

MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF MRS. GRANT OF LAGGAN.*

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Grant of Laggan lived to extreme old age, and has been dead for a few years, her name, we are persuaded, must still be familiar and welcome to Scottish ears. Nor can she be altogether forgotten in England, where her early Letters made a lively impression; and certainly not in the United States of America. At all events, her fresh, healthful, and delightful works must be remembered, as they represent something which many of us would not willingly let go; and that because they paint a condition of society, a primitive state of manners, which become the more fascinating in the retrospect, the farther that luxury and pseudo-refinement bears us away from the homely, but pure and heartfelt social enjoyments which they promoted. Distance may, no doubt, interpose its magic veil, softening asperities and external rudenesses; but the substantial plenty, the leisure, and freedom of mind of these bygone times, with their simplicity and ease of manners,—all, in brief, that is comprehended in Wordsworth's emphatic

"Plain living and high thinking,"—

were solid and enduring social blessings. Nor is it wonderful, that, from the barren heights which every class of society, above the lowest, has attained, if not in physical comfort yet in external accommodation, many a longing, lingering look should be cast back upon the rude and simple times which are vividly and picturesquely reflected in Mrs. Grant's pages. Her "Letters from the Mountains" are the genuine picture of a life spent in seclusion in the very heart of the Highlands; and a life, how full of energy, affection, and healthful enjoyment! Imagination and taste may, in her instance, have imparted a glow to the local colouring; but some measure of these faculties were no mean constituents in the happiness of the common life lived and described—part of her chartered possessions, but also, to some extent, possessed by every Highlander. Mrs. Grant's representation of domestic and social manners in the State of New York, in her own childhood and girlhood, or before the revolutionary war, are equally faithful and delightful as her delineations of the peaceful life of the Highland glens.—The book before us is of a different character; and chiefly, or alone, interesting from what it tells of the farther personal history of the writer of the works of which we have spoken, and of a few distinguished literary persons, and other *notabilities* with whom she came into contact, during her long residence in Edinburgh. There are in it no loyal and pious clansmen, rich in manners, and in ancestral, homely wisdom, though poor in science and learning; no primitive Dutch and English settlers living, on the banks of the Hudson and the Mohawk, the rural life in all its joys and ease, if not what is now called elegance, or cottage-*orné* refinement. Nearly the

whole interest of the new series of letters devolves, therefore, upon the author; the anecdotes she relates of distinguished literary characters; and her opinions on the various topics which she incidentally touches in the course of a private correspondence of above thirty years, and consisting of four hundred selected letters. The great blemish of this correspondence, is that attributable, more or less, to the greater part of all female correspondence that is not between the most intimate and confidential friends—namely, a candied complexion—a honeyed exuberance—a reflected egotism; and that, having often very little to say, far too much is sometimes made of that little merely to fill the sheet. Very many letters of the entire series are either congratulatory, complimentary, or of condolence. There is a consequent want of the ease and spontaneous impulse of the early letters; for it is somehow felt that much is said, not to give utterance to the affectionate feelings and recollections of an overflowing and warm heart, but to perform a duty, and perhaps to make a figure as a letter-writer. And though letters of duty and ceremony must, we suppose, be written, they excite little sympathy in those who do not share in the feeling or obligation which draws them forth. On the other hand, the entire series does infinite credit to the writer's talents, good sound common sense, and admirable tact. Without losing her own identity, and without forfeiting our respect, or condescending to flatter in any glaring way, she adapts herself with exquisite felicity to the varying tastes and circumstances of her correspondents.—The best of the series, or those letters that we like the best, are the few addressed to her eldest son in India, and to her daughters; and those in which she fully commands our sympathies, while we see her struggling to form the virtues and raise the fortunes of her numerous family; or heart-stricken with the successive bereavements with which it pleased Heaven to afflict her in an unusual degree. The Letters now published extend over a period of about thirty-five years; and in that time, Mrs. Grant had lost six daughters, in the early bloom, or full maturity of graceful or beautiful womanhood; all of them distinguished by talents and virtues. She had also lost her eldest son. These were heavy trials, and fruitful, if painful, themes for a mother's letters to those who had known and loved the endeared and amiable beings she lamented.

The literary gossip of the Modern Athens in its palmy days, or during the thirty years which Mrs. Grant resided in its circles, might promise to be an attractive feature in her correspondence; but we question if it will be so felt. The more remarkable of the persons of whom she speaks, have either forestalled her themselves, or she has been anticipated by their communicative friends. Mrs. Grant is, besides, a cautious writer, never personal, never satirical; and moreover, her literary history is often inaccurate. It is superfluous to

* Author of "Letters from the Mountains," "Memoirs of an American Lady," &c., &c. Edited by her son, J. P. Grant, Esq. 3 vols., with Portrait. Longmans.

point out what was erroneous at the time, and is now of no consequence whatever. In short, Mrs. Grant must, for a good while if not always, in her literary intimacies, have belonged to the dowager division of Edinburgh society, and could not have been in secrets—not, perhaps, much worth knowing.

The Memoir and Letters, which are modestly and unobtrusively edited by Mrs. Grant's son, the only survivor of a large family, who all, save himself, predeceased their mother, open with a brief sketch of her early life, from her own pen. It brings her personal history down to the opening of her "Letters from the Mountains"; and this new series terminates it, with a short account of her latter years, by the editor. Her father and mother were both Highlanders. No drop of *Sassenach* blood flowed in the veins of Anne Macvicar, though she chanced to be born in Glasgow. Her father, after her birth, entered the army; and her childhood, up to the age of fourteen, was passed in America, at a Dutch settlement below Albany, in the manner she has so fascinatingly described in the "Memoirs of an American Lady." She may be said to have been, so far as schools and direct instruction are concerned, literally self-educated. Her mother taught her to read; and her intimacy and domestication with the "American Lady," her residence in the rustic court of Madame Schuyler, must have been of incalculable advantage to her. At the age of fifteen she returned to Scotland with her father and mother; and, as she was an only child, should have been an heiress, had not the extensive grant of land which her father obtained been, after the revolution, included in the new State of Vermont, and confiscated as the property of a British officer. A residence of some years in Glasgow, at this time, must have added much to her stores of knowledge, and was a period of great mental activity and general improvement; though her vivacious and energetic mind had received its tone and impulse in America. Of her Glasgow residence she relates—

