumes; albeit, the name of Mr. Ballantyne is more likely to descend to posterity in connection with another order of art, since he is the principal decorator in stained glass of the magnificent Houses of Parliament now in progress of erection at Westminster. Both the "Wallet" and the "Miller" contain healthy scraps of poetry, with many of which the public is otherwise familiar, in "Whistle Binkie" and "Nursery Rhymes;" but we question if in pure chrysolite beauty any gem of the Ballantyne diadem, "Wee ragged laddie" inclusive, equals the author's latest and most exquisite effusion, published with the music—

"Ilka blade o' grass keeps its ain drap o' dew."

Gilfillan (not "the gifted," but Robert Gilfillan of Leith), still toys felicitously with the social muse; Mr. Vedder, the admirable lyricist; and Captain Charles Gray, the disciple and imitator of Burns, still occasionally appear on the literary horizon. But the hope of Edinburgh poetry centres in Mr. Robert Jamieson, a writer to the signet, and author of a highly dramatic poem—not, however, conceived in a dramatic form—"Nimrod." We always thought there was fervour about Mr. Jamieson, but hardly suspected it to be poetic, till "Nimrod" revealed it. This work is after an exalted order of poetry; and, with many subtle refinements, which it requires no mean power to depict and preserve throughout the shadowings and foreshadowings of a theme half prophetic of man's unfolding nature and final destiny, a little more decision, and a little more strength, would have stamped "Nimrod" as the poem of the age. As it is, Mr. Jamieson, when he tries again, will equal Browning, and eclipse Tennyson, for he is disfigured with the mannerism of neither. And so we wish him, and all the other subjects on whom we have fallen "a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

"OLD TIME."

Men call me feeble, old, and grey—
My strength and vigour pass'd away.
But strong and stalwart still am I,
Nor frail my step, nor dim mine eye.

What are a thousand years to me?
But as a drop to yonder sea!
I've not yet reach'd my manhood's prime,
And laugh to hear men say, "Old Time."

Let centuries pass, and ages roll—
The year that my last knell shall toll
So far away in the future lies
That ne'er a tear hath wet mine eyes.

No! I am joyous, gay, and free!
Leading a life of mirth and glee.
But, Man! note well each passing chime—
Short is thy stay in the realms of Time!

COLIN RAE BROWN.