

What right has such a question to be put? Is literature worked as if on a tread-mill, under the hand of a task-master; or is the public voice never to cease from the weary cry of "give, give?"

The contents of the following letter to Dr. Moir will show that he was not absolutely idle:—

"4th Oct., 1842.

"MY DEAR SIR:—I have lost several days in looking over till I am sick, all *Blackwood*, for a description of Christopher's house in Moray Place. It is somewhere pictured as the House of Indolence, and with some elaboration, as I once heard Horatio Macculloch, the painter, talk of it with rapture. I wish you would cast over in your mind where the description may be, as I would fain put it into a chapter in vol. iii. of 'Recreations' now printing. Sometimes a reader remembers what a writer forgets. It is not in a 'Noctes.' I read it with my own eyes not long ago; but I am ashamed of myself to think how many hours (days) I have wasted in wearily trying to recover it. Perhaps it may recur to you without much effort of recollection. Yours affectionately,

"JOHN WILSON."

CHAPTER XVI.

LITERARY AND DOMESTIC LIFE.

1844-'48.

WE now come to February, 1844, where an old correspondent reappears, whose letters, if not written in the sunny spirit of *bonhomme*, have a peculiar excellence of their own. Never did graver's tool give more unmistakable sharpness to his lines, than the pen of John Gibson Lockhart gave to his words. The three following letters are as characteristic of his satirical power as any of those off-hand caricatures that shred his best friends to pieces, leaving the most poetical of them as bereft of that beautifying property, as if they had been born utterly without it. I have seen various portraits of my father from that pencil, each bearing the grotesque image of the

artist's fancy, yet all undeniably like. So was it his humor, nearly to the end, to look upon men and things with the chilling eye of the satirist.

"25th March, 1844.

"MY DEAR WILSON:—I have spelt out your letter with labor,* but great ultimate contentment.

"Alexander Blackwood had given me, by yesterday's post, my first information touching that enormous absurdity of — *in re* Kemp deceased, and I answered him, expressing my deep thankfulness for the result of your interference; but I had not quite understood with how much difficulty you contended, and how nearly you were alone in the fight against eternal desecration. If Kemp had been put there, — must in due time have polluted the same site *à faculentiore*. Of the *other* suggestion nipt in the bud, never shall I breathe a whisper to any human being. For some time I have fancied Scotland must be all mad; I never see a Scotch paper without being strengthened in that conviction, but this is the *ne plus ultra!*

"I have not read any novel lately, far less written one. I do not even guess to what new book you allude in your last page. You address me by the name of some *hero*, I suppose, but that is undecipherable by my optics. No bammng here. Do name the book. Is this your sly way of announcing to me some new escapade of the long-haired and longish-headed?

"By the by, Swinton has depicted both hair and head with very admirable skill. I had no notion that there was such stuff in the lad. He will, I am confident, soon be on a par here with Frank Grant, who is clearing £5,000 or £6,000 per annum. I like the C. N. a thousandfold better than Lauder's, and hope to have an engraving of it, same size, very speedily.

"I showed the 'Poemata'† some weeks ago to John Blackwood, and bade him send you a copy. Perhaps to me you owe your knowledge, therefore, of the novel epithet. Horace, however, has 'teterima belli causa' and I rather suspect *teterima* carries a delicate *double entendre* in that classical *loc. vald. cit.*

"You have not read the title-page correctly. First, the book is

* This difficulty arose from the circumstance of his correspondent suffering, as has been told, from the weakness in his hand.

† *Poemata Lyrica. Versa Latina Rimante Scripta.* By H. D. Ryder. Stimpkin, Marshall, and Co.

published by Simpkin, Marshall, *et Co.* 2d. The author is not Moore, *Dean* (to whom it is dedicated, as a compliment to his 'zeal for the Apostolical succession'), but H. Ryder, Canon of Lichfield, son of the late Bishop of Lichfield, and nephew of Lord Harrowby. I fancy the man is simply mad; if not, Lonsdale must handsel his jurisdiction by overwhelming a scandal not inferior to the other Fitz-Eveque H. Marsh's *in re Miord*. That case, by the by, goes to confirm another of my old doctrines, viz., that the Trial by Jury is the grossest of all British humbugs. I forget if it is Swift or Scorpio who sang—

“ Powers Episcopal we know
Must from some apostle flow;
But I'll never be so rude as
Ask how many draw from Judas.’

“ Here is another fine spring day. Why don't you come up with Lord Peter for a week or two; or without him? The Government is in a tarnation fix. I suspect Ashley has got very wild, poor fellow—a better lives not; and that we shall have by and by Jack Cade in right earnest. Gleig is chaplain-general of the forces; keeping Chelsea and his living in Kent too. * * * * * Ever yours affectionately,

J. G. L.

“ Alone and dreary; both my young away from me; I shall soon be left entirely alone in this weary world.

“ You read in the papers about Louis Philippe giving Brougham a piece of Gobelins Tapestry, but they did not mention the subject. It is a very fine *picture* indeed—of a worrying-match between two dogs!

“ Now I went, a few nights ago, to a large dinner at Brougham's house, and on entering the inner room, there was he with a cane, holding aside the curtains, and explaining the beauties of this masterpiece to—*Plain John!*!

“ Literal truth; but absurder than any fiction. The company seemed in agonies of diversion at the unconsciousness of the pair of barons.

“ *That week* both *H. B.** and *Punch* had been caricaturing them as the Terriers of the *Times* disgracing a drawing-room!

“ All true, as I shall answer, etc.”

* Mr. John Doyle, the father of Richard Doyle, author of *Brown, Jones, and Robinson*, “is generally believed to be the author of the celebrated H. B. political sketches, which were a few

There are one or two allusions in this letter which may require a word of explanation.

The first paragraph refers to a proposition made by some parties in Edinburgh, that the remains of Mr. Kemp, the architect of the Scott monument, should have interment beneath it, he having come to an untimely end not long after the completion of his design. Professor Wilson had some trouble in preventing this absurd project being carried out. In the second, there are some playful remarks about a novel; *à propos* of which I may say, that novel-reading was a mental dissipation my father seldom indulged in, regarding that sort of literature, in general, as enervating to the mind and destructive to the formation of good taste. Now and then he was prevailed on to open one, when recommended as very good. *Whitefriars* had just been published; he was delighted with it, and sat down, on the impulse of the moment, to congratulate the author (who could be no other than John G. Lockhart) on his success; and in this belief he addresses him by the title of his hero.*

This letter is almost immediately followed by another:—

“March 28, 1844.

