

## CHAPTER XVII.

## CLOSING YEARS.

1849-'54.

IN the year 1849, the first of a series of beautiful papers from my father's pen appeared in *Blackwood*, entitled "Dies Boreales." They are ten in number, and to me are more attractive than any of his other writings, as they are not only the result of the last efforts of his matured strength, put forth ere the night came, but contain the very essence of his experience. Some, no doubt, will be ready to compare them with the "Noctes," and complain that they contain

She had not sailed a league,  
A league but only three,  
Eek, etc.,  
When she came up with a French Gallee  
As she sailed, etc.

Out spoke the little cabin-boy,  
Out spoke he,  
Eek, etc. ;  
"What will you give me if I sink that French Gallee,"  
As ye sail, etc.

Out spoke the captain,  
Out spoke he,  
Eek, etc. ;  
"We'll gi'e ye an estate in the North Countree,"  
As we sail, etc.

"Then row me up *ticht*  
In a black bull's skin,  
Eek, etc.,  
And throw me o'er deck-buird, sink I or swim,"  
As ye sail, etc.

So they've row'd him up *ticht*  
In a black bull's skin :  
Eek, etc.,  
And have thrown him o'er deck-buird, sink he or soom,  
As they sail, etc.

About and about,  
And about went he,  
Eek, etc.,  
Until he came up with the French Gallee  
As they sailed, etc.

Oh ! some were playing cards,  
And some were playing dice :  
Eek, etc.,

less variety of character and stirring incident. To compensate for that want, however, they have certain deeper qualities. The discussions they contain on some of the highest questions of morals, and the criticisms on some of the masterpieces of ancient and modern poetry, appear to me to be of the very highest value. In the first of these papers some noble thoughts will be found upon the rituals of the Church, from which I should like to extract his definition of what composes the Scottish service :—

“The Scottish service comprehends prayer, praise, doctrine; all three necessary verbal arts amongst Christians met, but each in utmost simplicity. The praise, which unites the voices of the congregation, must be written. The prayer, which is the turning towards God of the soul of the shepherd upon behalf of the flock,

When he took out an Instrument, bored thirty holes at twice!  
As they sailed, etc.

Then some they ran with cloaks,  
And some they ran with caps,  
Eek, etc.,  
To try if they could stap the sant-water draps,  
As they sailed, etc.

About and about,  
And about went he,  
Eek, etc.,  
Until he cam back to the Goulden Vanitee,  
As they sailed, etc.

“ Now throw me o'er a rope,  
And pu' me up on buird;  
Eek, etc.,  
And prove unto me as guid as your word :”  
As ye sail, etc.

“ We'll no' throw you o'er a rope,  
Nor pu' you up on buird,  
Eek, etc.,  
Nor prove unto you as guid as our word,”  
As we sail, etc.

Out spoke the little cabin-boy,  
Out spoke he,  
Eek, etc.,  
“ Then hang me I'll sink ye as I sunk the French Gallee,”  
As you sail, etc.

But they've thrown him o'er a rope,  
And have pu'd him up on buird,  
Eek, etc.,  
And have proved unto him far better than their word :  
As they sailed, etc.

I am indebted for the words and the music to my friend Mr. P. S. Fraser.

and upon his own, must be unwritten, unpremeditated, else it is not prayer. Can the heart ever want fitting words? The teaching must be to the utmost forethought, at some time or at another, as to the matter. The teacher must have secured his intelligence of the matter ere he opens his mouth. But the form, which is of expedience only, he must very loosely have considered. That is the theory. It presumes that capable men, full of zeal, and sincerity, and love—fervent servants and careful shepherds—have been chosen under higher guidance. It supposes the holy fire of the new-born Reformation—of the newly regenerated Church, to continue undamped, inextinguishable.

“The fact answers to the theory more or less. The original thought—simplicity of worship—is to the utmost expressed when the chased Covenanters are met on the greensward between the hillside and the brawling brook, under the colored or uncolored sky. Understand that, when their descendants meet within walls beneath roofs, they *would* worship after the manner of their hunted ancestors.”

My inclination would lead me to say something more of the “Dies,” but I must leave them, trusting that fresh readers of my father’s works will seek them out, and read him in the same spirit as he himself did those great minds that preceded him.

One more domestic change took place to make him for a time feel somewhat lonely. His youngest daughter, Jane Emily, left him for a home of her own. On the 11th of April, 1849, she was married to Mr. William Edmondstone Aytoun, Professor of Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh. But his second son, Blair, was yet left to cheer him in his now circumscribed household; discharging with devotion duties of affection, until broken health obliged him unwillingly to leave Edinburgh, and seek change of scene. The remaining portion of this year, like many others, was spent at his own fire-side; the coming and going of his family forming the only variety of the day, not unfrequently concluded by some amusement for his grandchildren. A favorite walk with them was to the Zoological Gardens. Wonderful diversions were met with there, and much entertaining talk there was about the wild beasts; not always, however, confined to the amusement of the little children who walked with him; for he generally managed to find auditors who, if not directly addressed, were willing to linger near and listen.

There is something expressive in the words, "Little Ways." Every one has seen, in intimate intercourse with his fellow-creatures, habits and peculiarities that are in themselves trifling enough, but so belonging to the person that they can be looked upon only as his "ways," and are never for an instant disputed, rather encouraged. My father had a number of these "ways," all of so playful a kind, so much proceeding from the affection of his nature, that I can scarcely think of him without them, coming, as they do, out of the heart of his domesticities, when moving about his house, preparing for the forenoon lecture, or sitting simply at home after the labor of the day. I would not as a matter of taste introduce an ordinary toilette to the attention of the reader, but with the Professor this business was so *like himself*, so original, that some account of it will rather amuse than offend. By fits and starts the process of shaving was carried on; walking out of his dressing-room into the study; lathering his chin one moment with soap, then standing the next to take a look at some fragment of a lecture, which would absorb his attention, until the fact of being without coat, and having his face half-covered with soap, was entirely forgotten, the reverie only disturbed by a ring at the bell, when he would withdraw to proceed with the "toilette's tedious task," which, before completion, would be interrupted by various caprices, such as walking out of one room into another; then his waistcoat was put on; after that, perhaps, he had a hunt among old letters and papers for the lecture, now lost, which a minute before he held in his hand. Off again to his dressing-room, bringing his coat along with him, and, diving into its pockets, he would find the lost lecture, in the form of the tattered fragment of a letter, which, to keep together, he was obliged to ask his daughter to sew for him with needle and thread, an operation requiring considerable skill, the age of the paper having reduced the once shining Bath post to a species of crumbling wool, not willing to be transfixed or held in order by such an arrangement as that of needlework. At last, he would get under weigh; but the tying of his shoes and the winding-up of his watch were the finishing touches to this disjointed toilette. These little operations he never, as far as I remember, did for himself; they were offices I often had the pleasure of performing. The watch was a great joke. In the first place, he seldom wore his own, which never by any chance was right, or treated according to the natural properties of

a watch.\* Many wonderful escapes this ornament (if so it may be called) had from fire, water, and sudden death. All that was required of it at his hands was that it should go, and point at some given hour. His own account of its treatment is so exactly the sort of system pursued, that this little imaginative bit of writing will describe its course correctly :—"We wound up our chronometer irregularly, by fits and starts, thrice a day, perhaps, or once a week, till it fell into an intermittent fever, grew delirious, and gave up the ghost." His snuff-box, too, was a source of agony to him; it was always lost, at least the one he wished to use. He had a curious sort of way of mislaying things; even that broad-brimmed hat of his sometimes went amissing; his gloves, his pocket-handkerchief, every thing, just the moment he wished to be off to his class, seemed to become invisible. No doubt all these minor evils of life were vividly before him when he makes his imaginary editor give occasional vent to his feelings in the "Noctes."†

