

## ART. III.—FLORENCE WILSON.

**A**N interesting book might be written on the rise and fall of reputations. How one man's fame has come to him during his life, while centuries have elapsed before the worth of another has obtained recognition; how this one's reputation has been brilliant but brief—"up with the rocket and down with the stick"—while his neighbour has slowly and painfully built up for himself a monument more enduring than brass—these, and a hundred kindred problems, would form material for a book which would be as entertaining as a work of fiction, but as sad, we fear, as human life itself.

And when this book comes to be written, as no doubt it will be sooner or later, the story of Florence Wilson, better known among scholars as Florentius Volusenus, will form, we venture to say, not the least interesting chapter of its contents.

For seldom has Fortune played fast and loose with a man's reputation, as it has done with the author of the once famous Dialogue on the Tranquillity of the Soul. Few men who have added anything of merit to literature have been so completely forgotten. In the eighteenth century, Smollett might, indeed, in one of his comedies, couple him with Marcus Aurelius as a philosopher, with some slight hope of having the allusion understood. In the nineteenth, it may be doubted if any but a few Dryasdust scholars, or some fellow countryman of his own, hailing like himself from the banks of the Lossie, has ever so much as heard his name. Yet the mere list of those with whom he is known to have been in relations either of friendship or of business, point to an eminence which was no more to be obtained three centuries ago without merit than it is in our own day. He was the *protégé* of no less than four Cardinals of different nations—Wolsey of England, Lorraine and du Bellay of France, and Sadoletto of Italy. He was the confidential correspondent of Thomas Cromwell, afterwards Earl of Essex. Boece, Vaus, Gavin Dunbar, and Sir John Bellenden had the highest opinion of him, and took an interest in his fortunes. Stephen

Gardiner, the celebrated Bishop of Winchester, Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, Fox, Bishop of Hereford, and William Pigot, Henry VIII.'s ambassador were amongst the number of his friends. Bartholomew Anneau, Principal of Trinity College, Lyons, went out of his way to eulogize his virtues and his learning to his countryman the Regent Arran. Conrad Gesner, 'the Pliny of Germany,' had the same opinion of his merits. George Buchanan, who knew him intimately, loved him as a brother, and lamented his untimely death in an epitaph as pathetic as it was elegant—

Hic musis, Volusere, jaces carissime, ripam  
 Ad Rhodani,—terra quam procul a patria !  
 Hoc meruit virtus tua, tellus quae foret altrix  
 Virtutum, ut cineres conderet illa tuos.

That with such testimonials to his merits, his memory should have been so soon and so completely forgotten is, at first sight, a very remarkable circumstance.

Yet there are not wanting reasons which may explain, though they certainly cannot altogether excuse, the apparent ingratitude of this neglect. In the first place, we possess nothing but the merest skeleton of his history. He never achieved the elevation of eminence which made the preservation of a detailed record of his career a debt due to posterity by his contemporaries. It was enough if his name was occasionally mentioned in the correspondence of the celebrated men of his time with whom he came in contact. Even of those who befriended him, how few have found their *vates sacer!* Again, the very means he adopted to ensure the vitality of the work on which he based his fame—if such a thought ever crossed his mind at all—has been one of the most effective causes why, in modern times at least, it has been so rapidly forgotten. His *magnum opus* is written in what is now to an infinitely greater extent than was the case in his own day, a dead language; and so far as we have been able to ascertain, it has never been translated from its original Latin. Lastly—and here, perhaps, we have the most potent reason of all—its author was a Scotsman.

It is odd, considering the high average which Scotch mediæval scholarship maintained at the continental universities, and how restless Scottish scholars were in their travels from college to college, how few writers of eminence Scotland has produced till comparatively modern times. Beyond John Duns, now definitely adjudged to Scotland, and John, indifferently surnamed Scotus and Erigena, to whose fame we have, we fear, at the best but a doubtful claim, it is difficult to recall the name of any great scholar hailing from north of the Tweed. It was not all our own fault perhaps. The poverty of our nation practically expatriated its most loyal and dutiful sons. Educated abroad and destined for the Church, they were speedily absorbed in the ecclesiastical crowd which swarmed around the gates of the continental universities. They lost their patronymics, and with them their nationality, in the barbarous terminology of a foreign language. Whatever fame they won in after life was acquired for the country which gave them bread, and in which they had cast their lot. Nor did they lack their reward. All over France,—to give but a single example,—from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, were to be found bishops and abbots and priors, enjoying fat livings, revelling in the good things of this earth, and ashamed of nothing but of the fact that they had originally issued from ‘the land of beggars, of rats, and of lice.’ For, despite the ‘Auncient Allynce,’ on which, when it suited them, our friends across the Channel set so much store, never hesitating to assign its origin ‘to the days of King Achaius, or at least of Robert the Bruce,’ there can be no doubt that Scotland, and everything and everybody Scotch, was systematically decried and assiduously despised by our continental neighbours, even when the bonds of amity were politically at their closest. A French Dauphin had no objection to wear the crown matrimonial of Scotland, nor a French king to trust the defence of his sacred person to a Scotch guard. These were honours conferred on, not by Scotland. They meant nothing more than is implied when a prince of the Blood Royal of our own day accepts the order of the Chrysanthemum from the Mikado of Japan, or the Queen of England that of the Medjidie from

the Commander of the Faithful. The nation had no concern with the personal decorations of their sovereign. They were still at liberty to look down upon the donors of these toys and gew-gaws as utter barbarians, dwelling in outer darkness. And it was precisely thus that France regarded the Scots during the whole period of their political connection with her. Gallic wit was never tired of amusing itself at our expense. Every Scotchman had flat feet and the red hair of Judas Iscariot. He was an incorrigible and ridiculous savage—a *sac à vin*, and a *mangeur de moutons*; very proud and very cowardly; very filthy and very poor. His country was a land which made one shiver even to think of. It was full of ice-covered rocks and impenetrable bogs. It was peopled with sorcerers and witches, and was the chosen home of the Devil. No wonder the wandering propensities of the Scots were so great. They were thankful to escape from their own horrid and inhospitable country. No wonder the Scots were so mean and despicable: for what good thing could come out of a country which produced nothing but thistles, and which could not even support its own few and barbarous inhabitants?