“MY DEAR WILSON:—It is not easy to judge of the merit of an architectural design until one (I mean an ignoramus) has seen it in actual stone. I thought the drawing of Scott’s monument very good, and I suppose, from what is now executed, you can form a fair opinion. All my remaining anxiety is that the statue should be in *bronze*. Marble will last very few years before you see the work of decay on the surface. Is it too late to make a vigorous effort for this, in my mind, primary object? I have no fear about *money*. I met . . . yesterday at dinner at . . . , and gave her your love. She is a fine creature. I see nothing like her, and were I either young or rich, I should be in danger. She told me Brewster, Chalmers, and all the Frow Kirk are going to start a new Review. How many Reviews are we to have? Is not it odd that the old ones keep afloat at all? but I doubt if they have lost almost any thing as yet. The *Q. R. prints* nearly 10,000, I know, if not quite. Nor have I

years ago so remarkably popular, and which, while exhibiting with abundant keenness the prominent features and peculiarities of the persons caricatured, were always gentlemanly in feeling, and free from any appearance of malice.”—Knight’s *English Cyclopædia*.

* *Whitefriars* has been ascribed to Miss E. Robinson.

heard that Ebony is declining, in spite of these Hoods and Ainsworths, etc., etc.

“ . . . showed me a lot of Edinburgh daguerreotypes—the Candles, etc.; that of Sir D. Brewster is by far the best specimen of the art I had ever seen. It is so good, that I should take it very kind if you would sit to the man whom Brewster patronizes *for me*.* I should like also to have Sheriff Cay. This art is about to revolutionize book-illustration entirely.

“ There is very great uneasiness here about this ten hours’ affair. I really expect to see the Government displaced sooner or later by this coalition of Johnny Russell with Ashley, Oastler, and the *Times*. Your old friend, Sir James Graham, is terribly unpopular with both sides of the House. Yet I think his demeanor in private society infinitely more agreeable than Peel’s, who, somehow, is not run upon in the same style by any party. Inglis takes kindly to the name of Jack Cade. We shall have him H. B.’d, of course. Ashley speaks well, he has a fine presence, good voice, and his zeal gives him real eloquence now and then; but he has slender talents, and his head has been quite turned by the popularity he has acquired. I seriously fear he will go mad. He lives and moves in an atmosphere of fanaticism, talks quite gravely about the Jews recovering Jerusalem, the Millennium at hand, etc., etc.

“ Brougham goes to Paris this week to (*inter alia*) take counsel with Guizot and Dupin about a great humbug (I believe), his new Society for the Amendment of the Law; and, learning that Lyndhurst, Denman, etc., approved, I agreed to be a member on Brougham’s request, and went to a meeting yesterday, where he was in the chair. What a restless, perturbed spirit! * * * * *

“ Nothing could surprise me now-a-days. The Government have allowed B. to be their saviour so often in the H. of Lords, that they may by and by find it impossible to refuse him even the Seals. I am, you see, idle, and in gossiping vein this morning, having just got rid of a d—d thick Quarterly, I fear, a dull one. Ever affectionately yours,
J. G. LOCKHART.”

In the next letter, which is the last of this correspondence that has been preserved, it will be seen how pain and inward yearning

* My father did so, and the frontispiece to the present *Memoir* is engraved from Mr. Hill’s calotype, by the artist’s kind permission.

for things gone from before his eyes had softened a stern nature, bringing it through trials which left him a sadder and a wiser man :—

“FAIR LAWN, TUNBRIDGE,
Easter Wednesday, 1844.

“MY DEAR WILSON:—I had your kind letter here yesterday, and the *resolutions* as to the Scott and Kemp affairs, which seem to me drawn up in the best possible taste, not a word to give offence, and much very delicately calculated to conciliate. I came to this place a week ago, utterly done up in body and mind; but perfect repose and idleness, with cold lamb and home-brewed beer, and no wine nor excitement of any sort, have already done wonders, and in fact convinced me that I might have health again, if I could manage to cut London, and Quarterly Reviews. As for any very lively interest in this life, that is out of the question with me as with you, and from the same fatal date, though I struggled against it for a while, instead of at once estimating the case completely as I think you did. Let us both be thankful that we have children not unworthy of their mothers. I reproach myself when the sun is shining on their young and happy faces, as well as on the violets and hyacinths and bursting leaves, that I should be unable to awaken more than a dim ghost-like semi-sympathy with them, or in any thing present or to come, but so it is. No good, however, can come of these croakings. Like you, I have no plans now—never. Walter must fag hard all this summer in Essex with a Puseyite tutor, if he is to go to Balliol in October with any advantage, and therefore I think it most likely I shall not stir far from London. * * * *

“ * * * * I used to have a real friendship for the water of Clyde and some half-dozen of its tributary Calder and Lethans, familiar from infancy; and, most of all, for certain burns with deep rocky beds and cold invisible cascades. As it is, I could be well contented to abide for the rest of this life in such a spot as this same Fairlawn—well named. It is a large ancient house built round a monastic court, with a good park, most noble beeches, and limes and oaks, looking over the rich vale of the Medway, with a tract of rough heath, and holt, and sand-hill, lying behind it, six or seven miles in length, and about two in breadth. This was the original seat of the Vanes; and old Sir Harry lies buried here with many of his ancestors. It is now possessed by Miss Yates, cousin-german to Sir R.

Peel, an excellent, sensible, most kind old lady; stone blind from five years of age, and otherwise afflicted, but always cheerful; too high a Tory to admire the premier, and, *inter alia*, of old Sir Robert's opinion as to the Children question. I am going to-day for a few days to another house in this neighborhood, and shall be in London again by this day week.

"Sir W. Allan writes he has a picture of Sir W. and Anne Scott for the Exhibition. I hope rather than expect to be pleased therewith.

"So Abinger *exit*. He wedded a spry widow who had been anxious for his third son on last August; and on landing at Calais for the honey trip, put herself down 'age 55'; but the Fates were not to be gammoned, nor Lady Venus neither, and the coffin-plate will tell truly: Ann. *Ætat.* 76. I suppose Pollock will take the place, yet it is not impossible that *H. B.* may fancy it, and if he does, it might not be easy for Peel to give him a rebuff. Ever affectionately yours,
J. G. L."