With one family of the name of Pagan, to whose son we were known in America, I formed an affectionate intimacy. At their country-house, on the banks of the river Cart, near Glasgow, I spent part of three summers, which I look back upon as a valuable part of mental, perhaps I should rather say moral, education. Minds so pure, piety so mild, so cheerful and influential; manners so simple and artless, without the slightest tincture of hardness or vulgarity; such primitive ways of thinking, so much of the best genuine Scottish character, I have never met with, nor could ever have supposed to exist, had I not witnessed. Here were the reliques of the old Covenanters all around us; and here I enriched my memory with many curious traits of Scottish history and manners, by frequenting the cottages of the peasantry, and perusing what I could find on their smoky bookshelves. Here was education for the heart and mind, well adapted for the future lot which Providence assigned to me. With these friends, then a numerous family, I kept up an intimate connexion, which neither time nor absence interrupted.

It is to the daughters of this family, Mrs. Brown of Glasgow, and Mrs. Smith of Jordan Hill, that many of the "Letters from the Mountains" are addressed. Many of those in the new series are to the same staunch friends. Mrs. Grant's father obtained the appointment of barrack-master at Fort Augustus; and, still an untaught, unaccomplished,

but a very clever, largely-informed, and enthusiastic girl, she was transferred to the heart of the mountains. Upon her solid, self-earned Lowland and American acquirements and stores of various knowledge, Highland romance and poesy, were now lavishly superinduced by her residence at Fort Augustus—then, though a kind of garrison, a much more solitary spot than it is now—and her subsequent residence in Laggan. In 1779, she married the minister of that parish, and became, in every sense, a true Highland matron; proving, not only how much virtue and happiness, but how many beautiful talents, how much of refining imagination and brightening fancy are compatible with the lowliest duties of a wife and mother, and parish-helper; and with circumstances which many of her future correspondents must have regarded as very narrow, indeed, if not miserable poverty. In 1801, she lost her excellent husband; and was left with a family of eight children, and not altogether free from debt. But she had firm faith and high courage, and the talent of attracting and attaching admirable friends, who again interested other friends in her behalf and in that of her family. Nor were her literary talents without their influence. From almost childhood she had scribbled verses; and now, her patrons and friends issued proposals for publishing a volume of her poetry. It proved the most successful attempt of the kind ever made, we believe, in Scotland; and was but an earnest of the very remarkable kindness which Mrs. Grant afterwards met with in quarters where she could have no claim, save that conferred by her virtues and talents, and the condition of her family. Through Mr. George Chalmers, the author of "Caledonia," she received, in one sum, three hundred pounds, the contribution of three princely London merchants, Messrs. Angerstein, Thomson, & Bonar. A number of ladies in Boston published her Letters by subscription; and transmitted her, at different times, considerable sums. Other generous individuals appear to have materially assisted her in her struggles; and her publishers, the house of Longman & Co., acted towards her with a liberality of which she was warmly sensible. They not only gave her the fair share of profits on her "Letters from the Mountains," to which she was entitled, but, as a free gift, a considerable part of their own profits. In her latter years she obtained considerable legacies from old pupils; and a pension of a hundred a-year; and one of her patrons, Sir William Grant, Master of the Rolls, left her an annuity to the same amount. This, with her other funds, and annuity as the widow of a Scottish clergyman, with her moderate tastes, rendered her old age easy and independent. —To return: soon after the death of her husband, Mrs. Grant removed, with her large family, to Stirling, in which she resided for some years. Her elder daughters, who had received many more advantages of education than their mother, were now of an age to assist her in any plan of active usefulness; and she received into her family some little boys, of a class that could afford to pay her handsomely, in order to prepare them for school. This scheme was afterwards relinquished for one more suitable to

her family circumstances; and, settling in Edinburgh, she received a select number of young ladies of good fortune, who had finished their school, if not their mental education, but who needed the care and protection of a mother, on their introduction into life, and the affection and society of sisters. For many years, her house was the home of a succession of young ladies of this description; and she appears to have had much satisfaction in the character and affection of these pupils, or inmates, whose presence threw a brilliancy around her family circle. But it is more than time that we allowed Mrs. Grant to speak for herself. As an example of her tact and self-respect, we select the following letter, addressed to Mr. Hatsell, Clerk to the House of Commons. It was written while Mrs. Grant was in London, sending her eldest son to India, having obtained a cadetship for him through the interest of the late Mr. Charles Grant, the East India Director:—

To JOHN HATSELL, Esq., *House of Commons, London.*
London, 2d May, 1805.

SIR,—The purpose of this address is to endeavour to recall to your memory a person of whom you had a very slight knowledge indeed, at Fort Augustus, thirty years ago, then a girl of seventeen, and in whose father's house you resided while there. Since that time I was happily and respectably married to a gentleman of that country, who was minister of an adjoining parish, and chaplain to the 90th regiment. He was a man of much humanity and generosity. We lived in an open and hospitable manner, and had twelve children, of whom eight remain. I hasten to the sad sequel. Three years ago, a sudden death deprived us of the best of husbands and fathers. To his young and helpless family his character and example are a rich inheritance. I do not fear that they will feel absolute want, nor were they left absolutely destitute. My friends, however, urged me to publish a volume of occasional verses, which I had wrote to please them or myself. This volume I have taken the liberty of sending you, not to solicit your name, or derive any advantage in that way; far otherwise. I do not mention my address, to prevent the possibility of having my motive mistaken. But, having come to town to send my eldest son to the East Indies, and conclude some other matters relative to my family, I happened to hear you spoken of as a worthy and benevolent character; thinking you, too, at the time I met with you, the finest gentleman I ever saw, I was very attentive to your conversation, and remarked that you had a taste for literature. These are the circumstances that have induced me thus to commit myself, by placing a confidence in you that may lead you to think oddly of me. I cannot help it. You will never see nor hear of me more: and if you do not attend to my simple request, forget, I beg of you, that ever I made it.