Nor do we feel quite certain that some dregs of this feeling have not descended to modern times. Discounting M. Max O'Rell as a mere frivolous and professional joker, no one—no Scotchman we mean—who reads between the lines of the late lamented M. Michel's *Les Ecossais en France* will, we venture to say, be able to resist the feeling that even when he is most polite to us, the polished and cultured Frenchman is not laughing at us in his sleeve. One feels inclined to sink through the earth when he reflects that he belongs to the sorry and despicable people that magnificent France for centuries deigned to patronize and to countenance. We are constantly reminded of the blessing that France has been to wretched little Scotland. We are bidden admire the hospitality she accorded to the poor truant Scots who came to warm themselves in her sunshine and to fill themselves with her corn and her oil and her wine. And certainly any benefits our ancestors did receive from France, are not lost in the telling of this learned and patriotic Frenchman. We do not blame him for it. There is

undeniable truth in many of the reproaches he so courteously and covertly hurls at our heads. Our national manners in the sixteenth century were not so nice as those of our continental neighbours, and indubitably our poverty was greater. We cite M. Michel merely to infer that if there is anything resembling a prejudice against us as a nation in the nineteenth century, there actually was a prejudice—rightly or wrongly it matters not—against Scotchmen and everything Scotch, on the part of neighbouring peoples in the sixteenth; and to argue therefrom that this prejudice was one of the greatest obstacles to Scotch scholarship deriving its due reward of honour in the world of letters. We have purposely taken the case of a nation which professed to be our friend. Need we say how much stronger that prejudice must have been in the case of a nation which, like England, acknowledged herself to be our ancient and hereditary enemy?

No doubt, in individual cases, as in that of Florence Wilson, there may have been more personal causes at work. We do not hesitate to admit that his reputation at this day might have been greater than it is, if he had not himself been one of the shyest and most retiring of mankind. He had not a scrap of ambition about him. He was content to pass his days as the obscure schoolmaster of an obscure town, in Vaucluse. In accepting this office, we find him writing to his friend Dr. Starkey, that he had been influenced less by pecuniary considerations and personal advantage than by the opportunity it afforded him of devoting himself to the study of philosophy, far removed from the bustle of the world, from ambition and from all cares. And though he started in life with the ball at his foot as the *protégé* first of Cardinal Wolsey and afterwards of Cromwell, though all his life he never seems to have wanted willing and powerful patrons, we know of no occasion when he sought or desired any preferment, until we find him, forced by actual indigence, soliciting the influence of Sadoletto, to obtain for him a mastership in the village school of Carpentras. Assuredly, he was either the simplest or the most philosophical of his kind!

The few facts which we know about his career are comprised in very small compass.

He was born about the year 1504. The exact place of his nativity is unknown, but his earliest biographer tells us that the placid Lossie meandered close by his early home, and it may be assumed to have been in the immediate vicinity of Elgin. Of his parents' position in life we know nothing, but they are stated to have been respectable. Judging from the education he received he doubtless owed much to their care and liberality. But he owed more to the place of his birth.

To-day a green country town, with little beyond its old trees and its crumbling ruins to remind us of its venerable past, Elgin in the early years of the sixteenth century was at the very zenith of its ecclesiastical grandeur and glory. For nearly three hundred years—ever, indeed, since the removal of its See and its Cathedral by Andrew de Moravia about the year 1222, from the shores of Loch Spynie to the banks of the Lossie, it had maintained its supremacy as the first Cathedral City of Scotland. Its Chanoury Kirk—*speculum patriae et decus regni* as the Register of Moray calls it—*omnium quae tum in Scotia erant, pulcherrima*, says George Buchanan, avowedly no friend of the Catholic religion either in dogma or in stone and lime—was the centre of an influence which pervaded not only the wild district in the midst of which it was placed, but the whole of Scotland itself. An apostolic succession of men of talents and learning—great statesmen, great scholars, great ecclesiastics, great courtiers and great pluralists—had enlarged the resources of the See and fostered its advancement to the highest degree of importance and dignity. Whether regarded in its material, political or religious aspects, there was not a Bishopric in Scotland, with the doubtful exception of the Archbishopric of St. Andrews itself, which could compare with that of Moray. It was the blue ribbon of ecclesiasticism in Scotland,—the greatest prize which it was in the collation of the Pope to bestow. How strong was the influence which it could exert, how great were its resources, may be appreciated from a mere consideration of the amount of building which was required to house all the dignitaries attached to the

Cathedral service. The Bishop had his own baronial castle at Spynie, but he had also his town house within the Chanonry walls. Here too, within the Precinct—*Collegium*, as it was technically called—enclosed by walls twelve feet in height, covering a circumference of nine hundred yards—were the twenty-two manses or official residences of the Dean, sub-Dean, and Canons. Kings themselves had not disdained to accept their hospitality. Some of them, such as Unthank Manse and Duffus Manse were in existence in the beginning of the present century, and might have been in existence yet but for the vandalism which, till quite recently, has been so active in improving off the face of the earth every landmark of the picturesque Past, and which was as rampant in the old Cathedral city as in other parts of the kingdom. Two, indeed, still survive—the residences of the Dean and sub-Dean, known by the names of the North and South College respectively. But these have long ago been converted into modern mansion houses, and nothing remains to tell of their pristine dignity but the massive thickness of their walls, and the magnificent old trees, which in the drowsy Morayshire summer, cover them with their green and grateful shade.

Nor was the little adjoining burgh—not for four centuries to come to be dignified with the name of city—which had grown up under the protection of the Bishopric, outside the Precinct walls, insensible to the influence of that ecclesiasticism, which, like the sweet perfume of flowers, exhaled from the portcullised gates of the Chanonry, and swept down the long narrow street which, at that time, constituted the sole territory over which the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities extended. Everything was grave, sober and calm as within the Precinct walls themselves. Sacerdotalism was as powerful in the burgh as in the college. Trade there was little or none, except what was required to supply the material wants of the Bishop and his court. But from morning to evening the church bells were forever summoning the pious burghers to prayers. Long processions of richly-robed priests paraded the causewayed streets. Grey and black-gowned Friars met one at every corner, and

the odour of incense mingled not inharmoniously with the peat smoke from the thatched cottages of the citizens.

Here, again, the predominance of the clerical over the secular element may best be understood by an enumeration of the buildings devoted to the different forms of its service.

In what is now the middle of the High Street, but which at the time we are considering was the extreme limit of the burgh's eastern boundary, stood until 1826, when it was demolished to make room for a sham Greek temple—the parish church—a quaint old Gothic building, raised on arches, and with a heavy lumbering old-world square tower, dedicated to St. Giles, the patron saint of the burgh. Built at a time when there was no intention to erect a Cathedral in Elgin, its dimensions had been calculated on a scale to supply the religious wants of the town for a long time to come, and hence it acquired the name by which it was long and affectionately known, of the Muckle Kirk. With the exception of a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin, and erected in connection with the old Royal Castle of the burgh, on the top of the hog-backed green hill—*collis leviter et modice editus*—called probably from it, the Lady hill, which lies to the north of the High Street, there was no other strictly ecclesiastical edifice in the town. But in its immediate vicinity were other buildings of a more or less religious character, most of them possessing chapels of their own. One of these, the Greyfriars' Monastery, whose ruins we still happily possess, was of peculiar beauty, extent, and importance. It was erected in 1409 by Bishop John Innes, for the monks of that particular branch of the order of Franciscans, known as Observantines, which had been introduced into Scotland by King James I.; and its resources were of great extent. Then, at the foot of the Lady hill, on a fertile haugh intersected by the gently flowing Lossie—the most placid, one is almost inclined to say the most sluggish, of all the rivers of Scotland—embowered amidst gardens and orchards, was a smaller monastery belonging to the Blackfriars, of which no traces remain. Not far from the Cathedral, too, stood the Maison Dieu, an establishment of a semi-religious, semi-charitable nature—at once an Hospital and a Preceptory,

where comfort alike spiritual and temporal, was administered with no niggard hand to the sick, the poor, and the aged. At a still greater distance from the town, but near enough to aid in maintaining its religious supremacy, were the two important priories of Pluscarden and Urquhart—the former, with the single exception of Melrose, which it much resembles, probably the most picturesque ruin of a religious edifice which we have in Scotland. Thus, within a radius of less than seven miles, were to be found no less than thirty-two buildings devoted to religious purposes—a wealth of ecclesiastical authority such as, we venture to say, no other district in the kingdom can lay claim to.