Lockhart's very sorrows are a contrast to those of his friend. There is something of a listless bitterness in the words, "I should be unable to awaken more than a dim ghost-like semi-sympathy with them, or in any thing present or to come." He is stricken, as it were, and will not look up. But my father, with that healthful heart of his, that joyous nature that smiles even in the midst of tears, had scarcely yet laid aside the strong enthusiasm which belonged so remarkably to his youth. His energies are, as may be seen from the following letter to his son John, still directed to the "Kemp affair." The subject is pleasantly mingled with domestic interests concerning Billholm:—

"6 GLOUCESTER PLACE, *Saturday, 6th, 1844.*

"MY DEAR JOHN:—On looking over the portfolio of prints, I thought Harvey's Covenanters, Baptism, and Allan's Burns worth framing, and have got them framed in same style with Allan's Scott in the dining-room. These three make a trio, with Harvey in the middle, which will hang, I think, well on the drawing-room wall opposite the front window.

"The Polish Exiles will hang, I think, well to the right of the door, as you enter the drawing-room, if in the middle, so as at any time to allow of two appropriate pendants. The demure Damsel

may range with Victoria. But follow your own taste, which is as good, or better than mine.

“The five will make the room look gay, and they leave this by the wagon on the 8th instant, directed to be left at Langholm till called for.

“I close my session on Friday, the 12th, or perhaps a day or two sooner. The weather here is fine, and I trust you will have a good lambing season in spite of the severities since you left us. I see prices are somewhat better, and trust this year may be considerably more favorable than the last two. My own motions are not fixed for the future; but I shall not leave this before the latter end of May for any other quarter. Four hundred persons were assembled to inter Kemp in the Scott Monument. I heard of it at eleven o'clock; saw M'Neill, and after much angry discussion with a deputation, stopped the funeral, and turned it into the West Kirkyard. They had got leave from . . . and some other fools, and had kept the public ignorant of the proceedings. Very general approbation of our interference is not unmingled with savage or sulky exasperation among the ten-pounders who stood up for their order. It would have been a vulgar outrage. Next day's *Witness* was insolent, but since, there has been a calm sough. The general committee have since passed resolutions approving our conduct. We passed them ourselves, and I moved them in a strong speech, to which there was no reply.

“A Professor of Music was to be chosen on Saturday, the 3d March. We were all met; but neither party could tell how it might go, as there were two doubtful votes. The Bennettites boldly moved, on false and foolish pretence of giving time to a new candidate named Pearson, to postpone the election till the 1st of June; and this motion was carried *by one*. They hope something may occur before then, to give Bennett a better chance; and they expect to have the vote of the Chemical Professor, who is to be elected in a few weeks, which may turn the scales. . . . We are all well, and Mary will visit you soon. I leave Blair, who is well, to speak for his own motions. He has been talking of going to Billholm for some days past. With love from all here and in Carlton Street—I am, your affectionate father, J. WILSON.”

Soon after this home-loving spirit has assisted in making the

pretty pastoral farm "look gay," we find him in the full energy of his ardent nature, awakening the sympathies of all around him on a subject that moved the whole Scottish nation as with one heart, and ultimately brought a stream of sympathetic souls together to the banks of Doon, till it seemed as if all Scotland had poured its life there to do honor to the memory of Burns.

The Burns Festival was an occasion fitted to call forth the zeal of Wilson's nature, and he worked heart and soul in the cause, with vigor little less than that which impelled him, in "his bright and shining youth," to *walk seventy miles* to be present at a Burns meeting, which he "electrified with a new and peculiar fervor of eloquence, such as had never been heard before."* We have three letters relative to this great gathering; one is addressed to his son-in-law, Mr. Gordon, before it took place, with a view to arranging the toasts:—

"MY DEAR SHERIFF:—The toasts now stand well, and we shall not try to improve the arrangement. What you say about the poor dear Shepherd is, I fear, true, though his fame will endure. Neither will his memory have to come in till after Scott and Campbell; and we all know, that even on a generally popular theme, it is very difficult to secure attention and interest far on in the 'Course of Time.' Perhaps the memory of the Shepherd cannot be given at all, for if some prosing driveller, without name or influence, were to give it, it would not do at all. If so, I shall speak of him during what I say of Burns. Will that do? I desire to have your opinion of this; for if you think it would not do, I shall look about for a proper person to give his memory after Alison has spoken. William Aytoun? What should follow? 'The Peasantry,' etc. That toast I recommended to Mr. Ballantine, and we leave it in his hands, or any one he may select to do it for him. If the Justice-General or Lord Advocate were to give 'Lord Eglinton' in a few sentences, it

* Of the Professor's walking feats I have not been able to gather many authentic anecdotes. Mr. Aird mentioned the fact quoted here in his speech at the Burns Festival, and my brother writes me on the subject:—"I have often heard him mention the following. He once walked forty miles in eight hours, but when or where he did it I cannot recollect. On another occasion he walked from Liverpool to Elleray, within the four and twenty hours. I do not know what the distance is, but think it must be somewhere about eighty miles. You are correct about his walking from Kelso to Edinburgh—forty miles, to attend a public dinner. It was in 1822, when the King was there. Once, when disappointed in getting a place in the mail from Penrith to Kendal, he gave his coat to the driver, set off on foot, reached Kendal some time before the coach, and then trudged on to Elleray."

would do well. But such toast is not necessary; for the names might be merely mentioned, and the thanks carried by acclamation. So with all others. These toasts might be set down and assigned, and given as circumstances may permit.

“I shall write to Ballantine to that effect, subject to any alterations; and there is no need to print the toasts, etc., tunes, etc., till all is fixed, a few days before the 6th; vice-chairman, stewards, etc., as no man of course would, on such an occasion, speak of himself, the place assigned him, whatever that may be, speaking for itself.

“Finally, we propose ‘The Provost and Magistrates of Ayr and other Burghs,’ and ‘The Ladies,’ of course, with shouts of love and delight. And so finis.”

The next letter is from Sergeant Talfourd,* whom he had invited to join the meeting at Ayr:—

“OXFORD, July 14, 1844.