You see, by the subscribers' list, that my own country-people are interested in me, and have treated me with unexampled kindness; yet my circumstances rendering it difficult for me to educate so large a family, without encroaching on their little capital, I am now about to publish two small volumes, without my name, of juvenile correspondence, genuine and unaltered, under the title of "Letters from the Mountains." Now, I send you my poetical volume, first, in return for two books you gave me at Fort Augustus; and, next, that you may read it; and if you think as kindly of it as many others have done, it will perhaps interest you in the writer, or, what is much better, in a large family of orphans belonging to a worthy man. You will, in that case, use your influence, which I know is extensive, to make the intended publication known. I do not expect you to recommend it; because that is useless, if it wants merit, and needless if it has. Longman and Rees are my publishers; they have some volumes of the work herewith sent on

hand: these, too, I wish you to make known. It would gratify me, if you would send a note to Longman and Rees, desiring to have the "Letters from the Mountains" sent you when they are published. If you are a man of delicacy and benevolence, you will do this, to show you take my confidence in good part; if not, be at least a man of honour,—burn this letter, never mention it, and forget the ill-judged presumption of your obedient humble servant,
ANNE GRANT.

Many months elapsed; but Mrs. Grant at last heard from this cautious gentleman, and afterwards found in him an active and useful friend. He brought her book, and her personal history, under the notice of the Bishop of London, the venerable Dr. Porteus, who criticised and corrected her Letters for a second edition, keeping out some of the more trivial letters. It might be wished that some one had performed a similar friendly office for the present collection, which a near relative can never be the best qualified to perform. During her residence in London at this time, Mrs. Grant acquired several useful and pleasant friends; and among others, Mrs. Hook, one of the daughters of the fortunate Scottish physician, Sir Walter Farquhar. To this lady, the wife of Dr. James Hook, afterwards an archdeacon of the English church, and the mother of Dr. Walter Hook of Leeds, many of her most elaborate letters were subsequently addressed. Her English friends were all High Church, and high Tory; and so was she, as she takes very great pains to assure them, often going out of her way to express contempt and dislike for the politics of the Liberal party and of *The Edinburgh Review*; and for a something—an abstraction, about which nobody seems to have any definite idea—which Cobbett went to call Scotch *feelosophy*, and English High Churchmen, with their ladies, and Mrs. Grant, "Scotch metaphysics." In her youth, Mrs. Grant must have been a true-blue Presbyterian Whig, and admirer of the "glorious and immortal"; but, in the trying era of Pitt, she seems to have become a high-flying Tory, and in old age she was a Legitimist or Carlist who had never been a Jacobite; and sent presents of parmigan to Holyrood to the Duchess of Angoulême, and wrote pretty verses to the little Duke of Bourdeaux. Nay, more, she obtained a new light upon the subject of Antichrist, and discovered him to be, not the Pope, as all Reformed Scotland had ever believed, but the French Encyclopedists. The Reform Bill appeared, to her, to threaten the end of the world, or the complete overthrow of religion and social order. But these notions were so far harmless, that they excited no rancorous feeling towards those of her friends who entertained opposite opinions. They are, indeed, by a younger generation, rather to be laughed at than seriously animadverted on. We must now introduce a few of the illustrious personages whom she describes to her friends, and who, indeed, form, with the exception of the few family letters, the best staple of her correspondence. In March 1810, nearly a lifetime since, she writes:—

Walter Scott and the formidable Jeffrey have both called on me, not by any means as a scribbling female, but on account of links formed by mutual friends. You would think, by their appearance, that the body of each was formed to lodge the soul of the other. Having met them both formerly, their appearance was not anything

new to me : but Jeffrey looks the poet all over ;—the ardent eye, the nervous agitation, the visibly quick perceptions, keep one's attention constantly awake, in expectation of flashes of the peculiar intelligence of genius : nor is that expectation entirely disappointed : for his conversation is in a high degree fluent and animated. Walter Scott, again, has not a gleam of poetic fire visible in his countenance, which merely suggests the idea of plain good sense : his conceptions do not strike you as by any means so rapid or so brilliant as those of his critic ; yet there is much amusement and variety in his good-humoured, easy, and unaffected conversation.

Some months later, she remarks of Jeffrey :—

Do you know, notwithstanding my wrath for his manifold literary offences, I think I shall be forced to like the Arch-Critic himself. He is, what, indeed, I knew before, the most affectionate relation possible, and truly good-natured in society, though so petulant on paper.

I must tell you how the Arch-Critic, Mr Jeffrey, and I have behaved to each other. For some time past I met him at parties, and I thought he looked odd and avoided me. Something I knew there was, but was not in the least aware that it was a criticism, having been told formerly that he resolved to let me alone. I was, however, obliged to have, what I much dislike, a small party in summer, on account of some strangers whose friends had strong claims on my attention. I boldly sent a note to the critic, saying, that if he had renounced me, he should at once tell me so, like a brave man as he was ; if not, to come on Wednesday evening, and meet some people whom I knew he did like. He answered, that, so far from renouncing, he had thought of me more than anybody else for some days past ; and if a little packet he was about to send me to-morrow, did not make me retract my invitation, he should gladly wait on me. I got, next day, the threatened packet, now before the public. Here follows the accompanying note, as far as I recollect it,—“ When I review the works of my friends, if I can depend on their magnanimity as much as I think I can on yours, I let them know what I say of them before they are led out to execution. When I take up my revising pen, I consider myself as entering the temple of truth, and bound to say what I think.”