Scenes and surroundings like these could not fail to influence a young mind of Wilson's studious and reflective temperament. Whether or not they awoke in him the ambition so common to his countrymen, 'to wag his head in a poopit,' he does not tell us; but from the first he seems to have been destined for the Church, or at any rate for one of the learned professions.

At that time the monopoly of all learning, both secular and religious, lay in the hands of the Church, and naturally it had the monopoly of all education as well. Burgh schools north or east of Aberdeen there were none. Though it is probable that schools of theology existed in connection with the Cathedral, at least from the middle of the thirteenth century, the only means of secular education available to the youth of middle-class Elgin—for the excellent education afforded by the monasteries was the exclusive prerogative of the nobility and landed gentry—was the Grammar School instituted by the Chapter towards the end of the fifteenth century. In the Register of Moray, under the year 1489, is a Statute and Act of Convocation providing for the erection of a suitable building for a *scola generalis*, and for the appointment of a fitting person—a Churchman of course—to be its governor and master. We have but scanty means of ascertaining what was the nature of the education there provided, but we cannot doubt that it included all the ordinary branches of a liberal education as the phrase was understood in those days. Grammar—that comprehensive *grammatica* which embraced the whole lan-

guage and literature of Rome—for Greek was then a sealed book to western Europe—was of course its principal object, but in all likelihood it corresponded to the secondary schools of the present day. At this school Wilson received his early education, and he himself provides us with a pleasant picture of himself and his friend, John Ogilvie, a lad of his own years—afterwards rector of Cruden, and latterly a Canon of Aberdeen Cathedral,—wandering, Horace in hand, along the banks of the Lossie, and philosophizing after the manner of ingenuous youth in all countries and of all ages, on the difficulties and problems of a life of which neither the one nor the other had the most remote conception.

From the Cathedral Grammar School, Wilson proceeded to the University of Aberdeen, the youngest of the three Universities then existing in Scotland, but already under the fostering care of Hector Boece, its Principal, struggling its way into reputation. Alone of all the Scottish Universities, Aberdeen possessed from and after the tenth year of its foundation, through the wise liberality of its founder, Bishop Elphinstone, a properly equipped and salaried official staff, which rendered it ultimately independent of the more or less amateur teaching which all graduates were bound to give in their several faculties for a limited period, to the University in which they had taken their degrees. This staff consisted of thirty-six persons in all, and as they were also members of the Collegiate Church, their duties were at once scholastic and ecclesiastical. We know a little from the *Fasti* of the University, of a few of the men whom it may be assumed were Wilson's teachers.

The Principal was Hector Boece, whom the Bishop had brought from the College Montaigu of Paris, to preside over and to teach philosophy in the infant seminary of his episcopal See. His fame as a historian has thrown his eminence as a teacher into the background, but the *permulti bene docti in philosophia* whom he mentions in his *Lives of the Bishops* as having been educated at Aberdeen under his own tuition and that of his friend and colleague William Hay, are evidence of the success which attended their joint labours. The celebrated John Vaus, the author of the well known *Rudimenta in artem*

*Grammaticam*, was the *Grammarius* or Professor of Humanity—*‘in hoc genere disciplinae admodum eruditus, sermone elegans, sententiis venustus, labore invictus’*—as Hector Boece describes him. Arthur Boece, the Principal's brother was Canonist, and either James Ogilvie or John Lindsay, Civilist.

Of the particulars of Wilson's university career no particulars are recorded either in his own books, or in the few and scanty casual notices of him by his contemporaries. In all probability he took his degree here, but this is mere matter of conjecture. The next we hear of him is in Paris, where we find him leading the ordinary life of a wandering and struggling student.

What Oxford and Cambridge are at the present day, and what even then they were fast becoming, the continental universities, especially those of France and Italy, were in the sixteenth century—the crown of a liberal education. And the Middle Ages had their fashionable branches of knowledge no less than our own times. The type of scholarship which, amongst ourselves, has its be-all and end-all in the classics, in Wilson's day concerned itself with philosophy, and it is hard to say which of these two branches of learning is the most useless in practical life. Amongst the continental schools, those of Paris had, after Padua, perhaps, the highest reputation for this description of knowledge. There was one school, in particular, which had special attractions for students from the far North. This was the Scots College, founded in 1325 by David de Moravia, Bishop of Moray. Attached to this institution were certain bursaries—*bursae de Gresioc*, the *Registrum Moraviense* calls them—to which natives of the old Province had a preferable claim, and it has been conjectured that Wilson may have been the fortunate recipient of one of them. However this may be, it is more than probable that he studied here, and that he here made the acquaintance of George Buchanan, who was also one of its students. It is certain, too, that at this period of his history, he maintained himself, either in whole or in part, by private tuition, and it may be assumed that his scholarship was above the average, for amongst his pupils was the young nephew of Cardinal Wolsey. This lucky appointment he owed to the great Cardinal himself, and

that is really all we know about it. His anonymous Latin biographer tells us that he discharged its duties to the entire satisfaction of his patron; and 'many benefits,' we are told, 'were heaped upon him by the Cardinal.' And doubtless it would in due time have led him to place and power, but for the Cardinal's death in 1530, and the changed fortunes of the family that ensued.

But Wilson's star was still in the ascendant. He had not yet exhausted the proverbial three chances that every man is said to have of making his fortune. He soon found another patron.

Through his relations with Wolsey, he had made the acquaintance of Thomas Cromwell, already a Privy Councillor and Keeper of the Crown Jewels, and from a letter preserved in the Cottonian Library, we find that after the Cardinal's death he obtained employment from him in the capacity of what we should now designate as a special correspondent. His duties appear to have been to pick up information for Cromwell of all that was going on in France. In the letter in question, which is written from Paris, and dated 25th April, either of the year 1531 or 1532, we have an admirable account of the excitement caused in Paris by Father Gérard's \* Latin sermon preached before the Queen of Navarre, who was more than shrewdly suspected of being tainted with the heretical doctrines of the fast approaching Reformation. †

'Richt honourable Sir,' it says, 'after humble commendatione at my service [I] besich your Maistership to vnderstand the nouvelles thair is [bot] few heir vorthy to be writtin; notwithstanding suche [as] thair is, I shall schortlie rehers. The doctors of the towne, not all, but Beda, ‡ de Cornibus, § a Cor-

\* Pierre Gérard was Principal of the College of Mignon.