These are some of the "ways." Gas, as I have said, he could not endure, having once blown it out, and nearly suffocated a whole family. It was the first duty of the servant to place the tin candlestick and snuffers on his table in the morning. That and his inkstand were two articles of *vertu* not to be removed from his sight. The inkstand, a little earthenware image of Arion on his dolphin, I preserve with care and pride.‡

\* A sufferer sends me the following anecdote :—"While delivering one of the Inaugural Addresses to the Philosophical Institution, of which he was president, in the full career of that impassioned eloquence for which he was so distinguished, he somewhat suddenly made a pause in his address. Looking round on the platform of faces beside him, he put the emphatic question, 'Can any of you gentlemen lend me a watch?' Being very near him I handed him mine, but a moment had hardly passed ere I repented doing so. Grasping the chronometer in his hand, the Professor at once recommenced his oration, and, in 'suiting the action to the word,' I expected it would soon be smashed to pieces; but I was agreeably disappointed, as, after swaying it to and fro for some time, he at last laid it gently down on the cushion before him."

† "Who the devil has stolen my gloves?" cries the same celebrated literary character, as, stamping, he blows his nails, and bangs the front door after him, sulkily shaking his naked mawlies on the steps with Sir John Frost.

"Hang it! had we three hundred and sixty-five snuff-boxes, not one of them would be suffered to lie still on this table; but the whole gang shall be dismissed, men and women alike, they are all thieves. You have not seen my slippers, you say, sirrah?—Well, then, we shall use our interest to get you admitted into the Blind Asylum.

"Hold your confounded tongue, sir, and instantly fetch us our hat. What else have you got to do in this life, you lazy hound, but attend to our hat? And have you no fears, you infidel?"

‡ It was bought by my mother, in a small shop in Stockbridge, in 1820. That shop was then kept by a young man, who has since risen to great eminence in the world, having gained by his acquisitions, and extensive antiquarian knowledge, a name of European fame. In his private life he is beloved and respected by all who know him, and among my own friends there is no one I esteem more highly than Mr. Robert Chambers.

He was in his latter years passionately fond of children: his grandchildren were his playmates. A favorite pastime with them was fishing in imaginary rivers and lochs, in boats and out of them; the scenery rising around the anglers with magical rapidity, for one glorious reality was there to create the whole, fishing-rods, reels and basket, line and flies—the entire gear. What shouts and screams of delight as “the fun grew fast and furious,” and fish were caught by dozens, Goliath getting his phantom trout unhooked by his grandfather, who would caution him not to let his line be entangled in the trees; and so they would go on. The confidence which children place in their elders is one of the most convincing proofs of the love bestowed on them. At that period of life no idea of age crosses the mind. The child of six imagines himself surrounded by companions of his own age in all he sees. The grandfather is an abstract of love, good humor, and kindness; his venerable aspect and dignified bearing are lost sight of in the overflowing benevolence of his heart. Noah’s ark, trumpets, drums, pencils, puzzles, dolls, and all the delightful games of infant life are supposed to possess equal interest in his eyes. I have often seen this unwearied playmate sitting in the very heart of all these paraphernalia, taking his part according to orders given, and actually going at the request of some of these urchins up-stairs to the nursery to fetch down a forgotten toy, or on all-fours on the ground helping them to look for some lost fragment. With all this familiarity there was a certain feeling of awe, and care was taken not to offend. Sometimes the little group, becoming too noisy, would be suddenly dispersed: Christopher, being in no humor to don his “sporting-jacket,” closed for a brief season the study-door, intimating that serious work had begun.

A nervous or fidgety mother would have been somewhat startled at his mode of treating babies; but I was so accustomed to all his doings that I never for a moment interfered with them. His granddaughter went through many perils. He had great pleasure in amusing himself with her long before she could either walk or speak. One day I met him coming down-stairs with what appeared to be a bundle in his hands, but it was my baby which he clutched by the back of the clothes, her feet kicking through her long robe, and her little arms striking about evidently in enjoyment of the reckless position in which she was held. He said this way of car-

rying a child was a discovery he had made, that it was quite safe, and very good for it. It was all very well so long as he remembered what he was about; but more than once this large good-natured baby was left all alone to its own devices. Sometimes he would lay her down on the rug in his room and forget she was there; when, coming into the drawing-room without his plaything, and being interrogated as to where she was, he would remember he had left her lying on the floor; and bringing her back with a joke, still maintaining he was the best nurse in the world, "but I will take her up-stairs to Sally," and so, according to his new discovery, she was carried back unscathed to the nursery. He did not always treat the young lady with this disrespect, for she was very often in his arms when he was preparing his thoughts for the lecture-hour. A pretty tableau it was to see them in that littered room, among books and papers—the only bright things in it—and the SPARROW, too, looking on while he hopped about the table, not quite certain whether he should not affect a little envy at the sight of the new inmate, whose chubby hands were clutching and tearing away at the long hair, which of right belonged to the audacious bird. So he thought, as he chirped in concert with the baby's screams of delight, and dared at last to alight upon the shoulder of the unconscious Professor, absorbed in the volume he held in his hand.

Such were the little scenes that recall "the grandfather" to me; and I hope I have not wearied my readers by this detail about babies and children, but that I may have added, by common facts, a tenderer association to his name, claiming from those who only knew his intellect respect for the loving sympathies that made home so sweet.

I have now come to the year 1850, when my father was living alone in his house in Gloucester Place, leaving it occasionally to visit his son John at Billholm, as two letters bearing the date of that year show. They are both addressed to his second son, Blair, and are written in his usual kind and home-loving spirit. One of them announces the death of his faithful old servant, Billy Balmer:—

"LIXMOUNT, 14th August, 1850.

"MY DEAR BLAIR:—Poor Billy died here yesterday night about nine o'clock, so quietly, that we scarcely knew when he was gone.

On Friday, he is to be interred in the adjacent cemetery. His wife had come from Bowness.

"I think of going to Billholm on *Saturday* for ten days. Perhaps you will write to me there on *getting this*, and tell me how you are going on. Your letter to Jane was most acceptable to all of us.

"I will write to you from Billholm on receiving a letter from you. All well. Jane Aytoun and Golly left for Billholm yesterday. Kind regards to all friends at Kirkebost, and believe me ever, your most affectionate father,  
J. W."

Of Billy a few more words may be said. The last time my father visited Westmoreland was in the year 1848. Whether his old boatman fancied, from being no longer young, that he would soon be separated from his master forever I cannot say, but soon after he took a longing to visit Scotland. The railway from Kendal to Edinburgh had been open some short time, but Billy was a stern Conservative, and could not suffer the idea of modern reform in any shape; he considered railways generally not only destructive to the country at large, but to individual life in particular—a species of infernal machine for the purpose of promoting sudden death.\* With these feelings, perfectly orthodox in the breast of such a primitive son of creation, it is natural to suppose that he would shun the locomotive. So one fine day he bade farewell to "pretty Bowness," and trudged manfully on foot all the way into Eskdale Muir, arriving, weary and worn out, after a couple of days' walking, at the hospitable door of Billholm. There he was received, and he tarried for some months; but kind though the young master was, he longed for the old. After a time he left the "house that shines well where it stands," and made his way to Edinburgh. True devotion like that met with the reward due to it, and Billy was re-established in his master's service, dressed after the fashion of his early days, in sailor guise, with pleasant work to do, and a glass of ale daily to cheer his old soul.

