

CHAPTER VIII.

LITERATURE.—BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

1817—1820.

WITH the year 1817 we enter on a new epoch in Wilson's life. Hitherto his literary exertions had been confined almost exclusively to poetry; and the reception of his works, however favorable, had not been such as to satisfy him that that was the department in which he was destined to assert his superiority, or to find full scope for his varied powers. Much as has been said as to the mode in which these were exercised, and the comparative inadequacy of the results, I cannot but think that there is misconception on the subject. I dismiss the question what he or any other man of great powers *ought* to have done: I look simply at what he *did* do, which alone concerns us, now that his work is finished. Whether he might or should have written certain works on certain subjects, for the use or pleasure of his own generation and of posterity, seems to me an idle question. Enough for his vindication, that in a long and laborious literary life he wielded a wholesome and powerful influence in the world of letters; and enough for his fame, that amid the haste and exigencies of incessant periodical composition, he wrote such things as no other man but himself could have written, and which will be read and delighted in as long as the highest kind of criticism and of prose-poetry are valued among men. Periodical literature, it seems to me, was precisely the thing for which he was suited by temperament, versatility, and power; and unless it be broadly asserted, that the service done to letters and civilization through the medium of a great literary organ is unimportant, and unworthy of the efforts of a man of genius, I do not see how it can be maintained that Professor Wilson neglected or threw away his gifts when he devoted them to the establishment and maintenance of the influence of *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Before, however, entering on the less peaceful events which follow, let us have a glimpse of him once more—rod in hand, and knapsack on back—away in the heart of the Highlands towards the close of July, 1817. This time, however, he was burdened with a new load,

for he carried besides his wardrobe and fishing-basket, a parcel of books. He had, in fact, come bound to produce an "article" for the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*, and that inexorable familiar the printer's devil followed on his heels even into the wilds of Rannoch. There he finished for the August number of that magazine a review of "Lalla Rookh," of which the first part had appeared in June. The following letter is the only memorial of this expedition:—

"MY DEAREST JANE:—On Monday at four o'clock I got to Perth, and during the journey felt much for poor Robert, who must have got dreadfully wet. We dined comfortably there, and walked to Dunkeld in the evening on foot, a very pleasant walk after the rain. On Tuesday, we took the top of the coach to Pitlochry, thirteen miles from Dunkeld, and about six from the bridge, where we got into the coach from Mrs. Izett's. We thence walked by the river Tummel (a scene somewhat like Borrowdale) to an inn at the head of Loch Tummel, where we stayed all night. On Wednesday, we fished up to Kinloch Rannoch, and I killed forty good trouts. I found our worthy friends here in good health and spirits. They have had two children since we saw them, and they inquired very kindly for you. On Thursday, I fished down to Mount Alexander, but the day was cold and unfavorable. Mr. Stewart, of Inverhadden, dined with us at the inn—a rare original. I fear I did not go to bed sober. (*Friday*.)—I have breakfasted with him, and fished; good sport, though, as usual, I lost several large ones. Menzies and his friend left me to-day for Loch Erich, and I expect to see no more of them. To-morrow I ought to leave this, but that confounded Lalla Rookh is still on my hands; so I shall review it to-morrow, leave it here, and be off to Blair Athole on Sunday. On Monday, I shall be at Captain Harden's, Altnagoich, Braemar, and hope on Wednesday to have good accounts of my sweet girl and the fry. After that my motions are uncertain, but on Sunday evening write to 'Mr. Wilson, Post-Office, Inverness, to lie till called for,' and I hope to be there as soon as the letter. That is the second Sunday after my departure. No mistakes now. Write long and witty letters. The weather has been tolerable, and I am in good health. Give my love to Ung and the others, and God in his mercy keep them all well and happy. Heaven bless you forever, and believe me thy loving and grateful husband.

"KINLOCH RANNOCH *July 27, 1817.*"

Here also may come in two pleasant letters from Jeffrey, before we arrive at the point when it became impossible for the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* to exchange confidential and friendly communications with an acknowledged contributor to *Blackwood*:—

“CRAIGCROOK, 10th October, 1817.

“MY DEAR WILSON:—Do you think you could be prevailed on to write a review for me now and then? Perhaps this may appear to you a very audacious request, and I am not sure that I should have had the boldness to make it, but I had heard it surmised, and in very intelligent quarters, that you had occasionally condescended to exercise the functions of a critic in works where your exertions must necessarily obtain less celebrity than in our journal. When I apply for assistance to persons in whose talents and judgment I have as much confidence as I have in yours, I leave of course the choice of their subjects very much to themselves, being satisfied that it must always be for my interest to receive all they are most desirous of sending. It is therefore rather with a view to tempt than to assist you, that I venture to suggest to you a general review of our dramatic poetry, a subject which I long meditated for myself, but which I now feel that I shall never have leisure to treat as I should wish to treat it, and upon which indeed I could not now enter, without a pretty laborious resumption of my early and half-forgotten studies. To you, I am quite sure, it is familiar, and while I am by no means certain that our opinions could always coincide, I have no hesitation in saying, that I should very much distrust my own when they were in absolute opposition to yours, and that I am unfeignedly of opinion that in your hands the disquisition will be more edifying and quite as entertaining as ever it could have been in mine. It is the appearance of the weak and dull article in the last *Quarterly*, which has roused me to the resolution of procuring something more worthy of the subject for the *Edinburgh*, and there really is nobody but yourself to whom I can look with any satisfaction for such a paper.