† The letter in question is printed in the Bannatyne Miscellany, i. 325, with prefatory remarks by the late David Laing, LL.D. It has been partially destroyed by fire, and many *lacunae* occur. The words within brackets have been supplied by its editor.

‡ Noel Bede (Natalis Beda), Principal of the College of Montaigu from 1502, and Syndic of the University of Paris, was a determined enemy of all religious innovation. But his zeal outran his discretion. An attack

delier and suche, has complened to the King vpon one preacher called Maister Petre Gerarde, wiche preached afor the Quein of Nauarre this Lent in Paris; and as Monsieur de Lange\* told me, thai haf noted bot thre articles, or four, the wiche thai juge other erroneus or ellis not to be preached in this tyme, saying that he largith suche generall ground whairvpon he intendith to beild a hous of heresi. Theis be the articles:—

‘*Omnia sunt munda mundis*, and thairfor this *delectus ciborum* should be superstitiose.

‘*Sicut ancilla contrectans panem domine sue immundis manibus offendit dominam, sic nos Deum quicquid operemur sine fide et conscientia munda.*

‘*Sicut non licet uxori mutare, augere vel imminuere, vel commentatione aliqua aut glossa in hunc vel illum sensum trahere testamentum mariti, sic nec licere ecclesie sacras literas sic pro arbitrio suo fingere ac refingere.*

‘The fourt article I harde not.

‘The Kyng has send for Gerard and for certaine doctors, and hes commanded Gerard when that he preachis afor his sister to have ever two honest men, and of judgement, sworne to recite faithfully it that he says, when thai shall be required; the wiche we think bot a small punishment. Thre or iiij was that preached against him be name, and that sediciosly, the wiche is commandit to fre ward amongs thair friendis; and amongs them is thair one Cordeleir, wiche told openly in the pulpits one example of a greate clerk wiche should have come other tymes out of Bohemia to England, and thair, vith great eloquence preached eroneous opinions. The princis and nobles of the realme persuaded be his eloquence, suffereth him; the comons for fear of great men, whobeit thai grongith, yet thai durst not do him no harm. . . . The [people] setting

upon the King's sister, Margaret, Queen of Navarre, was followed by his exile from the University in 1533. He was ridiculed by Rabelais.

§ Pierre d. Corne (de Cornibus), a man of learning but of singular character, who fell under the lash of Rabelais' satire. He is supposed by the late Sir William Hamilton, Bart., to be alluded to in Buchanan's *Franciscans*.

\* Probably Cardinal du Bellai.

apart all feir, ordinance, and [respect] of princis, went of their awne zeil and [haif] stoned this doctor to death; and so [that fell] wiche was persaued to be said of God, [ye kill] certaine fleis that eite and poysont the [body]; and so should ye doo, said the [Cordelier] vith this heretic Gerard, wich is now [poysoning] princis and ladyis.

'After this [on that] same day, as he was going on the streit [to the] sermon, he persaved certaine seruandis of [the Quein] of Nauarre, and schew to them that [wich happened], saying thois be this heretics and . . . falois hurt v or vj of thame be his exhortatione. . . . Other matters I defer [to my] cuming, wiche, be the grace of Gode, shall be [in xv] or xvi days. In the meane tyme, I commend humblie Nicholas Fedderstone, my procture of Spelhur, . . . besiching you to help and succurs him in his [neid]. George Hampton's seruand wich arrived [in this towne] yestereven, *hoc est xxiiij die Aprilis*, spakke [to me of bookis] to your maisterschip, and being willing [to buy] the same and not having great plenty as [I was wont] of money, I went to Maister Hampton [who spakke] to me and said, with a meruelus leborall [air, I shuld] not laike no money for ony thing that concernith your maisterschip, declairing your great humanite [which was] daylie schaw to him; and so suche new things [as are] heir I shall bring vith me in all haist. [I pray] Gode have your maisterschip in His keeping.'

This letter is remarkable, not only from its being the only one of Wilson's in the vernacular which has descended to us, but also in its reference to a patron, or possible patron, on whose power of advancing his interests he set, as we shall see, greater store than on any other, Wolsey alone excepted. This was Jean du Lange, or Langey, better known as Cardinal du Bellay, a scion of an old and distinguished family of Maine, at that time Bishop either of Bayonne or Paris, as the date of this letter is taken to be 1531 or 1532. He was the second of a trio of brothers who were all celebrities in their day, and who all achieved a certain degree of literary distinction. William, the eldest, Seigneur du Lange, had been Viceroy of Piedmont, and is eulogized by Brantôme as one of

the most excellent captains of the day. He was fond of history, and had written an *Epitome of the Antiquity of the Gauls and of France*, in which he deduced the origin of the Gauls from Samothés, the eldest son of Japhet, and of the French from the Trojans who had escaped the Fall of Troy. But his chief claim to distinction is his *Memoirs of the affairs of his time*, to which he gave the fantastic title of *Ogdoades*, from its division into eight books. Martin, the youngest, was a soldier also, and he, too, had tried his hand at *Mémoires Historiques*, chiefly of the battles and sieges in which he had himself taken part. But the Bishop far surpassed his brothers both in talents and eminence. He was one of those rich, showy and magnificent prelates in which the genius of the French mind delights. More statesman than ecclesiastic, more soldier than statesman, more courtier than both the two combined, he flits across the path of French and English history like a brilliant meteor, yet leaves, as meteors do, no trace or track behind him. The Bishop of Bayonne was, like his brother, a protector of letters, and, as is well known, Rabelais himself was among the captives of his purse and his flesh pots. It may have been Wilson's literary ability that attracted the prelate's attention; it is more than probable it was the relation in which he stood to Cromwell and other distinguished English politicians and churchmen. For the Bishop, at the time when this letter was written, was—and had been since 1527—ambassador for France at the Court of Henry VIII., where, in point of fact, he was at the moment engaged in negotiations of a particularly delicate and important nature.

The King's infatuation for Anne Boleyn had not yet culminated in his secret marriage and the subsequent divorce of his Queen; but matters were rapidly tending in that direction. And alongside, and in close connection with this, ran the menaced separation of England from the Papal See. Through these stormy political waters the Bishop had to steer his bark, and he managed to do it with consummate dexterity. As a Churchman, his aim was to retain England within the Papal fold; as a diplomatist and man of the world, his object was to make himself as agreeable to the King and his mistress as

possible. In a letter penned by Le Grand, he describes the high favour he is in both with Henry and with Anne. The King, he said, spent several hours with him every day, and told him all his secrets. As for the lady, he accompanied her in all her hunting parties. He had received from her the present of a greyhound, a horn, and a hunter's jacket and cap—strange gifts they would be thought nowadays for a Bishop!—and the King always selected for them a proper station, from which, with their crossbows, they might shoot the deer as they ran by.