Mrs. Grant professed herself satisfied. Seven years after this, we find her writing about a brilliant critique on Byron from Jeffrey's pen, with which the Edinburgh coteries were ringing, and giving him, though on a quite different score, praise, which we conceive very high praise indeed, when the reckless extravagance, folly, and paltry ambition, which shortly afterwards planged so many of his contemporaries into embarrassment, bankruptcy, and every sort of meanness and misery, are considered. Mrs. Grant tells that she dined at Mr. Jeffrey's—

A comparatively small and select party, where every one could see and hear each other, proved very pleasant. At this house I greatly admire the respectable, yet simple and moderate style of the furniture, entertainment, &c. This, in such persons, is the perfection of good sense : it would be as absurd for people, who, in the most literal sense of the phrase, live by their wits, to enter into rivalry of this kind with the great and wealthy, as it would be for these to try to excel Jeffrey in critical acumen, or Scott in poetry.

In reference to the puerile and ribald attacks made on the “ Arch-Critic ” by the early contributors to *Blackwood*—by young men trying to write themselves into notice, and not very scrupulous about the means—Mrs. Grant remarks :—

The town is in an uproar about the Chaldee manuscript in *Blackwood's Magazine*. . . . Literary gossip here holds the place of the petty personalities in little country towns, and of the more important concerns of foreign commerce in greater ones. Formerly these were very harmless contests ; but people have got such a taste for war and strong sensations, that what they cannot find they will make. Jeffrey is the Buonaparte

of literature here ; and I think this confederacy of petulant young men seem encouraged to attack him by the fate of his prototype.

Mrs. Grant frequently expatiates upon the good nature, the simplicity of manners, and unpretending ways of Scott. One good anecdote of him is related.

A young lady from England, very ambitious of distinction, and thinking the outrageous admiration of genius was nearly as good as the possession of it, was presented to Walter Scott, and had very nearly gone through the regular forms of swooning sensibility on the occasion. Being afterwards introduced to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, she bore it better, but kissed his hand with admiring veneration. It is worth telling for the sake of Mr. Scott's comment. He said, “ Did you ever hear the like of that English lass, to faint at the sight of a cripple clerk of Session, and kiss the dry withered hand of an old tax-gatherer ! ”

Scott, as everybody knows, was a Clerk of Session ; and the Man of Feeling held the office of Comptroller of Taxes.

The parish of Laggan lies in the Duke of Gordon's principality ; and the Duchess had taken a warm interest in Mrs. Grant and her family, though she had never seen her previous to her widowhood, and, indeed, only once or twice during her whole life. Of that great lady, who then made so brilliant a figure in the highest circles of London, as not only the leader of fashion, but the friend of the minister of the day, Mrs. Grant appears to have formed a true idea. While living in Stirling she writes to Mr. Hatsell :—

I was sitting quietly at the fireside one night lately, when I was summoned, with my eldest daughter, to attend the Duchess of Gordon. We spent the evening with her at her inn ; and very amusing and original she certainly is : extraordinary she is determined to be, wherever she is, and whatever she does. She speaks of you in very high terms, which, you know, always happens in the case of those whom the Duchess “ delighteth to honour ” : as the highest testimonial of your merit that she can give, she says you were one of the greatest favourites Mr. Pitt had ; and then she pronounced an eloquent eulogium on that truly great man. Her Grace's present ruling passion is literature,—to be the arbitress of literary taste, and the patroness of genius,—a distinction for which her want of early culture, and the flutter of a life devoted to very different pursuits, has rather disqualified her ; yet she has strong flashes of intellect, which are, however, immediately lost in the formless confusion of a mind ever hurried on by contending passions and contradictory objects, of which one can never be attained without the relinquishment of others. She reminds me, at present, of what has been said of the ladies of the old régime in France, who, when they could no longer lead up the dance of gaiety and fashion, set up for *beaux esprits*, and decided on the merits of authors.

Having said all this of her Grace, it is but fair to add, that in one point she never varies, which is active, nay, most industrious benevolence. Silver and gold she has not, but what she has—her interest, her trouble, her exertions—she gives with unequalled perseverance. She was at as much pains to seek out an orphan, the son of a gentleman who died lately in the Highlands, leaving a numerous unprovided family ; she was at as much pains to seek out this orphan, who lodged in some obscure corner of Stirling, as if he had been a fit match for her grand-daughter who accompanied her.

Mrs. Grant happened to be in Edinburgh on a visit, during the winter of 1809, when the Duchess of Gordon, then somewhat in the wane in London, irradiated the northern metropolis by her presence. She at this time again saw her Grace, and thus describes the interview :—

I called on the Duchesses of Gordon yesterday : she and I having a joint interest in an orphan family in the Highlands, which creates a kind of business between us. She had a prodigious levée, and insisted on my sitting to see them out, that we might afterwards have our private discussion. Among other characters at her levée, I saw Lord Lauderdale, who made me start to see him almost a lean slippered pantaloon, who, the last time I saw him, was a fair-haired youth at Glasgow College. He was really like a "memento mori" to me : had I much to leave, I would have gone home and made my will directly. More gratified I was to see Sir Brook Boothby ; though he, too, looked so feeble and so dismal, that one would have thought him just come from writing those sorrows sacred to Penelope, which you have certainly seen. Being engaged to dinner, I could stay no longer. The Duchesse said that on Sunday she never saw company, nor played cards, nor went out : in England, indeed, she did so, because every one else did the same ; but she would not introduce those manners into this country. I stared at these gradations of piety growing warmer as it came northward, but was wise enough to stare silently. She said she had a great many things to tell me ; and as I was to set out this morning, I must come that evening, when she would be alone. At nine I went, and found Walter Scott, whom I had never before met in society, though we had exchanged distant civilities ; Lady Keith, Johnson's Queeney, and an English lady, witty and fashionable-looking, who came and went with Mr. Scott. No people could be more easy and pleasant, without the visible ambition of shining ; yet animated, and seeming to feel at home with each other. I think Mr. Scott's appearance very unpromising, and common-place indeed ; yet though no gleam of genius animates his countenance, much of it appears in his conversation, which is rich, various, easy, and animated, without the least of the petulance with which the Faculty, as they call themselves, are not unjustly reproached.