“MY DEAR SIR:—Your very kind letter respecting the festival on the banks of the Doon has reached me at this city, where I am on the circuit; and if it were possible for me to meet the wish it so cordially expresses, I should at once recall the answer I felt compelled to give to the invitation of the committee, and look forward with delight to sharing in the enjoyments of the time. When, however, I tell you the sad truth, that on the 6th August we (*i.e.*, the Circuit) shall be at Shrewsbury, and on the 7th shall turn southward to Hereford, so that it will be impossible for me to be in Scotland on the 6th by the utmost exertion, and all the aid of steamboats and railways, without entirely absenting myself from both the Shrewsbury and the Hereford Assizes, and causing serious inconvenience to many, besides the loss to myself, I am sure you will sympathize with the conviction I have reluctantly adopted, that *I cannot* be with you at your most interesting meeting. Our long circuit, which is this year somewhat later than usual, in consequence of the Irish Writ of Error, will not close before the 22d or 23d August, when I hope to take my family to the country you know so well in the neighborhood of Windermere, where Mr. Wordsworth has taken a cottage for us for the holidays. If your festival had, happily for me, occurred while I was there at liberty, I should have embraced, with pleasure I cannot express, the opportunity of

* Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd died in the discharge of his professional duties at the Assizes, 1854.

meeting you under circumstances so original as the celebration of one of the truest poets who ever lived, and of beholding his genius by the light of yours, and then I might perhaps have hoped to induce our great living poet to accompany me. But I am tantalizing myself by fancying impossibilities, and can only hope that Wordsworth may grace your festival, and that all happiness may attend it, and you and yours.

“Believe me to remain, my dear sir, most truly and respectfully yours,
T. N. TALFOURD.”

The last from the Professor to Aird is characteristic of that gentle courtesy which the chivalry of his nature ever showed to woman. Such traits of kindness may seem almost too trifling to draw attention to, but they are unfortunately not so common in the routine of intercourse with our fellow-creatures as could be wished:—

“EDINBURGH, *Saturday Evening,*
August 17th, 1844.

“MY DEAR MR. AIRD:—I looked about for you in all directions, but could not see you on the field or in the Pavilion. I wished most to have had you on the platform, as the procession passed by before the Adelphi. It was very affecting.

“I told the Committee a week or two before the Festival, to invite Mrs. Thomson (Jessie Lewars), and no doubt they did so. But I could get no information about her being there from anybody, so did not allude to her in what I said, lest she might not be present.

“I spoke to a lady in the Aulds’ cottage, thinking she was Mrs. Begg, but she told me she was not; giving me her name, which I did not catch. Perhaps she was Mrs. Thomson? I wish you would inquire, and, if so, tell her that I did not hear the name; for, if it was she, I must have seemed wanting in kindness of manner. I saw it stated in a newspaper that she was seated in the Pavilion with Mrs. Begg. I wished I had known that—if it was so; but nobody on the morning of the Festival seemed to know any thing, and Mr. Auld in his cottage naturally enough was so *carried*, that he moved about in all directions with ears inaccessible to human speech.

“A confounded bagpipe and a horrid drum drove a quarter of an hour’s words out of my mind, or rather necessitated a close, leaving out a good deal to balance what I did say.

“I intend publishing my address in Blackwood’s next number, properly corrected, along with all the others; and, if you can find a place for it in the *Herald*, I wish you would, for I wish the people in the country to see it, if they choose, in right form. Speakers are at the mercy of the *first* reporter, and at the mercy of circumstances.

“I am not without hopes of seeing you at Dumfries this month—or early next. ’Twas a glorious gathering. Yours affectionately,
“JOHN WILSON.”

My father was always glad to escape from Edinburgh during the summer, but latterly he required other inducement than the “rod” to take him from home; a solitary “cast” was losing its charm, and he now liked to find companions to saunter with him by loch and stream. This summer his old friend, Dr. Blair, had been visiting him, and was easily prevailed on to take a ramble to the Dochart before returning south. The following letter to his daughter Jane (Umbs or “Crumbs”), tells of his own sport and of the *Wizard’s* walks:—

“LUIB, *Sunday, June 1, 1845.*

“DEAR CRUMBS:—We arrived at Luib (pronounced Libe) on the Dochart, foot of Benmore, on Tuesday afternoon at three o’clock, *via* Loch Lomond and Glenfalloch. We soon found ourselves enconced in a snug parlor looking into a pretty garden, and in every way comfortable. Our bedroom is double-bedded—small; but such beds I have not slept in for one hundred years. Since our arrival till this hour there has not been above twenty drops of rain, and the river (the Dochart) has not been known so low by the oldest inhabitant, who is the landlord—aged eighty-five—deaf and lame—but hearty and *peart*. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, after breakfast, I walked *three* miles up the river, which flows past the inn, and fished down, killing each day with midges about three dozen good trout, like herrings, of course, and about ten dozen of fry—a few of about a pound; none larger. The natives are astonished at my skill, as in such weather fish were never caught before. The Wizard* disappears in the morning, and returns to dinner about six. On Thursday he left Luib about nine, and returned at half-past seven, having been over a range of mountains

* Dr. Alexander Blair.

and back again, certainly two thousand feet high. But on Friday he was much fatigued and kept to the valley, and even yesterday he had not recovered from his fatigue. With respect to myself, I am always knocked up at night, and fresh in the morning. I made right down the middle of the river among huge rocks and stones, avoiding all the pools twenty feet deep, of which there are hundreds, many places utterly dried up, others not a foot deep. In flood or rains it must be a most tremendous river. On Monday I think of going to Loch Narget (Maragan?), about eight miles over the hills, but only if windy and cloudy.

“On the whole, this is the pleasantest inn I ever was at, and the station in all respects delightful. The Wizard takes a *gill of whiskey* daily. I have given up all hopes of rain, and intend staying here a few days longer. We shall be at Cladich on Thursday.”

“PORT SONACHAN, *June 9.*

“MY DEAR UMBS:—We left Luib on Thursday, the 5th instant, and reached Cladich at half-past seven. No Williams, nor room for ourselves, so we proceeded three miles to Port Sonachan, where we have been ever since. Friday was a day of storm, and no fishing. Having allowed my boat to drift a few miles to leeward, it took two boatmen three hours to bring me back to port, during which time it rained incessantly, and was bitter cold. I suffered much, and was in fits on Saturday. The fishing was bad, and I only killed nine; but one was a noble fellow, upwards of two pounds. On Monday kept the house all day. To-day fished eight miles down the lake to Castle Ardchonnell, a very fine old ruin on an island, which I had never seen before; landed and dined in the castle with Archy and Sandy, time from three to four o'clock; wound up and returned before the wind, homeward-bound; beheld the Wizard on a point of the loch, and took him in; reached Port Sonachan before seven, and dined sumptuously. Angling had been admirable; sixty-one trout crammed into the basket, which could not have held another. Of these, thirty were from one-half to three-quarters and one pound each; the rest not small; they covered two large tea-trays. It reminded me of the angling thirty and thirty-five years ago. The natives, especially Archy, were astonished.