I never knew of any love to mortal so true as that of Billy for my father. It was like that of David for Jonathan, "passing the

\* Billy's horror at railways appears to have been shared by others who ought to have known better. Witness Wordsworth's lines on the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway, commencing—

"Is there no nook of English ground secure from rash assault?"



love of women." Cheerful reminiscences he had of past labor by the lake-side; then came kindness and care to soothe the weakness and troubles of advancing age; and, last of all, the touch of a tender hand by the dying bed. Poor old man; he had come to pay me a visit at Lixmount, where I was then residing, when he took his last illness; he lay some weeks, fading gradually away. Before his last hour came, I sent to let my father know I thought it was at hand; my message brought him immediately. He walked the distance—about two miles from Gloucester Place; and walking at that time was beginning to fatigue him, so he arrived heated and tired, but went at once, without taking rest, to his old comrade's room, where he found him conscious, though too weak to speak. Billy's eye lighted up the moment it rested on the beloved face before him, and he made an effort to raise his hand—the weather-beaten hand that had so often pulled an oar on Windermere; it was lying unnerved and white, barely able to return the pressure so tenderly given. The other held in its helpless grasp a black silk handkerchief which he seemed desirous of protecting. As the day wore on life wore away. The scene was simple and sad. Pale and emaciated, the old man rested beneath the white drapery of his bed, noiseless almost as a shadow; while my father sat beside him, still fresh in face and powerful in frame, exhibiting in his changing countenance the emotions of solemn thought and a touched heart. Soon the change came; a stronger breathing for a moment, a few faint sighs, and then that unmistakable stillness nowhere to be heard but in the chamber of death. The old boatman had passed to other shores. The handkerchief he grasped in his hand was one given to him by his master; he had desired his wife to lay it beside him. It was a something tangible when memory was leaving him, that revived in his heart recollections of the past. Billy Balmer was interred in the Warriston Cemetery. My father walked at the head of his coffin, and laid him in his grave.

The next letter is written in September:—

“MY DEAR BLAIR:—Golly and Jane having both written to you from Billholm, I need say little of my visit to it. You know, too, of the sudden appearance of the dear Doctor.\* We left them all well on the Wednesday preceding the Queen's arrival. But we

\* Dr. Blair.

did not go to see her *entrée* on Thursday, and so missed what I hear was a sight worth seeing. On Friday I attended, with about twelve other professors, the stone-laying,\* which was pretty. The Prince spoke well, and to the purpose. On Saturday we dined with Mrs. R. Chambers, and met De Quincey and his daughters and a few others. In the evening dropt in about 150 literary persons of all ages and sexes; and I never saw the Doctor in such force. His tongue never lay, and he would have sat till midnight; but Sabbath broke up the party. Next day Mary came for us in her carriage, but no Doctor was to be found, so we went to Lixmount without him, and at half-past seven he appeared in a brougham, having lost himself in some quarries. On Tuesday, he dined with Mrs. Pitman, and to-day accompanies her to the Horticultural; so I do not expect to see him again till Friday. He is stronger than I ever knew him, and in great spirits; and I am as kind to him as possible. I expect he will stay yet for ten days, when he returns to Abberly to accompany Mrs. Busk to London. I am not without hopes that he will pay us a visit early in spring. He sends his love to you.

“Gordon is the greatest man in Edinburgh—next to him the Provost and Mr. Moxey.† The place seems quiet again as before, but the excitement was great. Dear Jane had a bad attack two days before we left Billholm, but was up the day we left, and I trust quite hardy again. I am much the better of the dear Doctor’s visit, and am in good spirits. You are not forgotten in Skye by any of us; and we all rejoice to think what a stock of health you are laying in for the winter. I am glad the guardsman and lady are pleasant. When the Doctor goes I shall be able to know my own motions. I must go then for a few days to St. Andrews. After that I will write to you. Meanwhile God bless you, ever prays your affectionate father,

J. W.

“Give my very kindest regards to the Doctor and good lady.”

The “dear Doctor,” whose name has so frequently been mentioned in these pages, claims a few more words here. The school-boy of olden days, beloved by all for his gentleness and goodness, singing out, as Miss Sym describes him, “Ohon a ree! ohon a ree!” whom she finds “groping in the press, howking out a book, part

\* The foundation-stone of the new National Gallery on the Mound.

† Superintendent of Police.

of which was read with his peculiar burr." These simple words give us the impression that there was something about him different from other boys. As a man, I never saw any one like him; and truly he continued his love for "howking out books." How much he read, and to what purpose, may be clearly seen from the correspondence between himself and his friend, to whom, in exterior and manner, he formed a strange contrast. The gentleness of his movements was remarkable. There was almost a timidity of character expressed in his bearing at first sight; but the wonderful intelligence of his countenance, the fine formation of his head, dispelled that impression, and the real meaning was read in perceiving that modesty, not fear, conquered his spirit, taking from him that confidence which the consciousness of power almost always gives. It was similarity of studies and sentiments that made them so much one; for of athletic sports in any shape, Dr. Blair knew nothing practically, nor cared. The course and habit of his life were like the smooth, deep water; serene, undisturbed to outward eye, and the very repose that was about him had a charm for the restless, active energy of his friend, who turned to this gentle and meek nature for mental rest. I have often seen them sitting together in the quiet retirement of the study, perfectly absorbed in each other's presence, like schoolboys in the abandonment of their love for each other, occupying one seat between them, my father, with his arm lovingly embracing "the dear Doctor's" shoulders, playfully pulling the somewhat silvered locks to draw his attention to something in the tome spread out on their knees, from which they were both reading. Such discussions as they had together hour upon hour! Shakspeare, Milton—always the loftiest themes—never weary in doing honor to the great souls from whom they had learnt so much. Their voices were different too: Dr. Blair's soft and sweet as that of a woman; my father's sonorous, sad, with a nervous tremor: each revealing the peculiar character of the man. Much of the Professor's deep thought and love of philosophy grew out of this friendship. The two men were mutually invaluable to each other. The self-confidence of the stronger man did not tyrannize over the more gentle, whose modesty never sunk into submission, nor quailed in presence of a bolder power. Their knowledge was equal; the difference lay in their natural powers. The one bright, versatile, and resolute, has left his works behind him; while the other, never

satisfied, always doing and undoing, has unfortunately given but little to the world; and it is to be feared the grave will close over this remarkable man, leaving no other trace of his rare mind and delightful nature than that which friendship hallows in its breast. The last visit Dr. Blair paid to his friend, their time was exclusively devoted to the study of Milton, and the result of these hours finds noble record in the "Dies Boreales." The subject is approached with a reverence such as ever marks a spirit willing to bow before a great power. The inner purpose of the poet's soul claims the critic's every thought, and he advances with well-ordered steps from the beautiful portals, opened by invocation to the muse, into the heart of the splendid structure, leading his reader with unrivalled skill into lofty chambers of thought and imagery.