There is, we think, penetration, besides nice female discrimination in Mrs. Grant's estimate of the two Mrs. Baillies.

Mrs. Baillie (for so her elder sister chooses to be distinguished) people like in their hearts better than Mrs. Joanna, though they would not for the world say so, thinking that it would argue great want of taste not to prefer Melpomene. I, for my part, would greatly prefer the Muse to walk in a wood or sit in a bower with ; but in that wearisome farce, a large party, Agnes acts her part much better. The seriousness, simplicity, and thoughtfulness of Joanna's manners overawe you from talking common-place to her ; and as for pretension or talking fine, you would as soon think of giving yourself airs before an Apostle. She is mild and placid, but makes no effort either to please or to shine ; she will neither dazzle nor be dazzled, yet, like others of the higher class of mind, is very indulgent in her opinions : what passes before her seems rather food for thought than mere amusement. In short, she is not merely a woman of talent, but of genius, which is a very different thing, and very unlike any other thing ; which is the reason that I have taken so much pains to describe her. Joanna's conversation is rather below her abilities, justifying Lord Gardenstone's maxim, that true genius is ever modest and careless. Agnes unconsciously talks above herself, merely from a wish to please, and a habit of living among her intellectual superiors. I should certainly have liked and respected Joanna, as a person singularly natural and genuine, though she had never written a tragedy. I am not at all sure that this is the case with most others.

These ladies were at this period, June 1820, on a visit in Edinburgh. Proofs of Mrs. Grant's sound common-sense are scattered throughout the whole correspondence ; and many of her letters, as those to Mr. Henning the artist, and to Miss Anne Dunbar, along with this display very friendly feelings, and a generous interest in the well-being of her correspondents ; though with Mr. Henning

she seems a little too "apt to teach." We shall, nearly at random, select a few isolated passages, which tend to establish the soundness of her judgment. It is thus she speaks to a friend of female separatists :—

Your scruples in detaching yourself, in the duties of public worship, from your family, must have been, to your feeling mind, of much weight, and, I am sure, unmixed with any lower motive. But I think you are well aware that I do not extend this indulgence of opinion to all females who choose a separate path ; my observation of life having warranted me in the opinion, that a love of distinction and consequence, among a certain set, has more to do with it than the subjects of this censure of mine are at all aware of. Nothing can be further from applying to you, who are diffident to a fault : but you may observe, that most people who separate from their family in this manner, are of the tribe distinguished for self-opinion ; and that when once they do set up a standard of purer doctrine and stricter practice, their charity and goodwill become very much limited to those who hear the same preacher, and very much alienated from the friends of early life.

You know my dislike to very conspicuous goodness among females, which makes me abrink a little from Female Societies formed with the very best intention ; not by any means as doubting the purity of the intention, or, in many instances, the beneficial results : but such societies so often include in their number officious gossiping characters, who derive a certain imagined consequence by overruling and interfering, and are so officious in raising contributions on all their acquaintances, and have so little of the charity of opinion, that I could never feel congenial with many of them, though there are some I hold in reverence. I think if I were wealthy, however, I should gladly "shake the superfluous to them," as not doubting of their faithful administration, and intimate knowledge of those on whom they bestow ; but having little to give, I bestow that little on the poverty with which I am well acquainted.

Young ladies of ostentatious piety, and consequently of weak understanding, began, at this period, to carry about Bibles in their reticules, on which practice Mrs. Grant remarks :—

To have the Scriptures laid up in the heart, and influencing the heart and conduct, would be just as well as carrying them about : neither Lady Rachel Russell nor Hannah More, nor any other of those illustrious women that did honour to Christianity and their country, ever carried about a Bible as a spell to protect them, or as a Catholic relic. . . . I am grieved to find in some high professors, and in those who are rather boldly termed advanced Christians, such inconsistencies, such a want of candour and charity, as makes me at a loss how to estimate these professions. This produces a painful distrust both of myself and others : I accuse myself of having less reverence for high professors than formerly, and considering some of them as self-righteous and uncharitable ; while I find others, who have walked softly under the same fears and doubts as myself, more constant and upright.

Edinburgh, as may be expected, figures at large in Mrs. Grant's correspondence. Nor does she at all underrate the many advantages of "Scotia's darling seat," when she states, what however may be perfectly just of one of its circle :—

One high preëminence, however, that Edinburgh holds above other towns, and more particularly above London, is the liberal style of conversation. All the persons most distinguished and admired here speak with a degree of respect and kindness of each other,—no petty animosities nor invidious diminutions, even though differing much on political or other subjects. Then, there is no scandal, no discussion of people's private affairs or circumstances to be met with in what is accredited as good society. . . . Now, in England, people in middle life are constantly talking of their superiors, and talking

so very much of them, that, as Johnson says of Shakspeare, who, "exhausted worlds and then imagined new," they exhaust their follies and vices, and then imagine new ones. This style of conversation is, of all the styles I have met with, the most contemptible.

Speaking of a young Englishman who had been introduced to her family, she remarks:—

He appears to them a young man very correct in his conduct, and of good disposition, but evidently born in the age of calculation; a propensity of which we Scots, in revenge for the obloquy formerly thrown on us by John Bull, are very apt to accuse his calves. There is no doubt but there are among the inhabitants of the Northern Athens many who calculate very nicely; but they leave that to be discovered in their conduct, and take care that it does not appear in their conversation. Perhaps there is no place where gossiping discussions respecting the amount of individual incomes, and the prices of articles of luxury, are so seldom heard; yet people here think of these things, and struggle to attain them as much as others. Good taste keeps many things out of sight, which good feeling in a high-toned mind would not suffer to exist.