“I understood the Wizard wrote to Blair yesterday; he enjoys himself much, and walks about from morning to night.”

We shall now follow him through a small portion of the year 1845, when he appears to have resumed his work with steady purpose, as may be seen by looking at the Magazine for seven consecutive months. North's Specimens of the "British Critics" make a noble contribution to that periodical. Those papers, along with too many of equal power and greater interest, have found jealous protection within the *ceinture* of its pages, and seem destined to a fate which ought only to belong to the meagre works of mediocrity. The eighth number of "British Critics" was written at Elleray, whither he had gone for a few weeks, tempted by a beautiful summer, and the natural longing of his heart to roam about a place full of so many images, pleasant and sad, of the past. The following note to Mr. Gordon refers to this article :

"ELLERAY, *Wednesday.*

"MY DEAR GORDON :—I am confidently looking for best accounts of dear Mary every day.

"Pray, attend! I have sent a long article to Blackwood—'No. VIII. on Critics,'—about MacFlecnoc, but chiefly the 'Dunciad.' It will be very long—far longer than I had anticipated, or he may wish. It cannot be sent here for correction, and I wish much you would *edit it*.

"Blackwood will give it to you when set up—and I hope corrected in some measure by the printer—along with the MS.; and perhaps *on Tuesday* you may be able to go over it all, and prevent abuses beyond patience. I will trust to you. I also give you power to *leave some out*, if absolutely necessary. Don't let it be *less than thirty-two pages*—if the MS. requires more. In short, I wish the article in this number, and all in if possible. If not, I leave omission to your discretion; but read it all over carefully first, that you may not leave out something referring to something remaining in. 'We ship on the 24th.' Yours ever, in haste for post,

"J. W."

In the same year (1847), when the Philosophical Institution was established in Edinburgh, he was elected its first President, and delivered the opening address. To this honorable office he was re-elected by the members every year as long as he lived.

We have now come to a longer blank, relieved by no letter, by no work. From the autumn of 1845 till that of 1848 there is noth-

ing but silence. Alas! this was but the beginning of the end. Ten years ago, while yet strong in body, though suffering and sad of heart, the melancholy of his mind gave a similar tone to his words, and he wrote of himself as if his days were being consumed swifter than a weaver's shuttle:—"Day after day we feel more and more sadly that we are of the dust, and that we are obeying its doom. This life is felt to be slowly—too swiftly wheeling away with us down a dim acclivity—man knoweth not into what abyss. And as the shows of this world keep receding to our backward gaze, on which gathers now the gloom, and now the glimmer, of this world, hardly would they seem to be, did not memories arise that are realities, and some so holy in their sadness that they grow into hopes, and give assurance of the skies."

With thoughts such as these ever springing from the pure region of his soul, did he go on meeting the common day with hope brightened into cheerfulness, until existence was beautified once more by the conviction that duties were still before him—though one was gone whose approving smile had given impetus to all he did.

The first break to this silence comes in a short letter, written to his old friend Mr. Findlay, inviting him to be present at the marriage of his son John, which took place in July, 1848. This relation was one conducive to his happiness—a fresh tie to keep him hale and strong of heart—making the summer visits to Billholm all the more agreeable by a welcome from its new occupant, whose gentle companionship often cheered his rambles by the river side, or made pleasant a rest beneath the shade of its trees:—

Friday, June 9, 1848.

"MY DEAR ROBERT:—My son John is to be married on the 22d of this month, at the house of his father-in-law, Mr. G. Bell, 43 Melville Street. We are sorry not to have beds to offer our friends, and a journey to and from Edinburgh may not be convenient to you at this time; but if you, your good lady, and one of your dear daughters, can assist at the ceremony (twelve o'clock) I need not say how welcome will be your presence, and that we shall hope to see you after it at Glo'ster Place.

"Ever affectionately yours,

J. WILSON."

It may be seen from a letter to his son Blair, that he had lost no time in paying a visit to the newly-married pair; for he writes from

their home on the 28th September, 1848, having taken a peep of the pastoral hills on his way from Elleray, where he had been in the earlier part of the season. His letter speaks of domestic matters only; but it is easy to see a change in his spirit, and that he clings more and more to the circle of young lives around him. Loneliness, as time crept on, was a feeling that easily affected him, so much so, that sometimes on his return from the College, if he found no one in the house, he would turn from the door, and retrace his steps through the streets, until he met with his daughter, or some of his little grandchildren; then all was right, and a walk with them restored him to his wonted spirits. How sadly comes the confession from his lips of the dreariness which fell upon him at Elleray, a place at one time enjoyable as paradise, but where now he could not rest, as these touching words tell: "I have resolved not to return to Elleray, as I should not be able to be there if you had left it. I slept at Bowness the fifth night after my return to Elleray from Hollow Oak; the silence and loneliness of myself at night not being to be borne, though during the day I was tranquil enough." He makes allusion to his hand, "it is very poorly," and so indeed it was, for he had been unable to use it, saving with difficulty, for nearly three years. This weakness annoyed him very much, not more than was natural, if it appeared to him to be the commencement of a greater evil—that fatal breaking up, which saps the strength, and brings age before its time.

His accustomed work goes on, but by fits and starts, according to his bodily vigor. This autumn only one paper was written for *Blackwood*, upon Byron's "Address to the Ocean," one of those beautiful critiques which go so deeply into the true principles of poetry. Its severity may startle at first, but can hardly fail to be acknowledged as just.