It is now time to speak of those days in which the sand was running quickly down in the glass. A change which the eye of affection is not always the first to mark, could not, however, be concealed from his family. In the winter of 1850, symptoms of breaking up of health obliged the Professor, for the first time, to absent himself from College duties. I have received an account of one particular illness, the exact statement of which did not, at the time it took place, come from his lips. Indeed, as his health decidedly weakened, so did he in proportion try to rise above it. The same interest in his work which kindled his energies in early years, glowed with unabated ardor in old age. I give it as it was sent to me:\*

"One day Professor Wilson was late in appearing; perhaps ten or twelve minutes after the class hour—an unusual thing with him, for he was punctual. We had seen him go into his private room. We got uneasy, and at last it was proposed that I should go in, and see what it was that detained him. To my latest hour I will remember the sight I saw on entering. Having knocked and received no answer, I gently opened the door, and there I found the Professor lying at full length on the floor, with his gown on. Instinctively I rubbed his head and raised it up, kneeling with the noble head resting on my breast. I could not, of course, move. But in a few minutes in came other students, wondering in turn what was keeping *me*, and we together raised the Professor up into his chair. I caught the words 'God bless you!' Gradually he got better, and

\* By the Rev. A. B. Grosart, Kinross.

we forced him to sit still, and never dream of lecturing that day or for a time. He was very reluctant to consent. I remember too that we spoke of calling a cab, but he said 'No,' it would shake him too much. In about half-an-hour he walked home. We announced to the class what had taken place, and very sore our hearts were. I think the Professor remained away three weeks, and on his return expressed glowingly and touchingly his gratitude to 'his dear young friends.'"

This was his last year of public labor. The whole session had been one of toil to him, and the exertions he made to compass his work could not be concealed.

His last Medallist says :\*—

"The end did not come till his work for that session was done. On Friday he distributed prizes, and heard the students read their essays; taking particular interest in those of one gentleman who, with great ability, attacked his whole system, and of another who fancied that he had discovered a *via media* between the two great factions. Then he dismissed us, and the cheers and plaudits of his class rang in his ear for the last time. On Monday I called to get his autograph on one of my books; but the blow had already to some extent fallen, for he was unable even to write his name. Twice after this I saw him, at his own request, and always on the subject of his lectures; for he was bent on what he called a 'reconstruction' of his theory for the ensuing session; while it was but too plain to those around him that he was not likely to see the College again. The old lion sat in his arm-chair, yellow-maned and toothless, pre-lecting with the old volubility and eloquence, and with occasionally the former flash of the bright blue eye, soon drooping into dullness again. I still remember his tremulous 'God bless you!' as the door closed for the last time. How different from that fresh and vigorous old age in which he had moved among us so royally the year before!"

The relaxation of summer holidays brought no satisfactory improvement in his health. The truth lay heavy on his spirit—that the usefulness of his life was drawing to its close. Day by day some strength went out of him, and he must bid farewell to "his children," as he was wont to call his students. The freshness of his glory was no longer in him; "the bow was not renewed in his hand." Long and mournful meditation took possession of him; days of silence re-

\* Mr. Taylor Innes.

vealed the depth of his suffering; and it was only by fits and starts that any thing like composure visited his heart. Still did he speak of returning to his labors at the commencement of the session; and, in order to regain strength, he proposed to make an excursion into the Highlands, provided that a family party went with him. There was no difficulty in arranging this; and in June, accompanied by his two eldest daughters, his sons John and Blair, his son-in-law Professor Ferrier, his brother James, and his niece Henrietta Wilson, he set out for Luib; at which rendezvous he was joined by Mr. Glassford Bell and his eldest daughter. Luib, as we have seen from his letter in 1845, is a pretty wayside hostelry in the central Highlands of Perthshire, about seven miles beyond Killin. There we encamped for a fortnight, encountering such caprices of weather as generally pass over the mountain districts of Scotland. The more adventurous of the party treated the weather with contempt, taking long walks. Of these were Mr. James Wilson and his niece, who wandered over large stretches of ground: but few of the others could compare notes of adventure with them. Had my father been able to endure fatigue, we too would have had something to boast of; but he was unable to do more than loiter by the river-side close in the neighborhood of the inn—never without his rod. Alas, how changed the manner of his sport from that of his prime! We must make use of his own illustration as he speaks of the past and present; for North's exploits in angling are varied enough to be brought forward at any point of his life. He says to the Shepherd:—

“In me the passion of the sport is dead—or say rather dull; yet have I gentle enjoyment still in the ‘Angler’s silent Trade.’” So seemed it then on the banks of the Dochart.

“But Heavens, my dear James! How in youth, and prime of manhood too, I used to gallop to the glens, like a deer, over a hundred heathery hills, to devour the dark rolling river, or the blue breezy loch! How leaped my heart to hear the thunder of the nearing waterfall! and lo, yonder flows, at last, the long dim shallow rippling hazel-banked line of music among the broomy braes, all astir with back-fins on its surface; and now the *feed is on*, teeming with swift-shooting, bright-bounding, and silver-shining scaly life, most beauteous to behold, at every soft alighting of the deceptive line, captivating and irresistible even among a shower of natural leaf-born flies, a swarm in the air from the mountain woods.”

A picture of the past visiting the present, as time glides on, making more perceptible the cruel changes which come to mortal strength. How now do his feet touch the heather? Not as of old, with a bound, but with slow and unsteady step, supported on the one hand by his stick, while the other carries his rod. The breeze gently moves his locks, no longer glittering with the light of life, but dimmed by its decay. Yet are his shoulders broad and unbent. The lion-like presence is somewhat softened down, but not gone. He surely will not venture into the deeps of the water, for only one hand is free for "a cast," and those large stones, now slippery with moss, are dangerous stumbling-blocks in the way. Besides, he promised his daughters he would not wade, but, on the contrary, walk quietly with them by the river's edge, there gliding "at its own sweet will." Silvery bands of pebbled shore, leading to loamy-colored pools, dark as the glow of a southern eye, how could he resist the temptation of near approach? In he goes, up to the ankles, then to the knees, tottering every other step, but never falling. Trout after trout he catches, small ones certainly, but plenty of them. Into his pocket with them, all this time manœuvring in the most skilful manner both stick and rod; until weary, he is obliged to rest on the bank, sitting with his feet in the water, laughing at his daughters' horror, and obstinately continuing the sport in spite of all remonstrance. At last he gives in, and retires. Wonderful to say, he did not seem to suffer from these imprudent liberties. Occasionally he was contented to remain away from the water, enjoying the less exciting interest of watching others. His son John delighted him by the great achievement of capturing two fine salmon, their united weight being about forty-five pounds. It was a pleasant holiday-time. There was no lack of merriment, and though my father was not in his best spirits, he rallied now and then from the gloom that oppressed him at the outset of the excursion.

On his return to Edinburgh, he was prevailed on by his brother Robert to pay him a visit at Woodburn. While there, the painful question of his retirement from public life was agreed on, and caused him much mental distress. He sent in his resignation, after thirty years' service. The remaining portion of this autumn was spent at Billholm. His retirement from active life was a step that interested all parties, and Government was not backward in rewarding the faithful services of one who, though not of their party, merited

grateful consideration. The following letters will explain my words. One is addressed to Sheriff Gordon; the other to James Moncreiff, Esq., Lord Advocate:—

“GWDYR HOUSE, WHITEHALL,  
August 30, 1851.

“MY DEAR GORDON:—The enclosed will show you with what great cordiality my suggestion has been received by Lord John, and this post conveys directly to Professor Wilson an intimation from Lord John Russell, conceived in terms which, I think, cannot fail to be most gratifying to him, that the Queen has granted him a pension of £300 a year. I have sent Lord John’s letter direct, as I think it will in that way best bear its real character of being a spontaneous tribute by the Government and the country.