It was policy, rather than conviction, that led the acute diplomatist to keep on the best of terms with Cromwell and others of the Reforming and, for the time being, the ascendant party; and without detracting from his goodheartedness, it may have been policy also, that led him to include one of Cromwell's *protégés* among his own. In all likelihood, too, Wilson's relations, first with Cromwell and subsequently with du Bellay, may have engendered in his mind that liberality of sentiment towards the Reformers which, while it detracted nothing from his own attachment to the Catholic Church, is so striking, and to our modern ideas, so pleasing a feature in his writings. Referring in his Dialogue on Tranquillity of Mind to Bernard Ochino, Peter Martyr, and Paul Lacisa—'excellent men who have betaken themselves from Italy to Germany—men who oppose the dignity and dogmas of the Roman Pontiff with no less success than zeal'—he eulogizes their eloquence and their sanctity, and has not a stone to hurl at their heresies. Nay, he takes occasion to hold them up as examples to the clergy of the established religion. 'If priests,' he says, 'would but be prudent and lay aside luxury and expense, they might teach the gospel with purity and make Christ's doctrine dearer to the people. If they would but do so, defections of this kind would not exist; nor would men of great talents join themselves so readily to those who are denounced enemies of piety by the edicts of Popes and Kings.'

This is the only passage, so far as we remember, in which he directly expresses himself with regard to either the men or the doctrines of the Reformation. But, of a surety, it was a

subject that much exercised his thoughts, and often and often he seems to have asked himself how he—*Scotus et qualiscumque Christianus*—should comport himself if, as he hoped and intended, he was permitted to end his days in his native land, where Protestantism was already beginning to make great strides.

But to return from this digression. It was not till the end of 1533 that du Bellay was called to put his patronage of Wilson into practical shape. But the time that had yet to transpire was not wasted. It was the busiest—perhaps the happiest—period of Wilson's life. It was his *wanderjahre*, before he settled down to the great work of his life. It was then, probably, that he visited Italy. It was then that he must have visited Spain, if, indeed, he ever did so, which Irving, in his *Lives of Scottish Writers*,\* very properly doubts. Then, too, he undoubtedly made several trips to England, where, as we have seen, he had many and influential friends. It is even possible that in one of these, he may have revisited his old home on the banks of the Lossie. On the flyleaf of an old volume of the *Apothegmata* of Erasmus, preserved in the Aberdeenshire family of Forbes of Tulquhon, there is a letter of Wilson's to his old schoolmate, John Ogilvie, the Rector of Cruden, in which he asks him to let him have the loan of a pony, as he purposed going into the country, and had occasion to require one. But we know nothing for certain beyond the fact that if he was ever in Scotland after he first left it, this must have been the time when his visit took place.

In May, 1533, Henry VIII.'s marriage with Queen Catherine was annulled; and in July Cranmer's decision was set aside by the Pope on the ground that the question of the validity of the marriage was pending before the Pontifical courts. And in the autumn the King appealed from the decerniture of the Pope to a General Council. A few months later the French King, whom already Henry shrewdly suspected was playing a double game, despatched the Bishop of Paris, with Henry's sanction, on an embassy to Rome, to treat for a renewal of the

negotiations for a reconciliation between England and the Papal See, which naturally Henry's appeal had for the moment broken off.

To this embassy, Wilson was attached; but in what capacity we are ignorant. The late Dr. Taylor of Elgin, in a meritorious and industrious *brochure* on Volusenus,\* to which we are under great obligations, has hazarded the suggestion that it may have been as its secretary. But there is not the slightest foundation for this assertion. There is no reason for believing, indeed, that like Rabelais he was merely one of the Bishop's lackeys. But nowhere can we find any grounds for assuming that he occupied any higher position than that of an ordinary member of the Bishop's suite.

But as things turned out, the mission was equally unfortunate for Wilson and his patron. The former fell grievously sick, and had to be left behind at Avignon. The latter found on his arrival at Rome that the sentence of the Consistory declaring in favour of the marriage, had already been pronounced, and in despair precipitately retired to Bologna.

Wilson's fortunes were now at their lowest ebb. His illness was a protracted one. When at last he recovered, he found himself absolutely without a penny. He had not a friend to whom he could turn for assistance. Worse than that, he was without a patron—an indispensable requisite for worldly advancement in these old mediaeval days. For, in electing to follow the fortunes of the Bishop of Paris, he had broken with another powerful friend, who at one time had seemed disposed to take him under his protection. This was the Cardinal de Lorraine, the Bishop's great rival. From him he was in receipt of a small pension, an earnest, doubtless, of greater favours to come. But it had now ceased, and though in later years Sadoletto wrote appealingly to the Cardinal requesting its renewal, we have no evidence that this was ever done, and the chances are very much against it. And now du Bellay had gone his way, without bestowing a thought upon his

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\* *A Memoir of Florentius Volusenus*, read to the Elgin Literary and Scientific Association, February 5, 1861. Elgin, 1861.

*protégé*; and Wilson, who had hitherto never wanted protection, was forced for the first time in his life to face the cruel world by himself.

*Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat  
Res angusta domi.*

At this juncture, with starvation staring him in the face, he learned that the neighbouring little town of Carpentras in Vaucluse was in want of a teacher for its public school. He determined to make an effort to secure the appointment. It was not such a one, perhaps, as his talents and his antecedents might have led him to expect. But it was a competence. It was respectable. It would afford him leisure to devote himself to his favourite study of philosophy. And he was, at the moment, very sick of the world, its pomps, its ambitions, and its vanities. Better than all, it was in the diocese of Sadoletto, for whom, as a brilliant scholar, an accomplished writer, and a most saintly man, he had long entertained the highest respect and admiration. He had no personal knowledge of the Bishop, and the Bishop had probably as little of him. But wandering scholars were no novelties in these days, and lettered adventurers had—when they had once proved their qualifications—as much chance to obtain vacant preferments, as those whose antecedents were better known. So one forenoon he set out to visit the Bishop, and after a weary walk of fourteen miles, presented himself in the dusk of the evening at the gate of the episcopal palace of Carpentras. The rest is best told in a letter from Sadoletto to his cousin Paul,\* who succeeded him in the See.

‘I do not think there is any longer need to seek through your means for a schoolmaster and instructor of the youth of this place. For I will give you a little history, wherein you shall at once acknowledge how far more fortune may oftentimes effect than human counsel.