His whole heart and soul were in poetry, and he threw out from the intensity of that feeling a hundred little side-lights, that sparkled and danced on and about the commonest things in nature, till, like a long-continued sunbeam, they lengthened and deepened into a broad light, the happiest, the most joyous in the world, radiant with fun, careering, playing the strangest pranks, showing at last, in shape unmistakable, that enviable property which cannot by any skill in the world be planted in a nature that has it not from its cradle. I do not agree with those who hold that humor is the best

part of human nature, and that the whole meaning of a man's character may be traced to his humor. But it is an element coming and going, with other qualities, with all that composes the inner spirit; often, it is true, in abeyance, but never crushed; always asserting its rights, not unfrequently with an incongruity which, in its unexpected intrusion, does not rob it of charm, but rather adds to its power.

Wilson's humor has been described as being sometimes too broad; perhaps, in the "Noctes," he occasionally makes use of an *impasto* laid on a little too roughly. But who ever enjoyed his conversation at home or abroad, among the woods and wilds of nature, or on the busy streets of Edinburgh, that was not as often overpowered by his humor as by his wit, by his wisdom as by his eloquence? His manner in mixing the talk with the walk was peculiar. He took several steps alongside of you, conducting you on to the essential point, then, when he had reached that, he stopped, "right-about faced," stood in front of you, looking full at you, and delivered the conclusion, then released you from the stop you were forced to make, walked on a few paces, and turned in the same manner again.

Latterly, a walk to the College was rather too much for him, and he generally took a cab from George Street. This in time became his habit, and gave rise occasionally to the most riotous behavior among the cab-drivers, who used to be on the look-out for his approach, all desirous of driving him. The moment that well-known figure was seen, an uproar began. His appearance and dress were too peculiar not to be recognized a good way off, for no one wore a hat with so broad a brim, covered with such a deep crape, his long hair flowing carelessly about his neck, and his black coat buttoned across his chest, now somewhat portly. Still, despite increasing infirmity, his step was free, and he looked leonine in strength and bearing. So did he when he sat for his photograph to Mr. D. O. Hill, an engraving from which is prefixed to this work. In this product of that wonderful art, then in its infancy, comes out the character of the man; the block, as it were, from nature, not softened down or refined away by that delicacy which so often makes portrait-painting insensate, but great in its original strength; with a something, perhaps more of the man, and a little less of the poet in his look, than painting would have given, yet

unmistakable to the very character of the hands, broad and beautiful in form. The hair, not so fine, is rather lost in the hazy shadows of the photograph, but all else is good and true. Why, some one may ask, are those "*weepers*"* on his sleeves?† This was a mark of respect he paid to the memory of his wife, and which he continued to wear as long as he lived, renewing these simple outward memorials with tender regularity. The solicitude he showed about his weepers was very touching. Many a time I have sewed them on while he stood by till the work was finished, never satisfied unless he saw it done himself.

A street scene was described to me by a lady who saw it take place:—

One summer afternoon, as she was about to sit down to dinner, her servant requested her to look out of the window, to see a man cruelly beating his horse. The sight not being a very gratifying one, she declined, and proceeded to take her seat at table. It was quite evident that the servant had discovered something more than the ill-usage of the horse to divert his attention, for he kept his eyes fixed on the window; again suggesting to his mistress that she ought to look out. Her interest was at length excited, and she rose to see what was going on. In front of her house (Moray Place) stood a cart of coals, which the poor victim of the carter was unable to drag along. He had been beating the beast most unmercifully, when at that moment Professor Wilson, walking past, had seen the outrage and immediately interfered. The lady said, that from the expression of his face, and vehemence of his manner, the man was evidently "getting it," though she was unable to hear what was said. The carter, exasperated at this interference, took up his whip in a threatening way, as if with intent to strike the Professor. In an instant that well-nerved hand twisted it from the coarse fist of the man, as if it had been a straw, and walking quietly up to the cart he unfastened its *trams*, and hurled the whole weight of coals into the street. The rapidity with which this was done left the driver of the cart speechless. Meanwhile, poor Rosinante, freed from his burden, crept slowly away, and the Professor, still clutching the whip in one hand, and leading the horse in the other, pro-

* "*Weepers*" are "*stripes of muslin or cambric stitched on the extremities of the sleeves of a black coat or gown, as a badge of mourning.*"—*Jamieson*.

† They do not appear in the engraving, as the page is too small to contain the whole photograph.

ceeded through Moray Place to deposit the wretched animal in better keeping than that of its driver. This little episode is delightfully characteristic of his impulsive nature, and the benevolence of his heart. No weak appeal, through the gossiping columns of newspapers, to humane societies for the suppression of cruelty to animals; but action on the spot, with instantaneous aid to the oppressed. Such summary measures, however, are not always taken. Moral courage is required to face bystanders; and not many would care to be seen with a carter's huge whip, leading a miserable raw-boned old horse through the fashionable streets of Edinburgh. But he despised nothing that was just, even to the meanest of created things; and had a supreme contempt for the observance of conventional formalities, when they interfered with good and honest feelings of the heart.

It may seem somewhat strange, as I advance towards the later years of my father's life, that I can relate nothing of foreign travel; or even of recurring visits to London. Only twice after his marriage did he go to the metropolis, and then, not for any lengthened period, nor with the purpose of keeping himself in the world, or gathering gossip from that great whirlpool of tongues. He never, as far as I can remember, at any time thought of or cared to associate his name with circumstances likely to bring him into contact with that huge centre of the world—the first entrance to which he so beautifully describes in his "Recreations," written in 1828; too long to give here, and yet almost too fine to be omitted. But those who do not know it, will do well to learn how a nature such as his was affected, by what scarcely now awakens more than a certain curiosity, that ere long takes the shape of *blasé* indifference. I doubt very much if any spirit, even beyond the common mould, ever had such emotions awakened within it as those Wilson felt when, "all alone and on foot," he reached that mighty city, where every sight he saw called up some thought of wonder from the treasures of his ardent mind.

Here is a portion of his powerful description; to convey the idea how, without fear yet trembling, he left the world of his dreams, the "emerald caves," the "pearl-leaved forests," and "asphodel meadows," and opened his eyes upon that which was no longer a shadow. "Now were we in the eddies—the vortices—the whirlpools of the great roaring sea of life! and away we were carried,

not afraid, yet somewhat trembling in the awe of our new delight, into the heart of the habitations of all the world's most imperial, most servile, most tyrannous, and most slavish passions! All that was most elevating and most degrading, most startling and most subduing too; most trying by temptation of pleasure, and by repulsion of pain; into the heart of all joy and all grief; all calm and all storm; all dangerous trouble and more dangerous rest; all rapture and all agony—crime, guilt, misery, madness, despair." This fragment is part of one of those prose poems which he has so often composed, and which many of his imaginative essays may be called. What visions foreign shores would have brought to his mind, can from such morsels as this be imagined. But the plans of his youth, sketched out no doubt during a period of mental disquietude, and broken up forever, were not likely to be again suggested to one who had found in domestic life so much happiness. Thus, all thoughts of travel were dissipated from his mind when excitement ceased to be necessary for the preservation of his peace. So time passed away, and no new place rose up to tempt him from home. I believe, however, if his health had continued unbroken, or even been partially restored, he would have crossed the Atlantic.