Appropos to all the evil propensities which high rents and exorbitant wealth have cherished, till, like the cuckoo's progeny, they turn the owners out of their proper abodes; I hear the complaints that resound from every side, with the most philosophic indifference, and reserve my sympathy for great and real evils. As I never thought people essentially the better for the superfluities which the late unnatural state of things enabled them to possess, so I do not think them the worse for wanting them.

Such is this Tory lady's opinion of the consequences of high rents, and "the protection of agriculture."

The structure of Edinburgh society, in relation to Mrs. Grant and others of the frugal-genteel, is amusingly illustrated in the following description of the composition of her respective parties:—

I have this morning the muddiest head you can suppose, having had a party of friends with me on the last two evenings. To understand the cause of all this hospitality, you must know that, being a very methodical and economical family, every cow of ours, as we express it in our rustic Highland dialect, has a calf; that is to say, when we have a party, which in Edinburgh includes a cold collation, we are obliged to provide *quantum sufficit* for our guests, who, being of a description more given to good talking than good eating, are content to admire and be admired, and have little time to attend to vulgar gratifications: of consequence, the more material food, after contributing, like the guests, to embellish the entertainment, remains little diminished. As our wide acquaintance includes the greatest variety of people imaginable, there are among them a number of good, kind people, that dress finely, laugh heartily, and sing merrily, and have, in some instances, genealogy besides; yet on these good people the lions and lionesses of literature would think their roaring very ill bestowed. These, however, make a greater noise in their own way, and before their superior prowess the substantial soon vanishes: they are in every sense less fastidious; happier because less wise, and more benevolent because less witty. An assemblage of these contented beings, who can amply appreciate the value of a custard, a jelly, or a jeat on its second appearance, are convenient successors to the refined pretenders to originality, who prefer what is new to what is true, and would not for the world be caught eating blanc-mange while Mr. Jeffrey and Dr. Thomas Brown are brandishing wit and philosophy in each other's faces with electric speed and brilliancy. These good fat people, who sing and eat like canary-birds, come with alacrity the day after, and esteem themselves too happy to be admitted so soon to consume mere mortal aliment in the very apartment where the delicacies of intellect were so lately shared among superior intelligences.

The grand first-day entertainment, and those who afterwards thriftily eat up "the funeral baked meats," might be a subject for Dickens.

Theodore Hook, *apropos* to such writers, frequently formed the subject of Mrs. Grant's correspondence with his sister-in-law, Mrs. Hook; and we are struck with the justice of her observations on his position and character, and his pitiable—most pitiable!—career. In one place, she says:—

Talking of genius leads me naturally to congratulate you on the awakened brotherly feelings of that Theodore for whom I know your sisterly concern is restless and extreme. You may believe I rejoice over the capture of this shy bird, for his own sake, as well as yours: I do in my heart love genius in all its forms, and even in its exuberance and eccentricity. You will teach him, for his own good, to make a due distinction between living to please the world at large, and exerting his powers in a given direction for his own benefit, and the satisfaction of his real friends. The uncultured flowers, and even the early fruit of premature intellect form an admirable decoration for a dessert; but woe to him who would expect to feast on them daily and only. Of a person depending merely on talents and powers of pleasing, what more brilliant example can be given than Sheridan! and who would choose to live his life, and die his death! I talk of his death as if it had already taken place, for what is there worth living for that he has not already outlived! and who, that ever knew the value of a tranquil mind and spotless name, would be that justly admired, and as justly despised, individual! And if the chieftain of the clan be such, what must the tribe be "of those that live by crambo-clink," as poor Burns called those hapless sons of the Muses, who, without an object or an aim, run at random through the world, and are led on by the unfeeling great and gay to acquire a taste for expensive pleasures and elegant society, and then left to languish in forlorn and embittered obscurity, when their health and their spirits and their means ebb together. Raise, then, your voice of truth and affection, and out-sing all the syrens that, on the coast of idleness, strive to attract Theodore by the songs of vanity, pleasure, and dissipation; teach him to love those that love him, independent of all that flatters or pleases, for himself; and make auxiliaries of all those kindred among whom you are now placed, to make him know something of more value than empty admiration.

Though you had not the generous and tender motives which actually instigate your endeavours to gain an ascendancy over the volatile though accomplished mind of Theodore Hook, worldly prudence should induce you to woo into the paths of honourable exertion and permanent respectability the brother of your husband and uncle of your children; and mere worldly wisdom would point out to you the only means by which this could be brought about. "Sour advice with scrupulous head" would only produce the effect of driving him for shelter into the enemy's camp; no cords will draw him but that "silken band of love" that poor Burns talks of.

In a subsequent letter, she remarks:—

Among other glad tidings you send me, I am highly pleased with Theodore Hook's intention of entering the Temple. He is not too old for it, and has certainly sense enough to know, and spirit enough to feel, how precarious and disreputable it would be to spend one's whole life in a manner which, however it might amuse the butterfly spirit of youth, made so little provision of any kind for riper years. It would be mortifying to see one that has so many better things than wit and gaiety about him shuffled into the mob of people, whose amusive talents make them first applauded and next endured, when people see that it is all they have. I think that the fate of Monk Lewis may serve as a warning to wits by profession. Spirits will not always flow; and Pope has finely described the "many miserable nights of those who must needs affect them when they have them not." Half the ingenuity that Theodore wastes to amuse people who are not worth his pains

would make him eminent in a profession. I always think of him with much kindness, and rejoice not a little to hear of his being likely to cast anchor.