‘Four days ago I had by chance gone into my library, when already night, and was turning over some books very diligently, when my chamberlain announced there was some one who wished to speak to me. I enquire, “Who is he?” “A person in a gown,” was the answer. I order

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\* Sadoleti Epistolæ, ad Paul Sadol. Epist. 3.

him to be admitted. He comes in. I ask what he may want, that he would come to me at such an hour (for I was anxious to get quit of the man speedily, and return to my studies). Then he, having entered on his introductory matter in very humble terms, conversed with such propriety, correctness, and modesty, as to hasten in me a desire to question him particularly, and to become more intimately acquainted with him. So having shut my book and turned round to him, I began my queries ; of what country he might be, what was his profession, and for what purpose he came into this neighbourhood. Upon which he replies, "I am a Scot." "What!" say I, "do you come from that uttermost part of the earth?" "Even so," said he. "Where, then, have you studied the liberal sciences?" (which question I put to him because his discourse savoured of genius and an elegant Latinity). 'I applied myself to philosophical pursuits," said he, "first in my own country during many years ; afterwards I studied at Paris, and had there, under my tuition, a brother's son of the Cardinal of York. Subsequently, when his uncle's death occasioned the lad to be taken from me, I betook myself to Monseigneur du Bellay, Bishop of Paris, and was about to accompany him to Rome, had not a severe illness separated me from him, while on our journey." "What, then, do you look for here?" was my question. "In the first place," said he, "a longing to come and see you, which I mainly desired, urged me hither ; then, as it had been told me at Avignon, you were in need of some one to teach in your city school, I thought of offering myself to you, in case I should be fit for the undertaking ; not being, indeed, so desirous of the office as anxious to make myself agreeable to you ; and having, at the same time, understood that whatever function I might enter on near your person, by your discretion, or at your request, would redound to my praise." What think you now? So much did he please me, that very early next morning I would send for Glocerius, the magistrate, and for Helia. I explained to them my expectations of the man, and related everything in regard to him that had so highly gratified me ; for, assuredly, we had little chance of finding in any native of Italy this man's modesty, prudence, and propriety of address and appearance.

'Not being, however, content with this, as well Florence himself (for that is his name), as our physician, of whom I have already written to you ; Helia also, together with the magistrates, were my guests. Forthwith, after dinner, some discussions are brought on by my encouragement, and while treating of subjects in natural philosophy, our medical friend maintains his argument with tartness, distorting his features, and labouring in deep aspiration. The other is modest and calm, uttering nothing which is not to the purpose, nothing but what is distinctly and accurately expressed—every word, indeed, with skill and understanding. Aye, and when I myself, opposed to the physician in argument, had concluded one of an intricate and difficult nature, in the expounding of which the doctor had struggled hard, our stranger, craving pardon, suggested how, in the

most fit and scientific manner, a solution might be afforded. What further seek you to know? All burn with desire to keep this character among us. The magistrates take him aside. The terms of his engagement are fixed at a hundred gold pieces, and with such satisfaction upon the citizens' part, as I hear, that they all consider the event to be an occurrence of rare felicity for the town. Report, moreover, is circulated of discussions which he has had with the magistrates that are so liberal and ingenuous that nothing can surpass them. Wherefore, I do hope that for the office and its business, we are in the best manner provided. The man has, moreover, what to me is a main subject of pleasure, enough even of Greek literature for the instruction of our boys. In respect then, to this, you may cast away all anxiety.'

And in this quaint town, happy in the friendship of one of the most distinguished, certainly one of the best men, of the sixteenth century, happy, also, let us hope, in his work, he spent the remainder of his life.

We have glimpses of him through collateral sources, during his residence at Carpentras. Conrad Gesner met him here in 1540, whither he had gone to purchase books. He describes him as being at that time in the prime of life, and expresses great hope of the benefits to be derived by the studious from his erudition. How long his residence here extended, we do not know. Neither do we know the exact date of his death. But it was probably in 1547, when he was about forty or forty-two years of age. He was certainly alive in 1546, for we have a letter from Sadoletto, written in that year from Rome, in answer to one of Wilson's which is lost, but in which he had apparently entreated the Cardinal's advice respecting the line of conduct which he should adopt towards the religious discussions which were then agitating his native land, and to which he had, he explains, the intention of immediately returning. The Cardinal's letter is full of expressions of kindness and sympathy towards Wilson, and his advice is wise and sound. He exhorts Wilson to continue in the religion of his fathers, and to make the utmost of the talents God has given him. He censures the conduct of the agitators, who were striving to sow dissensions in the Church, but he has not a word to say against the doctrines they were advocating. And he concludes his letter by reiterating his sentiments of regard and esteem for his correspondent.

Soon after this, Wilson seems to have resigned his appointment, and to have begun his journey to Scotland. But it was not fated he should see his native land again. He took ill by the way, and died, after a somewhat lingering malady, at Vienne, the ancient capital of the province of Dauphiny.

Wilson's works include *Commentatio quaedam theologica quae precatio est in aphorismos dissecta*, published at Lyons in 1539; a posthumous volume of Latin poems published at London in 1619; a synopsis of the Fourth Book of Aristotle's Philosophy, which has never apparently been published; and his celebrated *Dialogus de Animi Tranquillitate*, published originally by Sebastian Gryphius at Lyons in 1543, and of which four editions are extant.\*

It is on this work that his fame, once so deservedly great is based; and if that fame is not what we think it should be, it is because this book of his, which embodies the learning, experience, and meditations of a lifetime, has been most unjustly neglected. From a literary point of view, we have no hesitation in placing it on a level with the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, and the *Consolations of Philosophy* by Boethius; while, in our opinion, it transcends both of these in the tender and loving sympathy it evinces for weak and erring nature. We may go to the emperor and the statesman for strength and consolation in the great troubles, the supreme crises of life. We can never make either of them the friend, that we can of the obscure Scottish philosopher. He never makes us feel, as both the others do, that in consulting him we are brought in contact with a being superior to all the ordinary failings of humanity. We may admire his learning, if we please, but he makes us admire his commonsense more. We may stand aghast at the extent and variety of his know-

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\* These are (1) the original edition above mentioned; (2) an edition, dedicated to Robert Ker, Earl of Ancrum, edited by David Echlin, physician to the Queen Consort of King Charles I., published at the Hague in 1637; (3) an edition, revised by Ruddiman, published by Fairbairn at Edinburgh in 1707; and (4) an edition, published under the supervision of Principal Wishart, by Hamilton, Balfour, and Neill, at Edinburgh in 1751.

ledge of the various schemes of philosophy and philosophers, but we can always meet him on equal ground when he appeals to our common Christianity. In the absolute sanity of his judgments, the acuteness of his arguments, and the liberality of his opinion, lie the main characteristics of his work. To these everything else—his theories, his prejudices, his originality even—is made subservient. In them are to be found his principal claim to the attention of nineteenth-century readers.