There is no literary man of our land more highly prized or better appreciated in America than Professor Wilson. In that country his name is respected, and his writings are well known. It is doubtful if in England he has so large a circle of admirers. I have often heard him speak of Americans in terms of admiration. He knew many, and received all who came to see him with much interest and kindness; loving to talk with them on the literary interests of their country; giving his opinion freely on the merits and demerits of its writers, for they were well known to him. Of one of them he always spoke with profound respect, as a man whose spiritual life and great accomplishments, pure philosophical inquiries and critical taste, had given him a lofty position among his countrymen—Dr. Channing, the piety of whose character made his life upon earth one of singular beauty. Of his peculiar religious tenets I never heard my father speak. Nobility of nature, and aspirations directed to high aims in exercising influence for good over his fellow-creatures, were virtues of a kind, taken in combination with intellectual power, sufficient to win favor from him.

The autobiographical nature of my father's writings permits me,

to a certain extent, to make use of such passages as I know are not only the expression of his sentiments, but likewise a reflex of his conduct in life. Then he had a simple habit of seeking pleasure in communion with his own people above all others, finding their society sufficient for the interest and enjoyment of life. Thus it is that I have no record to give of his mixing in circles composed of those above him in station; no *bons mots* from noble wits; no flashes of repartee from dames of high degree; at home and abroad he walked a simple, unaffected, *unfashionable* man. With gracious respect to rank, he held aloof from the society of the great; admiring, from the distance at which he stood, the great and illustrious names that adorned his land; doing homage in the silence of his heart to all that makes aristocracy admirable and worthy of good report, yet preferring to remain true to his own order.

It was this loyalty that gave him power over the hearts of men, and, I believe, this influence it was which, beyond the respect that knowledge wins, enabled him to render such valuable assistance to art in Scotland. Though he was not (beyond opportunities found in youth) cultivated as many are in the deeper parts of art, such as can only be fathomed by long study and unwearied research, he nevertheless possessed an intuitive feeling for it; he loved it, and brought an intimate knowledge of nature in all her humors, to bear upon what was set before him. The poet's eye unravelled the painter's meaning, and if minute detail escaped the expression of his admiration, as not being significant of the moving spirit of the painter's soul, it was because this careful transcription merged its beauty into greater and more touching effect; even as in contemplating nature, our first feeling is not to sit down to trace the delicate pencillings of flowers, or count the leaves of the dark-belted woods, or yet pick out the violet from its mossy bed. In the perfect landscape we know how much lies "hidden from the eye," and so with the perfect tableau. Our first impression is taken from the general effect, and if one of delight, fails to be recognized until our transport has subsided; then from delight to wonder are the senses changed, and the handiwork of nature in art is acknowledged by one acclamation of praise. It was this love of nature, this devotion to the beautiful, the *truth*, as I have before observed, that made my father welcome to that body of men who form so interesting a portion of the community—our painters. Their social gatherings, their public meet-

ings, even the "annual Exhibition," was confessed to be benefited by his presence. That hearty sympathy, the genial smile, and the ready joke, are all remembered as something not soon to be seen again. The artist's studio was a resort well known to him, and many an hour did he spend within its pleasant enclosures.

On one occasion when sitting to Mr. Thomas Duncan for his portrait,* entering his studio, he said, "I am sorry, my dear sir, that my sitting must to-day be a short one; I have an engagement at two o'clock, I have not a moment after that hour to spare." Mr. Duncan, of course, expressed his regret; and at once arranged his easel, placed his subject in the desired position, and began his work. Never had an hour passed away so rapidly. The Professor was in excellent spirits, and the painter, delighted with his sitter, was loath to say that two o'clock had struck. "Has it?" said the Professor, "I must be off;" and forthwith began to re-arrange his toilette, looking at himself in the large pier-glass, stepping backwards and forwards, making remarks upon his appearance, tying his neckcloth, brushing back his hair, then turning to Mr. Duncan with some jocular observation on the subject of dress. Sitting down for a moment led on to something about art; then perhaps a story. Rising up, his waistcoat, still in his hand, was at last put on; a walk for a moment or two about the room; another story, ending in laughter; beginning again some discourse upon graver matters, till he fell into a train of thought that by degrees warmed him into one of those indescribable rushes of eloquence, that poured out the whole force of his mind; turning the studio into a lecture-room, and the artist to one of the most delighted of his students.

"Bless me, my dear sir," he said, rising suddenly; "give me my coat, I fear it is long past two o'clock, I had almost forgotten my engagement."

Mr. Duncan, smiling, handed him his coat, saying, "I fear, sir, your engagement must be at an end for to-day; it is now five o'clock."

Many a story, I believe, of this sort could be told of him.

There is nothing in the world so difficult to call up and retain as a passing gleam of fun or humor. We require the accessories of the moment, the peculiar little touch, the almost invisible light, that, gleaming athwart the mind, kindled it into that exuberance out of

* Christopher in his *Sporting Jacket*. Mr. Thomas Duncan, an accomplished artist, died in 844. His portrait, painted by himself, hangs in the National Gallery, Edinburgh.

which comes the story, the jest, the speaking evidence of the man. Better is it to be silent forever than destroy the meaning of such words. Wilson's conversational powers, his wit, his humor, cannot, save in general terms, be described. I humbly confess my own unfitness for such an undertaking; and I have not been able to meet with any one who by faithful repetition can give me aid in this way. I doubt very much if there is one alive who could. Mr. Lockhart was the only person, who, had he survived to do honor to his friend, might, from the clearness of his perceptive qualities, the pungency of his wit, and the elegance of his language, have done him justice.