“And now let me say that nothing that has happened to me since I held office has given me so much real pleasure as being permitted to convey to so old and steadfast a friend as yourself, intelligence which I am sure must greatly gratify you. I trust, under Providence, it may be fruitful to your illustrious relative of a long and honored old age, and of comfort and happiness to all your circle. Believe me ever, yours very sincerely,  
J. MONCREIFF.”

“HOLYROOD PALACE, 28th August, 1851.

“MY DEAR LORD ADVOCATE:—I have complied at once with your wishes, and immediately obtained the Queen’s approbation. I send the enclosed letter to you, that there may be no unfair surprise in communicating the Queen’s intentions to Professor Wilson. Be so good as to take care that this letter is given him in such a manner as may be most agreeable to his feelings. Yours truly,  
“J. RUSSELL.”

As soon as Mr. Gordon received the intelligence that it had pleased her Majesty to bestow her bounty on Professor Wilson, he and I set off immediately to Billholm as messengers of the pleasant news. We arrived there late at night, and found every one in bed. The reason for our sudden appearance was not long in being made known, and in a short time the whole household was astir. The Professor rose from his bed, supper was set out before us, and a very joyful repast we had; every one expressing their grateful pleasure at this unexpected recognition of his public services. We



were scarcely inclined to retire to our rooms, and remained talking till early morning. My father was much touched by the delicate tact of Lord John Russell's communication to the Lord Advocate, couched in terms indicative of a tender nobility of soul.

I know not if the acknowledgment of her Majesty's bounty is a fragment, or the whole of a letter addressed to Earl Russell, but it came into my hands lately, and as being written by my father, I imagine it was a copy of the letter sent, or at least part of it. Whatever the case may be, it will at least be interesting, and I therefore give it:—

“BILLHOLM, LANGHOLM.

“MY LORD:—That her Majesty has been graciously pleased to bestow on me, in the evening of my life, so unexpected a mark of her bounty, fills my heart with the profoundest gratitude, which will dwell there while that heart continues to beat. I beg your Lordship to lay this its poor expression with reverence at her Majesty's feet.

“For your kindly sentiments towards my professional and literary character, I would return such acknowledgment as is due from one who knows how to estimate the high qualities of the house of Russell.”

We remained a week or two at Billholm, my father returning with us to Edinburgh. As winter approached, many a thought crossed his heart of his lost labor, and cheerfulness was hard to keep up. He seemed disinclined for any sort of amusement, and remained within doors almost entirely; unable to find pleasure even in the pastimes of his grandchildren, at one time so great an amusement to him. Something of a settled melancholy rested on his spirit, and for days he would scarcely utter a word, or allow a smile to lighten up his face. He was as a man whose “whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.” That such a change for a time should take place, was by no means unnatural. He was not yet stricken in years, the glow within the great mind was still strong, but the pulses of life were weak. So ardent and impulsive a nature could not be expected to lay aside its harness without a pang. Religion alone supported him in the solitude of that altered existence. These dark clouds were possibly as much due to his enfeebled health as to the belief that the usefulness of his life was over. His brother Robert, who

had ever loved him with the tenderest affection, and who sought by every means to soothe his spirit and restore his health, proposed that he should again make his house a home. He did so, taking up his abode at Woodburn,\* where, from the closing year of 1851 until the autumn of 1852, he resided. If unwearied care and devoted affection could have stayed the increasing malady, which with certain, though often invisible, steps was wearing him away, he had never died. While under that kind roof, there were many days of calm happiness, mingled with others sad enough. The restlessness attending nervous disease is almost as distressing as pain; of which I believe he had but little during the whole course of his decline. He rallied so far when at Woodburn as to be able to write his last papers for *Blackwood's Magazine*—numbers IX. and X. of "Dies Boreales." There was nothing in that house to disturb study when he was inclined for it. He had a suite of rooms to himself; no noise, no interruptions molested the quiet of his days. Pleasant and cheerful faces surrounded him at a moment's notice. His nieces rallied about him as loving daughters, often watching through the weary hours of sleepless nights by his bedside. Nothing was wanting, yet did the heart "know its own bitterness," in those moments when the cruelty of his disorder laid hold of his spirits, and plunged him, as he expressed it, into a state of "hopeless misery." "Nothing," he said to me, "can give you an idea of how utterly wretched I am; my mind is going, I feel it." Then coming directly to the burden of his soul, he would say, "Yes, I know my friends thought me unfit to hold up my head in the class as I ought to do;" then continuing, with an expression of profound solemnity, "I have signed my death-warrant; it is time I should retire." This was so evidently a morbid state of feeling induced by disease, that, distressing as it was to those who witnessed it, one could not but feel satisfied that ere long it would pass away, and a more placid frame of mind ensue. When these brighter hours came—which they did—nothing could be more delightful than his aspect, more playfully charming than his spirit. He scarcely looked like an invalid, or one who would be tormented by the fluctuations of moody humors. Altogether there was a something about him different from his days of defiant strength. Massive as his frame still remained, its power was visibly gone, and a gentle air of submission had taken

\* Mr. R. S. Wilson's residence, near Dalkeith.

the place of that stately bearing. His step, that once seemed to ignore the ground beneath his feet, was feeble and unsteady. He no longer had the manner of one who challenged the inroads of time. In these moments he presented a serene and beautiful picture of calm and genial old age. He had not lost his interest in outward things nor yet in those of literature. He writes the subjoined playful note to his son Blair, or rather causes it to be written. The contents of it are evidence of how he intends to occupy his time:—

“WOODBURN, DALKEITH, 4th December, 1851.

“MY DEAR BLAIR:—Anne’s\* fair hand holds the pen. The supply of books was most acceptable. The volume of Pascal was right; but I see there are two others by the same translator, viz., vol. 1st, ‘Provincial Letters;’ vol. 2d, ‘Miscellaneous Letters.’ Have you a translation of Cicero’s ‘De Finibus?’ Is there a volume on Philosophy by Price or Dring? also by one Dymond, a Quaker? also by one Oswald, a Scotchman? Sir William Drummond’s ‘Academical Questions?’ That vol. of Lord Jeffrey’s collected works containing a Review of Sir William Drummond? That vol. of Lord Jeffrey’s works containing a Review of Bishop Warburton? Send the above to my brother Robert. Come out, if convenient, on Saturday. Yours affectionately,  
JOHN WILSON.

“(Signed by order of the Presbytery.)

“P. S.—You may give my regards to Mary, and perhaps to Gordon,—Golly,† Adel, Pa, Charles Dickens, and the young lady.

“JOHN WILSON.”

He also kept himself *au courant* with public affairs by reading the journals of the day. His political ardor was not so much abated as to prevent him from expressing his sentiments with his usual animation; and he found an opportunity of giving one last memorable proof of his independence and magnanimity of spirit in favor of an illustrious political adversary. In 1852 the representation of the city of Edinburgh became vacant by the dissolution of Parliament. There were three candidates, and one of them was Thomas Babington Macaulay. During the summer the Professor was more than usually feeble, seldom taking exercise out of doors, but preferring

\* His niece, the eldest daughter of Mr. R. S. Wilson.