Mrs. Grant often played the critic in her letters, and could not well avoid it, while her friends were continually inquiring her opinion of the new books that appeared, as that of one who sometimes looked in the living face of Mr Jeffrey,—and who had authority in literature herself. One of her most pointed critiques is this, on Peter's Letters, though it is not perhaps one of the most just:—

You would know what I think of Peter's Letters! I answer in a very low whisper—not much. The broad personality is coarse, even where it is laudatory; no one very deserving of praise cares to be held up to the public eye like a picture on sale by an auctioneer: it is not the style of our country, and is a bad style in itself. So much for its tendency. Then, if you speak of it as a composition, it has no keeping, no chastity of taste, and is in a high degree florid and verbose. . . . Some depth of thought and acuteness appears now and then like the weights at the tail of a paper kite, but not enough to balance the levity of the whole. With all this, the genius which the writers possess, in no common degree, is obvious through the whole book: but it is genius misapplied, and running riot beyond all the bounds of good taste and sober thinking. We are all amused, and so we should be, if we lived in a street where those slaves of the lamp had the power of rendering the walls so transparent that we could see everything going on at our neighbours' firesides. But ought we to be so pleased!

In general, however, she is an indulgent critic, protesting against the frequent severity and petulance of *The Edinburgh Review*, and Mr. Jeffrey's denial of the existence of female genius, save in Miss Edgeworth. Though Wordsworth's Religion and Metaphysics do not appear to have pleased her, she liked his poetry. We consider the following unstudied praise an offset for whole reams of technical critical condemnation:—

There is something so pure and lofty in his conceptions; he views external nature so entirely with a poet's eye, and has so little of the taint of worldly minds, that I grieve when I find him wandering through the trackless wilds of metaphysics, where I cannot follow him, or in the lower and too obvious paths of childish inanity, where I wish not to accompany him. Yet he is always morally right; and his pictures in the *Excursion* delight me. It is next to profanation to read that book in town, unless at midnight: its purity and simplicity, and occasional elevation of thought, make us all, with our note-writing and everlasting door-bells calling us to talk nothings to mere nobodies, seem like puppets on wires, without a thought beyond our daily trifles, which are worse than his worst; the radiance of the *White Doe* excepted. What a treasure the *Excursion* would have been at Laggan! How often, even amidst this senseless hurry, have I read the account of the eccentric clergyman, who removed his family in panniers to the mountain parsonage. People come in here constantly with new books, that take up one's time: dear Laggan, where we coned over those we had till they grew like old friends!

This series of Letters has a use, and perhaps its highest and most permanent use, in the manner in which it shows how the deepest affliction may be borne by a pious and reasonable mind. On the death of a third or fourth daughter, and soon after hearing of the death of her eldest son, Mr. Duncan Grant, whose prospects in India were of the most cheering kind, and his conduct and character all that the fondest mother could have wished, we find Mrs. Grant writing to her

eldest daughter, then in England, in the true spirit of Christian philosophy. This fondly-loved brother, suddenly snatched away, had been the pride and stay of his sisters.

My Dear Mary,—I have just read your letter, and with every allowance for human frailty, sisterly affection, and the sinking effect of many sorrows, I must affectionately reprove you for indulging, under any circumstances, the feeling, or expressing the language of despair. Had he been reduced, by the death of your dear brother, to extreme poverty, and deprived of the daily society of a beloved relative, as has been the case with many other more deserving persons, we would not be entitled to speak of "the extinction of every hope;" because, even then, the gates of a blessed immortality would have been still more visibly open to us for our transient, though severe sufferings. But here we had no right to rest any hopes on him so early taken from us, but those of knowing at a distance that he loved and remembered us. I never meant that we should subsist upon the price of blood, as I think all do who live at ease on what prolongs the exile of their relatives in that fatal Indian climate. We have the same worldly views of subsisting by our own exertions as we had before; and our views of futurity, if we improve and patiently submit to the Divine will, are improved by this severity, from that fatherly hand which chastens in love. You know my reliance on Bishop Taylor, who asserts, from close observation of God's providence, and deep study of his word, that where the vial of wrath is poured out in this world, without any visible cause why the punished should be distinguished by superior inflections, there is reason to hope that a treasure of divine mercy may be reserved in the next. This is a rich source of comfort. Then, what may not this dispensation have prevented! Riches are a great snare; and he who once sets his mind on making money is apt to forget the just uses of wealth. Great prospects of worldly advantage were opened to the beloved object of our sorrow; but it is impossible to know whether he, or we, should have borne this well: if otherwise, we are best thus.

It is the language of humility and submission, not that of rash despair, that we ought to speak. Much, much remains that we may still be deprived of: you have relatives to lose, whose value would be trebled in your estimation, were you deprived of them; you have my firmness of mind and exertion to lose, which has hitherto been almost miraculously preserved to me, for your general good; and you have the means of subsistence to lose, which fruitless and sinful excess of sorrow may deprive you of. Do not think me harsh: the excuse you will all make to yourselves for a sinful indulgence of sorrow is, that we have suffered so very much. The very contrary inference should be drawn by a chastened and well-regulated mind. Why did we suffer so much? God has no ill-will towards his creatures; no delight in giving them pain. If He has so often broken, with a strong hand, those ties that bound us to the world, should we not, by this time, be loosed from it, and prepared for all that the vicissitudes of life can bring to those whom sorrow should have sanctified? We are permitted to weep, but we must not lie down in the dust and forsake each other; but rather consider ourselves as a remnant of a once large and promising family, left to soothe and support each other, and do honour, by our patience and submission, to the religion we profess. Comfort, comfort me, my child! and may the God of consolation visit you with light and many blessings. All here are rather mending, and support is given to your affectionate mother,
ANNE GRANT.

Those who have read the "Superstitions of the Highlands," must be aware, that there was a little tinge of something deserving a softer name than superstition, apparent in Mrs. Grant's mind, as there is, perhaps, in every imaginative mind. One proof of it, and nearly the only thing of the sort in the entire correspondence, occurs at the end of one of the above letters, in which she says, that she will

not recur again to her daughter's death, feeling the wound too deep to expose it to indifferent eyes.

I only add what I must tell you, that Anne, for a few days before her death, when waking confused from unquiet sleep, exclaimed three or four times, "Duncan is in Heaven!" Strange, this gave us no fear or alarm at the time; now it is balm to my sad recollections: he died about ten days before her. Accept poor Isabella's love, and believe me, with affection, your attached friend.