Two friends have sent me their reminiscences of social meetings with him about this time. One of them says:—

“During his last five or six years, in common, I believe, with the rest of the world, I saw him in society very rarely. It was said that he came to be fond of solitude, and much to dislike being intruded on. I remember Lord Cockburn giving a picturesque account of an invasion of his privacy. It was something, so far as I can recall the particulars, in this way. There was a party which it was supposed he should have joined, but he did not. They forced their way to his den, and, he being seated in the middle of the room, walked round and round him in solemn, silent, and weird-like procession, he equally silent and regardless of their presence, only showing, by a slight curl of the corner of his mouth, that he was internally enjoying the humor of the thing.

“The last time I met him in society was an occasion not to be easily forgotten. It was one of those stated evening receptions (Tuesdays and Fridays) which brightened the evening of Jeffrey's life. Nothing whatever now exists in Edinburgh that can convey to a younger generation any impression of the charms of that circle. If there happened to be any stranger in Edinburgh much worth seeing, you were sure to meet him there. The occasion I refer to was dealt with exactly as the reception of a distinguished stranger, though he was a stranger living among ourselves. There came a rumor up-stairs that Professor Wilson had arrived, and a buzz and expectation, scarcely less keen among those who had never met him, than among others who wondered what change the years since they had last met him in festivity had wrought. I could see none. He was on abstinence regimen, and eschewed the mulled claret consecrated to those meetings, but he was genial, brilliant, and even

joyal. If he had become a hermit, it was evident that solitude had not visited him."

My other correspondent met the Professor at a dinner-party at Lord Robertson's, the last party of the kind, I think, he ever was induced to be present at. "The party was especially joyous and genial. After the ladies had left the room, the host, in a short mock-heroic speech,* moved that I should 'take the chair of the meeting,' which was duly seconded by the Honorable Lauderdale Maule, of the 79th Highlanders. Upon modestly declining to accept of the honor, I was informed that, if I persisted in my refusal, I should be removed from the room by a policeman for contempt of court! I then at once moved up to the head of the table and seated myself, having on my right hand the gallant and accomplished officer above mentioned, and on my left the grand-looking old Professor, with his eye of fire, and his noble countenance full of geniality and kindness. Lord Robertson, as was his wont several years before his death, sat on the left-hand side, two or three seats from the top. Of that goodly company, those three I have just mentioned have passed away. One incident I remember of that dinner-party. Robertson, with affectionate earnestness, but from which he could

* Of Lord Robertson's mock-heroic speeches, Mr. Lockhart gives a vivid description in his account of the Burns dinner of 1818:—"The last of these presidents (Mr. Patrick Robertson), a young counsellor, of very rising reputation and most pleasant manner, made his approach to the chair amidst such a thunder of acclamation, as seems to be issuing from the cheeks of the Bacchantes, when Silenus gets astride on his ass, in the famous picture of Rubens. Once in the chair, there was no fear of his quitting it while any remained to pay homage due to his authority. He made speeches, one chief merit of which consisted (unlike Epic Poems) in their having neither beginning, middle, nor end. He sang songs in which music was not. He proposed toasts in which meaning was not. But over every thing that he said there was flung such a radiance of sheer mother-wit, that there was no difficulty in seeing the want of *meaning* was no involuntary want. By the perpetual dazzle of his wit, by the cordial flow of his good humor, but, above all, by the cheering influence of his broad, happy face, seen through its halo of punch steam (for even the chair had by this time got enough of the juice of the grape), he contrived to diffuse over us all, for a long time, one genial atmosphere of unmingled mirth." The remarks I have already made, as to the difficulty of adequately recording the expressions of original humor, where the felicity consists in the expression and accessories as much as in the mere words, apply equally to the wit or humor of Robertson. I venture, however, to give one example that occurs to me, out of perhaps hundreds that might be remembered, of his peculiar and invincible power of closing all controversy by the broadest form of *reductio ad absurdum*. At a dinner party, a learned and pedantic Oxonian was becoming very tiresome with his Greek erudition, which he insisted on pouring forth on a variety of topics more or less recondite. At length, at a certain stage of the discussion of some historical point, Robertson turned round, and fixing his large eyes on the Don, said, with a solemnly judicial air, "I rather think, sir, Dionysius of Halicarnassus is against you there." "I beg your pardon," said the Don, quickly, "Dionysius did not flourish for ninety years after that period." "Oh," rejoined Patrick, with an expression of face that must be imagined, "I made a mistake. I meant *Thaddeus of Warsaw*." After that the discussion went no farther in the Greek channel.

not altogether exclude his peculiar humorous style of illustration, proposed the health of his friend, Professor Wilson. The Professor replied with feeling, but, at the same time, gave Robertson a rejoinder in Patrick's own style. 'I have known him,' said the Professor, 'since his early manhood; I remember his beautiful hair—intensely red! Knew him! I produced him; I educated him; and I occasionally snuffed him' (here the Professor stretched out his arm in the direction of Robertson's head, making the motion with his hand as if it held snuffers). 'It is said, I believe, my friend is a wit; this I deny; he never was, is not, and never can be a wit; I admit his humor, humor peculiarly his own—unctuous and unmistakable.' In the course of the evening, the Professor sang his favorite song of the 'Sailor's Life at Sea,' and with what power, with what sailor-like *abandon*, and in the concluding stanzas, when he describes the 'Sailor's death at Sea,' with what simple pathos! it is indescribable, but the effect was visible on every one who heard him. Later on, he volunteered 'Auld Lang Syne,' and often as I have heard the song, and by many good singers, I never heard before, nor ever will again, such a rendering of it. Burns himself would have been glad and proud to have joined in the chorus! I met Wilson one or two days after in Hanover Street. He accosted me. I remarked that never till that night at Robertson's had I ever really met '*The Professor*.' He said it was a pleasant evening, and that 'Peter' was very good. 'But, sir,' said he, 'a very curious circumstance happened to myself; I awoke next morning singing, ay, and a very accurate version too of the words and music of that quaint ballad of yours, "The Goulde[n] Vanitee;" curious thing, sir, wasn't it?' and with a sly look of humor, he turned and walked away.*

* This quaint ballad, the author of which is unknown, is worth giving in a note, but without the magic of the singer's voice it reads but tamely.



THE GOULDEN VANITEE.

There was a gallant ship,
 And a gallant ship was she,
 Eek iddle dee, and the Lowlands low;
 And she was called "The Goulde[n] Vanitee,"
 As she sailed to the Lowlands low.