Unfortunately the space at our disposal renders it impossible to do more than to give the most superficial idea of this admirable work. Its form is that of a Dialogue between himself and his two friends, Francis Michaelis, a patrician of Lucca, and Demetrius Caravalla. The scene is laid in a garden situated on the heights overlooking the city of Lyons—probably in the suburb called Fourvières, which commands an extensive view of the city below and its environs. Here in a shady alley, the three friends have met to while away the warmest hours of the day in sober and improving discourse. They appeal to Volusenus to suggest a subject. He selects that of peace of mind, and at their request, proceeds, with occasional interruptions from his auditors, to explain its nature, its advantage, and the means of obtaining it.

Tranquillity of mind, he argues, is the entire seclusion of the intellect from all disturbing passions. It is not so much a gift as an art—at any rate, any one may acquire it who sets himself steadily to do so, and is fortunate enough to discover the right way. To explain himself more clearly, he discusses the seat and nature of the passions or emotions, distinguishing them from the animal appetites, as well as from the instincts of the brute creation. From that he proceeds to consider the power or faculty of subduing or controlling them. He passes in review the various teachings of philosophers upon the subject, and points out how they ultimately fail in producing that state of mind which they all profess, or at least aim at, being able to secure. Finally, he shows that in the teachings of Christianity alone true peace of mind is to be found; and he concludes with the relation of a wonderful dream or vision which

appeared to him, and from which he learned his own philosophy.

Such is the argument of his book. But the performance is infinitely better than the argument.

So much admiration has been lavished on his latinity, that we shall probably be reckoned hypercritical if we profess our inability to share it. Yet to our mind, Wilson's Latin style is mediocre. At any rate, it falls far short of classical standards. Easy, elegant, and graceful it undoubtedly is, but its ease and its elegance are those of the Middle Ages, not of the Golden Age of Roman literature. It is homely, kindly, and natural, but it wants the majestic rhythm, the stately cadence of Cicero and Tacitus. Not unfrequently we come across Low Latin words and modern forms of expression, which assuredly Quintilian would not have approved. Yet with all these faults, it is impossible to resist its charm. In matter we frankly confess that Wilson's occasional lapses from the strict canons of Roman literary propriety constitute not the least of the attractions of his book. For they are in almost every case, accompanied with a corresponding lapse of that rigid, though dignified deportment which he seems to think essential to the importance of his subject, and his carriage as a philosopher. When he drops his toga, we see the man; and in our opinion, the man is infinitely more attractive than the philosopher. Take the following passage, for example:—

He is speaking, very humanly for a philosopher, of the warmth of feeling evoked in one by the sight of a beautiful face or figure. 'Then,' he asks, 'what happens?' '*Mox hoc animal formivorum (utinam hanc vocem Romanus sermo admittat; non invenio quomodo quod sentio exprimam)—mox hic pulchritudinis helluo homo ad speciem visam exardescit, ad fructum properat atque in se transferre studet.*' Pretty ardent language this, it must be admitted, for a philosopher! But he quickly repents of his ardour. In the very next sentence he is talking of the *summum bonum*, and quoting Lucretius to prove that Love is after all but the vain imaginings of a noxious dream.

Again, he has an effective, if sometimes homely way of lightening up a long passage of sustained argument, and

bringing conviction home to his readers by means of a proverb, a metaphor, or even an epigram. And some of these last rhetorical shafts are as keen and polished as any of our own acute and cultured age. Here are one or two samples. They are culled almost at random :—

Nature is no stepmother to her children.

A man may be honest without ceasing to be religious.

Our eyes are our leaders in love.

If we always thought in syllogisms, we might gain many victories over our passions.

The Future, which is not our own and never may be, we give to virtue ; the Present which is ours, we devote to folly.

Wherein does dead Narcissus, or Adonis, or Ganymede, or Helen, or even Venus herself, differ from those fleshless bones which hang on the gallows of the robbers ?

An advocate who is diffident of his cause, appeals to the passions of his hearers.

Wisdom is the true gold of the soul.

From Love all passions proceed, like rills from a fountain.

We sin, not because we desire to sin, but for the pleasure that is in the sin.

Empty eggs float ; full ones fall to the bottom.

His life, as the proverb says, has had more of aloes in it than of honey.

Far wiser is he who is wise before the blow, than he whom the blow makes wise.

Every one who laughs is not happy.

He buys at a great price what he purchases by prayers ; he buys very basely what he purchases by flattery.

There is not a single spot of earth, which is not impressed by the footsteps of the wicked.

Within our hearts rage all manners of beasts—the Wolf of avarice, the Lion of money, the Sow of lust, the Fox of fraud, the Peacock of vanity, the Dog of selfishness, the Hare of cowardice.

Rare in man is the harmony between brow and soul, between tongue and heart.

Far from being uncommon, such passages abound on every

page. Persons who compile 'Gems of Thought,' 'Laconics,' 'Wise Words of Wise Men,' or the like Ready Reckoners of human intellect, might do worse than lay the humble school-master of Carpentras under contribution.

Equally notable is his holy horror of philosophasters and impostors of every description, whether clad in the flowing robes of Greek or Roman philosopher, or in the habiliments of modern life. Sophists, rhetoricians, scientists, pedants, may look for a short shrift at his hands. It is his zeal and respect for what he regards as true philosophy that makes him lift up his indignant voice against all the play-acting crew. Philosophers, he admits, may err, but philosophy itself—true philosophy, not the sham—is much to be commended. It is *maxime utilis*; it is the wit of life. Nor has he any difficulty in defining its proper sphere. True philosophy, he says, is that which is the handmaid and follower of religion—that which assist humbly in her works, and stands awaiting her precepts. And philosophers, he tells us in another place, are those who show their wisdom, not by their words but in their actions. He is not a philosopher who has read Aristotle and Plato, any more than a man is a lute player, who has learned to play the lute. Finally, to give his argument a practical inclination—and Wilson, like the good Scotsman that he was, is nothing if he is not practical—he provides a simple and infallible test for those who desire to know how far they are deserving of the philosopher's honourable name. 'If your desire for glory cools,' he says, 'if your indulgence in pleasure is diminished, if your lust of gold is allayed—these are symptoms by which you may judge that if you have not yet attained philosophy, you are, at any rate, in a fair way to attain it.'

Scattered throughout the Dialogue are several original poems, all bearing more or less directly on the subject on hand. They constitute to our mind the principal flaw in an otherwise almost perfect piece of literary workmanship. They are full of the false taste, stilted sentiment and crude personification common to ordinary Middle Age poetry. All the rivers and hills of 'the world as known to the ancients,' all the nations of antiquity, all the virtues and vices—every one with

a capital initial to its name—are introduced into them. As for the verses themselves, they are neither better nor worse than one might expect from a Fifth Form boy of an English public school.