† His five grandchildren.

to remain in his own room. Possibly the languor of disease made exertion painful to him, for it was difficult to prevail on him, in the latter portion of his life, to drive or even to sit in the open air. Much to the surprise of the household, he one morning this summer expressed a desire to go into Edinburgh. Unfortunately, Mr. Wilson's carriage was not at hand, some of his family having gone into town to make calls. This *contretemps* it was supposed would have diverted his intention to another day. Not so. He sent to Dalkeith for a conveyance, and on its arrival set off with his servant upon his mission, giving no hint as to its nature, but evidently bent upon something of the most engrossing interest and anxiety to himself. On arriving in Edinburgh he drove to Mr. Blackwood's, in George Street, to rest before proceeding farther. Every one rejoiced to see him; and as he drove along many a respectful and glad recognition he received, people wondering if he had come to live and move among them once more. But what had brought him through the dusty roads and hot midday sun? He looked wearied and feeble as he got into his carriage to drive away from George Street, apparently without any particular object in view. So might it have been said, for he had not mentioned to any one what had brought him so far—far for an invalid, one who had almost risen from a sick-bed. His mysterious mission to Edinburgh was to give his vote for Thomas Babington Macaulay. When he entered the Committee-room in St. Vincent Street, supported by his servant, a loud and long cheer was given, expressive both of pleasure at seeing him, and of admiration at the disinterested motive which had brought him there. Mr. Macaulay's recognition of this generous action supplies an interesting sequel to the incident:—

“ROYAL HOTEL, CLIFTON,

July 16, 1852.

“MY DEAR MR. GORDON :—I am truly grateful for your kindness in letting me know how generous a part Professor Wilson acted towards me. From my school-days, when I delighted in the *Isle of Palms* and the *City of the Plague*, I have admired his genius. Politics at a later period made us, in some sense, enemies. But I have long entertained none but kind feelings towards him, and his conduct on Tuesday is not the first proof which he has given that he feels kindly towards me. I hope that you will let him know

how much pleasure and how much pride I felt when I learned he had given me so conspicuous a mark of his esteem.

“With many thanks for your congratulations, believe me, yours most truly,  
T. B. MACAULAY.”\*

This autumn my father's hand ceased forever from work. Writing had now become a painful exertion, and nothing shows it more than his manuscript. The few notes he wrote at this time to his son Blair, and now lying before me, are almost undecipherable, the characters evidently written by a weak and trembling hand. There is nothing of moment in any of them; but as they refer to the work which occupied him at that time, I subjoin them with feelings of painful interest, as the last words his hand ever transcribed.†

Few as the words of these notes are, we can perceive that his work is one of much interest to him, and that he is bestowing the usual care on its preparation.

There is only one passage which I shall make use of from these last articles, the *Dies Boreales*. Not because it is so beautiful in itself, but by reason of the tender character of the subject. That deep and lasting love which the grave did not destroy—the lost image of his wife—was an ever present theme for the exercise of his soul's submission. Tempered though his sorrow was, he carried it in the recesses of his heart perpetually, and his last thoughts have been embalmed in this fine passage. The forlorn and widowed heart speaks in every word:

“When the hand of Death has rent in one moment from fond

\* Besides the laudatory critique of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* in *Blackwood*, for December, 1842, my father, unless I am misinformed, had once more at least acted a generous part to a political opponent, by reviewing “Croker's Criticisms” on Macaulay's *England*, in two letters addressed to the editor of the *Scotsman*, April 18th and 28th, 1849, signed *Alivis*.

“July 22d.

† “MY DEAR BLAIR:—I took from Gloucester Place three volumes of Milton, of which one is the second volume of ‘Paradise Lost,’ 4th edition, Thomas Newton. It contains the first six books, and the note and letter. The first volume must contain the first six. Can you get it for me, and send it out without delay per train? Yours affectionately,  
J. WILSON.

“I want to have Addison's Essay on ‘Paradise Lost.’”

“WOODBURN.

“MY DEAR BLAIR:—Your active kindness has done all that could be done about Milton. Look in my room for ‘Payne,’ Knight's ‘Principle of Taste,’ and for Kames's ‘Elements.’

“Yours affectionately,

J. WILSON.”

“WOODBURN, *Thursday Afternoon*.

“MY DEAR BLAIR:—Call at Blackwood's on your way to College (on Saturday), and ask John or the Captain if they have a parcel for me at Woodburn from the printer's in the evening; if so, you may stay and bring it by railway, the latest one going.

“Yours affectionately,

J. WILSON.”

affection the happiness of years, and seems to have left to it no other lot upon Earth than to bleed and mourn, then, in that desolation of the spirit, are discovered what are the secret powers which it bears within itself, out of which it can derive consolation and peace. The Mind, torn by such a stroke from all those inferior human sympathies which, weak and powerless when compared to its own sorrow, can afford it no relief, turns itself to that Sympathy which is without bounds. Ask of the forlorn and widowed heart what is the calm which it finds in those hours of secret thought, which are withdrawn from all eyes? Ask what is that hidden process of Nature by which Grief has led it on to devotion? That attraction of the Soul in its uttermost earthly distress to a source of consolation remote from Earth, is not to be ascribed to a Disposition to substitute one emotion for another, as if it hoped to find relief in dispelling and blotting out the vain passion with which it labored before; but, in the very constitution of the Soul, the capacities of human and divine affection are linked together, and it is the very depth of its passion that leads it over from the one to the other. Nor is its consolation forgetfulness. But that affection which was wounded becomes even more deep and tender in the midst of the calm which it attains.”\*

All earthly things now wore for him a solemn aspect. His mind was evidently inclined to meditate upon those truths by which religion exalts moral perceptions, and to bring all his force to test how he could elevate the soul's aspirations before he retired from the field in which he had so long labored. He humbly looked in the coming days of darkness for the light that rises to the upright, and hopefully awaited the summons that should call him to rest from his labors, and enter into the joy of his Lord.

He remained at Woodburn until the end of the autumn of 1852. Before he left it he had received visits from various old friends. Among the last was his old partner in literature and all the wild audacities of its then unlicensed liberty, John Gibson Lockhart. Much changed he was; more so even than his friend. It was a kind and pleasant meeting. I had prepared Mr. Lockhart to find my father greatly altered, as we drove out together. He afterwards told me he saw no change mentally, but considered him as bright and great as ever. Yet time had done much to destroy the

\* *Dies Boreales*, August, 1852.

fine frame of the one ; the heart-energies and interests of the other ; nor could it be but a melancholy retrospect which crossed their thoughts in looking back to the days of gigantic strength in "life's morning march when the spirit was young." There was the same contrast between them as of yore, attributable to the different condition of their mental health. The indestructible buoyancy of my father's spirit gave to his mind an almost perennial freshness, and he was not less susceptible to emotions of joy and sorrow than in the passionate days of old. But now all within was tempered by the chastening hand of time, and the outward expression showed it. There was no more exuberant happiness, but a peaceful calm ; no violent grief, but a deep solemnity. Mr. Lockhart, on the other hand, seemed to live with a broken heart, while all about him had a faded and dejected air. He spoke despondingly of himself. Health, happiness, and energy, he said, were gone ; he was sick of London, its whirl and its excitements.

"I would fain return to Edinburgh," he said, "to be cheered by some of your young happy faces, but you would have to nurse me, and be kind to me, for I am a weary old man, fit for nothing but to shut myself up and be sulky." He certainly looked very much out of health and spirits at that time ; indeed, he was like a man weighed down by inward sorrow. The momentary vivacity which lightened his countenance was almost more painful to witness than the melancholy natural to it. Now and then, some of the old sarcastic manner came across him, and as he sat at the writing-table, with the once tempting pen and ink before him, one could fancy him again dashing off one of those grotesque sketches in which he had delighted to commemorate friends and foes. But the stimulus was gone. A few hours were spent together by these old friends, during which there was much talk of bygone days. They parted as they met, with kindness and affection, expressing hopes that renewed health might enable them to meet again. My father stood at the door while Lockhart got into his carriage, and watched him out of sight. He never saw him again.\*

As long as my father's mind remained unclouded, he continued to take an interest in the welfare of his friends, participating with unaffected sincerity in their pleasures, and rejoicing in their affection. The following little note to Mr. Robert Findlay, says more than

\* Mr. Lockhart died at Abbotsford, November 25, 1854, about seven months after the Professr.

many words, and is significant of that *love* which was so large an element of his nature: \*—

“MY DEAREST ROBERT:—I rejoice in my soul to learn that your son Charles has married a wife to his own entire satisfaction, and I trust to his father’s, mother’s, sisters’, and brother’s, and all friends. Kindest love to Mrs. Findlay and the rest. God bless you, and her, and them. Much love in few words. Your friend of friends,

“J. W.”