We shall cite but one more proof of the sacrificing strength of this mother's mind, her power to control her own emotions, when receiving the severest chastisement, and to sustain the less disciplined minds of her young daughters. She was on a visit with her eldest daughter, at Rokgby Hall, whence she got a little boy, the heir of that place, as a pupil. She had left one of her daughters at home, in a very delicate and precarious state of health, though immediate danger was not apprehended: and the daughter who accompanied, was also in indifferent health. When she had returned to Glasgow, on her way home, she thus wrote Mrs. Hook:—

Now, my dear friend, after wearing out my very soul and spirits with communicating sad tidings to others, I come to claim your sympathy and gratulation at once; for you will both feel my distress, and duly estimate my consolations. Catherine, my admired and truly admirable Catherine, is at rest! My old attached friend, the Rev. Mr. Hall, who, with his whole family, were particularly fond of Catherine, had lodgings near her, and some of them saw her daily. I found a letter addressed, by my desire, to Fellfoot, in which they told me that she had not at any rate been worse than when I saw her, and that they hoped she would be better by the time I returned. Some days after, I got a letter at Rokeby from Mr. Hall. I opened it, and found the first lines a preparation for some wounding intelligence. I feared it might affect me so powerfully as to force me to distress a house full of strangers, and particularly alarm Mary, whose mind had suffered so much from former distress, that she was ill prepared for a new shock. I put the letter, unread, in my pocket, and feigned indisposition to Mary, to account for the tremours I felt, which shook me every now and then almost to fainting. I sent Mary to bed before me, and when she was asleep, opened the fatal letter. I will not describe my anguish on finding the dear creature had got beyond my cares and tenderness, at the very time I was languishing to clasp her to my breast. Nothing could be more sudden or more quiet than her departure.

My dear friend, I can write no more. When I arrive at Stirling, and settle quietly, I will tell you at large of my Catherine, that you may know how valuable she was. And yet how much fitter her fervid spirit was for the bliss of angels than for the struggles of suffering humanity. Adieu! my grief will in time be tranquil as she who caused it.

Shall I complain, whose mind had suffered so much from former distress, while conscious that angels hover round me, and while those that still on earth love me so tenderly are themselves so worthy of love! The fire of heaven has indeed scathed my branches; but while the stem is bound by such tendrils as these, life will still remain in it. How tender, how interesting were those eight days we passed together! The dear souls live in a voluntary seclusion, that they may cherish the precious memory of my beloved children, and indulge those aspirations after a happier state, so natural to the wounded heart.

I am apt to say, in some moments of "anguish unmingled and agony pure," "O Catherine, Catherine, thou hast split my heart"; and I think I hear her melodious voice reply, "Then live the purer with the other half." Sure I must have told you of Catherine's voice; the day that we parted, she sang the Judgment Hymn to me like a seraph. "Angels hear that angel sing." There is no speaking of that admirable creature without soaring into rapture, or

sinking in anguish. "Turn, hopeless thoughts, turn from her!"

We have been beguiled by Mrs. Grant's letters into exceeding our allotted space, and must abruptly leave off with a passage in a letter to her son in India, which we earnestly commend to the attention of the many British mothers who have sons in that country.

I must now tell you of an additional and very strong motive that I have for keeping your sisters independent of you. I regard with very great compassion most men who are destined to spend their lives in India. Far from home and all its sweet and social comforts, and burdened perhaps with relations who keep them back in the paths of independence, they seek a resource in forming temporary connexions with the natives. These, I am told, are often innocent and even amiable creatures, who are not aware of doing anything reprehensible in thus attaching themselves. In the meantime, the poor woman who has devoted herself to him secures his affection by being the mother of his children: time runs on; the unfortunate mother, whom he must tear from his heart and throw back to misery and oblivion, is daily forming new ties to him. The children, born heirs to shame and sorrow, are for a time fondly cherished, till the wish of their father's heart is fulfilled, and he is enabled to return to his native country, and make the appearance in it to which his ambition has been long directed. Then begin his secret but deep vexations; and the more honourable his mind; and the more affectionate his heart, the deeper are those sorrows which he dare not own, and cannot conquer. This poor rejected one, perhaps faithfully and fondly attached, must be thrown off; the whole habits of his life must be broken; he must pay the debt he owes to his progenitors, and seek to renew the social comforts of the domestic circle by soliciting, with little previous acquaintance and no great attachment, some lady glad to give youth and beauty for wealth and consequence. The forsaken children, once the objects of his paternal fondness, must be banished, and have the sins of their fathers sorely visited upon them.

I will spare myself and you the pain of finishing this picture, which you must know to be a likeness, not of an individual only, but of a whole tribe of expatriated Scotchmen, who return home exactly in this manner. This, my dear son, is what I dread in your case, and would fain avoid, that is, prevent it if I could. All that remains for me is, in the first place, not to burden you with encumbrances that may check the freedom of your will; and in the next, to assure you, that if any person, whom it would be decent or proper for you to connect yourself with by honourable ties, should gain your affections, your mother and your sisters will be ready to adopt her to theirs. Difference of nation, or even of religion, would not alienate us from any wife that you would choose. Doubtless, we should much prefer that you were married to one that we knew and esteemed; but we should far rather make room in our hearts for a stranger, who was modest and well principled, than see you in the predicament I have described.

We fear that Mrs. Grant's liberality as to *religion* might only extend to the Episcopalian form, and of *nation*, to the English, and, perhaps, the Irish. She showed that strong prejudice against the French which was the feeling of her Anti-Gallican age.

But Mrs. Grant was, on principle, a friend to early marriages; and, in contradistinction to Mrs. Trollope and others, thought the young married people of America justified in living in boarding-houses for a time, if they could not afford, all at once, "the pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious housekeeping." "How much is affection," she says, "curbed in this country, and how much happiness delayed, by the ambition for style!"