We are not sure whether we ought not, in strictness, to include among the defects of the work the celebrated dream, which, in its time, has probably led more readers to peruse Wilson's treatise, than either its reasoning, its piety, or its philosophy. But we willingly pardon the suspicion of false taste which modern critics would be prone to bring against its conception, for the many undoubted beauties of its execution.

As a piece of descriptive writing, we know nothing more admirable than Wilson's picture of the Ladyhill and its environs. It is true in outline, and entirely sympathetic in tone. He has caught the *amabilis mollitudo* of Elgin scenery and climate to perfection. His sketch is drawn by a loving hand, and touched in with a wealth of tender colouring, which shows how in a foreign land and amidst alien scenes, his thoughts ever turned towards the land of his nativity.

The dream itself is the argument of his work put into concrete form. From the philosophy of the ancients he ascends to the philosophy of Christianity, and by merely placing the two in juxtaposition, shows the immeasurable superiority of the one to the other.

It was years ago, he tells us, when his dream occurred. It was in those happy days of his youth, when he and his friend John Ogilvie were still pacing the banks of Lossie, and occupying their summer afternoons in high and solemn discourse. The night after one of their conversations, he dreamed that he was walking in a beautiful meadow full of all manner of flowers. He concluded that it could not be far from Elgin, 'for that corner of extreme Britain is very pleasant both in aspect and fruitfulness. Well-wooded hills surround it. It is near a great loch—the Loch of Spynie—frequented by swans.\*

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\* Since the draining of the greater portion of the Loch of Spynie in 1860, the large flocks of swans that used to frequent it in the winter time have almost entirely disappeared. See 'A Legend of Vanished Waters,' by Miss C. E. Gordon-Cumming, *Scottish Review*, July 1884.

And hard by is a magnificent cathedral—*templum magnifice extructum.* The meadow lay at the foot of a little hill, whose summit was surmounted by a glorious temple, which seemed to have been built of the purest Parian marble. Round the base of the hill, and right through the midst of the meadow, ran a limpid, fordable river, full of all sorts of fish. And between the river and the hill, and on the other side of the river, as well as on the slope of the hill itself, were trees of every kind—myrtles, laurels, cypresses, and terebinths—whatever these may have been—as well as commoner ones; fruit trees also—apples and nuts, and many others whose very names he did not know. The birds sang in the trees. The wind murmured pleasantly among the leaves. Crystal rills descended from the hills. Everything was fair and smiling in earth and sky. And to add to his enjoyment, he reflected that no hidden snakes lurked amongst the grass or the bushes.

It is impossible for any one acquainted with the locality to mistake this picture. Then as now the gently swelling hills, which enclose the sandstone city on the north, are covered with the dark foliage of the Quarrywood and the Oakwood. Then as now the silent Lossie winds underneath the Ladyhill, through the once green meadow known as the Burrowbriggs, and the speckled trout swim in its indolent waters. The Blackfriars monastery with its manor, its crofts, its gardens and its orchards, have, it is true, disappeared. But on a portion of the monastery lands the modern castellated mansion of Blackfriars' Haugh has been erected, and with its lawn, its park, its gardens, its shade, and its fruit trees, still preserves, to some extent, at least, the sentiment of the place. And on the Ladyhill itself—where during the long summer afternoons and evenings all the children of the town spend their time in rolling from the top to the bottom—the mark of the scars—*sykes*, as they are locally called—Wilson's *scaturgines fontium*—are still, it is said, faintly visible.

But there is no temple on its summit, and there never was. That *aedes eximia* has never been but the 'passing fabric of a vision.' It never existed but in Wilson's poetic imagination. Dreams, in the majority of cases, are composed of mingled

fact and fiction,—the relative proportion of these two elements varying according as the memory or the imagination of the dreamer preponderates. And Wilson, having, in the exquisite piece of word-painting above quoted, exhausted his fact, now gives in his description of the *Aedes Tranquillatis*, the requisite modicum of fiction.

The temple which was of great extent, and built with consummate art, was encircled with a wall both high and spacious. At its gate sat an old man of reverent aspect, such as he conceived Democritus, or one of his school, would have looked. Wilson approached him, and asked him what this fair structure was, when the old man, speaking in Latin though with a Greek accent, pointed to the inscription above the door, which, in Greek characters, announced it to be the Temple of Tranquillity. Wilson demanded if he might enter. The old man at first demurred, but finally taking him by the hand, led him within the enclosure. Stopping at an admirably constructed porch, supported by eight pillars, he directed Wilson's attention to the fact that each bore an inscription upon it a little below the epistyle. And proceeding to examine these, Wilson found that each embodied a leading doctrine or precept of one or other of the different philosophic schools. We need not follow Wilson in his dissertation upon them, further than to remark that in them is to be found the whole moral teaching of the ancients. Our duty to Providence and to Man, as it appeared in the doctrine of the best and wisest men of antiquity, is clearly and succinctly set forth; and the result is the elaboration of a system of practical morality, especially beautiful in itself, no doubt, and, to a certain extent, of intense value to humanity, but which our author feels, and makes us feel with him, is wanting in a certain vital and vivifying influence. That influence Christianity alone can give; and kneeling down, Wilson prays for light from heaven to show him the way that leads to peace and rest. His prayer is answered. Looking up, he sees before him another hill, higher than the one on which he is at the moment standing. And on this hill, reached by a strait and narrow path, there stands another temple, infinitely more beautiful, infinitely more

glorious than the last.\* And as he approached its gates there met him a man in whose countenance there shone a certain celestial majesty. St. Paul—for it is he—bids Wilson be of good cheer, and pointing to the inscription upon the front of the temple, bids Wilson read it,—‘Blessed are they,’ it says, ‘that dwell in Thy house.’ His guide then tells him that this is the haven of rest, for which he has been in search so long, and draws his attention to the two columns which adorn its entrance. On the one is inscribed the request ‘Know thyself’; on the other ‘Know thy God.’ Finally, pointing to the arch which these two columns support, he shows him sculptured there the image of Christ crowned with thorns, his side, hands and feet pierced with wounds; his body streaming with blood. Above His head appeared the words ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear Him’; and beneath His feet the inscription, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’

Then, for the first time, Wilson understood wherein true tranquillity of mind lay; and—he woke from his dream.

Such is the outline of a book, which, in our opinion, is worth a whole library of modern systematic Theology, and the want of an English translation of which is not, we venture to think, very creditable, either to our country or its literature.

CHARLES RAMPINI.

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\* It seems hardly credible that any one should seriously believe that in his account of either the heathen or the Christian temple, Wilson should have intended to describe, or even had in his mind, the Cathedral of Elgin. Yet this ridiculous opinion is maintained by Mackenzie, in his *Lives of Scottish Writers* (vol. iii. 29), by Mr. Lettice in the *European Magazine* for 1775 (vol. xxvii., p. 87), and by many other inferior writers; and from them it has naturally found its way into many of the guide-books of the district. The idea is too absurd to require serious refutation.

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