And so with these kind words he took farewell of the friend, the “brother,” of his youth. What thoughts of the past would revisit his memory in writing that little missive, we can imagine, taking him back to the sunlit hills which enclosed the home of his prime, from whence his “friend of friends” heard of a wedding morning, bright as the good deserve, and radiant with happiness; more serene, because it had come to close sorrow long and stoutly borne.

A yearning for home still lingered amidst the fading joys of memory; and the old man, standing on the threshold of another life, sighed to set his house in order. He must return to Edinburgh; so, bidding adieu to the kind brother who had so gently met all the caprices of his illness, and to whom the happier condition of a docile spirit had endeared him more than ever, he left the devoted circle of that household towards the close of the year 1852, and once again established himself in Gloucester Place.

For the first few months after his return, he appeared to rally, and gained strength; so much so as to inspire his family with hopes that better days were yet in store; but, like the sudden reanimation of a dying light, the glow proved tremulous and uncertain. Anxiety and watching still continued; the gloom and depression of his mind coming and going from time to time, leaving with the struggle of each beating wave, a melancholy evidence that a wreck lay there. How was such a trial borne? As all others had been. Grief deep as death was overcome in the end by patience. That great and lustrous mind felt day by day how its might was sinking;

\* Since I wrote the above this dear friend has also been laid in his grave. Mr. Robert Findlay died on the 27th of June, 1862, having reached the advanced age of seventy-eight. As one of my father’s earliest and dearest friends, I would have respected his memory; but personal knowledge of his high worth, and all those amiable qualities which endeared him to his family and friends, claims expression of sorrow.



while no outward complaint came to tell of the agony within; but efforts more trying and perplexing than can be told were made to test the amount of power yet remaining. He would read, or rather cause to be read aloud, books upon the same subject, as differently treated by their various authors, chapter by chapter. Philosophical works were tried first, but confusion was the result of this process of inquiry, as to his mental strength. The attempt was too much. With a sigh of despondency the volumes were laid aside, ordered to be taken away, and were not again brought out. A short period of repose, that might in ordinary cases have been beneficial, seemed only to fret and disturb him. There was no allaying that long-fostered passion for communion with the immortals. Thus, for a period almost covering the year, were such afflicting struggles continued. Nothing was ever seen more touching than the gradual undoing of that lofty mind; the gradual wasting of that powerful strength. One looked on, and felt as David did of old when the Lord's anointed fell. "How are the mighty fallen!" were words that sent a sound as a solemn dirge to our hearts. Yet was there no rebellion in this desire to hold fast the gifts that were his from heaven: who would part willingly with such powers?\*

Such usefulness was about to pass away: he had parted from "his children." In the silence of his more composed hours, God be praised, the "storm was tempered," and a quiet sunshine shed its peaceful radiance over his spirit, nor have I reason to believe that other than happy thoughts visited him, mingled with the brightest and most joyous of the past—of those days when "our parish" was little less than Paradise in his eyes.

Certain it was the "Mearns" came among those waking dreams, and then he gathered around him, when the spring mornings brought gay jets of sunshine into the little room where he lay, the relics of

\* I remember having once heard an instance of his having effected a happy cure in a case of severe mental trouble. The subject was a student whom he had recognized as showing great promise in his earlier career, but whose subsequent exertions had not answered his expectations. Inquiring of the youth the cause of this falling off, he learned that his mind had been overpowered, as many are on entrance into thinking life, by doubts and difficulties leading to darkness and disbelief, verging in despair. Fitful glimpses of light had crossed his dreary path, but still he found no comfort or rest. The Professor listened to the tale of grief with tender sympathy. His steady faith and long experience, his knowledge of how doubts and fears assail the hearts even of the high and pure, enabled him to enter into the very depths of that woe-stricken soul. With words of wisdom he consoled the wandering spirit, while he led him by the power of persuasion, the force of truth, and the tenderness of love, to the clear upper light, there leaving him to the blessing of the Father. The clouds broke away, and the day-spring from on high revisited that darkened spirit.

a youthful passion, one that with him never grew old. It was an affecting sight to see him busy, nay, quite absorbed, with the fishing-tackle scattered about his bed, propped up with pillows—his noble head, yet glorious with its flowing locks, carefully combed by attentive hands, and falling on each side of his unfaded face. How neatly he picked out each elegantly dressed fly from its little bunch, drawing it out with trembling hand along the white coverlet, and then, replacing it in his pocket-book, he would tell ever and anon of the streams he used to fish in of old, and of the deeds he had performed in his childhood and youth.\* These precious relics of a by-gone sport were wont to be brought out in the early spring, long before sickness confined him to his room. It had been a habit of many years, but then the "sporting jacket" was donned soon after, and angling was no more a mere delightful day-dream, but a reality, "that took him knee-deep, or waistband-high, through river-feeding torrents, to the glorious music of his running and ringing reel." This outward life was at an end. With something of a prophetic spirit did he write in former days, when he affected the age he had not attained—how love for all sports would live in his heart forever: "Our spirit burns within us, but our limbs are palsied, and our feet must brush the heather no more. Lo! how beautifully these fast travelling pointers do their work on that black mountain's breast! intersecting it into parallelograms, and squares, and circles, and now all a stoop on a sudden, as if frozen to death! Higher up among the rocks, and cliffs, and stones, we see a stripling whose ambition it is to strike the sky with his forehead, and wet his hair in the misty cloud, pursuing the ptarmigan now in their variegated summer dress, seen even among the unmelted snows. Never shall Eld deaden our sympathies with the pastimes of our fellow-men any more than with their highest raptures, their profoundest griefs." Nor did he belie the words.

We were naturally desirous of keeping from his knowledge any thing that would surprise him into agitation. This could not, however, always be done, for family distress, as a matter of course, he must participate in. The day which brought us intelligence of Mrs. Rutherford's death was one of startling sorrow to him. His own

\* A year or two earlier he writes to his youngest daughter:—"I took stock, and find I have forty-four dozen loch flies and fifty-six of stream flies. Of the latter six dozen are well adapted for our river; but 'Lord Salton' is nearly done, and must be renewed. Into the Yarrow I shall never again throw a fly."

widowed life had been one of long and faithful mourning; and the bereavement which his friend, Lord Rutherford, was called upon to endure, filled his mind with the most poignant pain, and it was with difficulty he could banish the subject from his thoughts. Other men's sorrows, in the unselfishness of his nature, he made his own. More unbounded sympathy I never knew. Therein lay the feminine delicacy of his nature, the power of winning all, soothing the sad, encouraging the weak, scorning not the humble. With heart and hand alike open, he knew and acted up to the meaning of one simple rule—Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you. So, through another spring into summer, and once again to the mellowed autumn and winter snows, he lingered on contented, almost cheerful, but also sometimes very sad. At such times he never spoke. Can we doubt that these visitations of solemnity had a meaning? The veil which it had pleased God to draw over the greater power of his mind had not left it without a lesser light. He still knew and loved his friends, and found pleasure in their occasional visits. The presence of his children and his grandchildren continued to cheer and interest him almost to the end. That silence, so incomprehensible to common minds, looking too often for consolation in the recited words of Scripture, which they convey to curious ears as expressing the last interest and hope of dying hours, was no other than the composing of his spirit with the unseen God.

There is little more to tell. The last time my father was seen of familiar faces was on the 13th of October, 1853. I drove with him to Mr. Alexander Hill's shop in Princes Street, in order to see a painting of Herrings' then being exhibited there. He did not take so lively an interest in the picture as I had anticipated, but soon grew wearied, and evidently unable to rouse himself from a certain air of indifference which, when disappointed, he generally wore. Yet he was not always untouched by the efforts which love made to cheer and please him; and his moistened eye told more than a thousand words how he felt and followed the little entertainments got up for this end. Young children were at all times attractive to him, and though now unable to do more than stroke their heads or touch their little hands, still he loved to look upon them; smiling a gentle adieu when their prattle became too much for him. One day I thought to amuse him in one of his gloomy moments by intro-

ducing his youngest grandchild, some four years of age, dressed as "Little Red Riding-hood." This picturesque small figure, in a scarlet cloak, with a shock of long curls hanging about his merry face, made his *entrée* into grandpapa's room, holding up in his chubby hands a basket neatly adorned with leaves, out of which peeped sticks of barley-sugar and other bon-bons. Trotting to the bedside where the old man lay, he offered his dainty repast with a sort of shy fear that the wolf was actually there, and was greatly relieved by the kind caresses and good welcome he received, observing that grandpapa's hands were so white, and that he never once *growled*.

The tender and anxious question which he asked concerning Robert Burns, "Did he read his Bible?" may, perhaps, by some be asked about himself. On a little table, near his bedside, his Bible lay during his whole illness, and was read morning and evening regularly. His servant also read it frequently to him. In the strong days of his prime, he wrote, not without experience, these words in reference to sacred poetry:—

"He who is so familiar with his Bible, that each chapter, open it where he will, teems with household words, may draw thence the theme of many a pleasant and pathetic song. For is not all human nature and all human life shadowed forth in those pages? But the heart, to sing well from the Bible, must be imbued with religious feelings, as a flower is alternately with dew and sunshine. The study of *The Book* must have begun in the simplicity of childhood, when it was felt to be indeed divine, and carried on through all those silent intervals in which the soul of manhood is restored, during the din of life, to the purity and peace of its early being. The Bible to such must be a port, even as the sky—with its sun, moon, and stars—its boundless blue—with all its cloud mysteries—its peace deeper than the grave, because of realms beyond the grave—its tumult louder than that of life, because heard altogether in all the elements. He who begins the study of the Bible late in life must, indeed, devote himself to it night and day, and with a humble and a contrite heart, as well as an awakened and soaring spirit, ere he can hope to feel what he understands, or to understand what he feels; thoughts and feelings breathing in upon him, as if from a region hanging, in its mystery, between heaven and earth."

On Christmas day, 1853, he assembled around him his entire family, sons and daughters, with their children, to spend the day in his house. It was almost merry. His servant decorated the rooms with evergreens, and one little garland, with touching love, he ordered to be laid on his wife's picture, which hung over the chimney-piece in his bedroom. He was unable to dine down-stairs, but we visited him after dinner, and rejoiced in the cheerfulness that lighted up his countenance. It seemed a harbinger of coming peace, and we felt no strangeness in wishing him a happy Christmas, nor thought, as we gazed upon that beautiful face, that the snows of another such season would fall upon his grave. My brother John, with his wife and some of his infant family, spent this New Year with him. This was a great happiness; and for some time the old fervor and animation of his spirit seemed to return. They remained with him to the end. There were two subjects he had been wont to dwell on with affecting tenderness—the memory of his wife, and his beautiful home on Windermere. Had they faded from his vision now, or were they only more sacred as sights now connected with the glories of another world, purified in his thoughts from all earthly contact, renewed in spirit and in beauty, just as his sight was about to close, and his heart to cease from participation in things here below? I cannot say, but the name of “Jane” and of “Elleray” never more escaped his lips.

Another spring is announced amid sunshine, and the cheerful twittering of birds. Even in towns the beautiful influence of this season is felt, for the very air has caught up the fresh loamy perfume from the far-off fields, and a feeling of exhilaration is participated in by all creatures. The languid invalid is not indifferent to this emotion, and, with reanimated nature, new life invigorates every sentient being. And so did we hope that this advent of spring would cheer, and for a time console the heart of him whose eyes, yet able to bear the light of day, were often turned from the bed where he lay to the window, as if he wandered again in the faintness of memory to the freedom of outward nature. But these impulses were gone, and the activity which once bore him gladly along to the merry music of streams “to linger by the silent shores of lochs,” rested now forever. On the 1st of April I received a message that my father had become worse. I hurried immediately to Gloucester Place. On entering the room a sad sight caught my

eye. He had risen to breakfast much in his usual state of health, but, while taking it, a stroke of paralysis seized him. When I arrived, his bed was being prepared for him, and he still lay in his large chair. A mortal change was visible over his whole frame. The shock affected one entire side, from his face downwards, and at that moment he appeared quite unconscious. We laid him gently in bed, composing that still powerful-looking body as comfortably as possible, and in a few moments the medical attendants arrived. There was no hope given us; his hour had come. All that were near and dear to him were in the house. Not a sound was heard but the heavy and oppressed breathing of the dying man. No change took place the whole of that day. His brother Robert never left his bedside, but sat there holding the big hand, now able only to return the pressure given it; the last grateful sign of still conscious love.

We all watched through the night while some hours of natural sleep fell upon him. Next day the same sad scene; no change; morning's dawn brought no comfort. It was now Sunday; time hurried on, and we still hoped he knew us as we laid our hands upon his, but he was unable to speak. The only sign we had that consciousness had not left him was, that he continued to summon his servant, according to his old habit, by knocking upon the small table at his bedside. Several times during the day he made that signal, and on its being answered, I could not say that it meant more than that he desired his servant should now and then be in the room. She had served him long, faithfully, and with a true woman's kindness. It was the only way in which he could thank her. At five o'clock his breathing became more difficult. Evening sent its deepening shadows across his couch—darker ones were soon to follow. Still that sad and heavy breathing, as if life were unwilling to quit the strong heart. Towards midnight he passed his hand frequently across his eyes and head, as if to remove something obstructing his vision. A bitter expression for one instant crossed his face—the veil was being drawn down. A moment more, and as the clock chimed the hour of twelve, that heaving heart was still.

The following lines came into my hands after my father's death. They were written in youth; but the fact that his prayer was grant

ed, makes these beautiful words, as it were, the parting farewell which his lips were not permitted to utter to those he loved:—

“ When nature feels the solemn hour is come  
That parts the spirit from her mortal clay,  
May that hour find me in my weeping home,  
’Mid the blest stillness of a Sabbath-day!  
May none I deeply love be then away;  
For through my heart the husht though sobbing breath  
Of natural grief a holy calm will send;  
With sighs from earth will heavenly voices blend,  
Till, as on seraph fair, I smile on death,  
Who comes in peace, like an expected friend.  
Dipt in celestial hues the wings of love  
Will o’er my soul a gracious shade extend;  
While, as if air were sun, gleams from above  
The day with God, the Sabbath without end!”