“I do not want, as you will easily conjecture, a learned, ostentatious, and antiquarian dissertation, but an account written with taste and feeling, and garnished, if you please, with such quotations as may be either very curious or very delightful. I intended something of this sort when I began my review of Ford's plays, but I ran off the course almost at starting, and could never get back again.

“Now, pray, do not refuse me rashly. I am not without impatience for your answer, but I would rather not have it for a day or two, if your first impression is that it would be unfavorable. If you are in a complying mood, the sooner I hear it the better.

“Independent of all this, will you allow me again to say, that I am very sincerely desirous of being better acquainted with you, and regret very much that my many avocations and irregular way of life have forced me to see so little of you. Could you venture to dine here without a party any day next week that you choose to name, except Saturday? If you have no engagement, will you come on Monday or Tuesday? Any other day that may be more convenient. If you take my proposal into kind consideration, we may talk a little of the drama; if not, we will fall on something else. Believe me always very faithfully yours,

“F. JEFFREY.

“Send your answer to George Street.”

The fact that my father agreed to contribute to an organ which soon after became the object of determined hostility in the periodical to which he chiefly devoted his services, will not, I imagine, be now regarded in the same light as it was by the Edinburgh Whigs of 1817. The practice of writing on different subjects in organs of the most hostile opinions is one which is now so universal among men of the highest character in the world of letters, that it needs no vindication here. At the time, too, when my father received this friendly overture from Jeffrey, the Magazine had not assumed that position as a representative of high Tory principles which by and by placed it in direct antagonism to the Review. The subjects on which he agreed to contribute were purely literary, and he was, no doubt, very glad to get the opportunity of expressing his views on poetry in an organ where that subject had not been treated in a style which he could consider satisfactory. It would appear that he had offered to review Coleridge in a friendly manner, which, taken in connection with the fact that a fierce onslaught on that poet appeared in the Number of *Blackwood* at that very time in the press, may furnish matter for unfavorable judgment to any sympathizers in the angry feelings of that period. I have no fear, however, that this circumstance will lead to uncharitable conclusions in the minds of any whose opinion I value. I am content to risk the reader's estimate of my father's generosity and kindness of nature on the real

facts of his life, without keeping any thing in the background that throws light upon them. The following is Jeffrey's reply to his communication, which I regret has not come into my hands :—

“CRAIGCROOK, 17th October, 1817.

“MY DEAR WILSON:—I give you up Byron freely, and thankfully accept of your conditional promise about the drama; for Coleridge, I should like first to have a little talk with you. I had intended to review him fairly, and, if possible, favorably, myself, at all events mercifully; but, on looking into the volume, I can discern so little new, and so much less good than I had expected, that I hesitate about noticing him at all. I cannot help fearing, too, that the discrepancy of our opinions as to *that* style of poetry may be too glaring to render it prudent to venture upon it, at least under existing circumstances; and besides, if I must unmask all my weakness to you, I am a little desirous of having the credit, though it should only be an inward one, of doing a handsome or even kind thing to a man who has spoken ill of me, and am unwilling that a favorable review of this author should appear in the *Review* from any other hand than my own. But we shall talk of this after I have considered the capabilities of the work a little further.

“I am very much gratified by the kind things you are pleased to say of me, though the flattering ones with which you have mixed them rather disturb me. When you know me a little better, you will find me a very ordinary fellow, and really not half so vain as to take your testimony in behalf of my qualifications. I have, I suppose, a little more practice and expertness in some things than you can yet have, but I am very much mistaken if you have not more talent of every kind than I have. What I think of your character you may infer from the offer I have made you of my friendship, and which I rather think I never made to any other man.

“I think you have a kind heart and a manly spirit, and feel perfectly assured that you will always act with frankness, gentleness, and firmness. I ask pardon for sending you this certificate, but I do not know how else to express so clearly the grounds of my regard and esteem.

“Believe me always, very faithfully yours,

“F. JEFFREY.

“I hope to see you on your return from Glasgow.”

Of the subjects spoken of or contemplated, the only one which he took up was Byron, the review of whom did not make its appearance till August of the following year. That was my father's first and last contribution to the *Edinburgh Review*. Another fragment of a letter from Jeffrey, that must have been written not long after, may also be inserted here for the sake of coherence. It refers to a vindication of Wordsworth by my father, in reply to a letter in the *Edinburgh Magazine* criticising the poet's strictures on the *Edinburgh Review's* estimate of the character of Burns:—

. . . “hear that you had any thing to do with it, and was so far from feeling any animosity to the author that I conceived a very favorable opinion of him. I have not had an opportunity of looking into it since I saw your letter, but I can most confidently assure you that nothing that is there said can break any squares between us, and that you may praise Wordsworth as much as you please, and vilipend my criticisms on him in the most sweeping manner without giving me a moment's uneasiness or offence, provided you do not call me a slanderer, and an idiot, and a puppy, and all the other fine names that that worthy and judicious person has thought fit to lavish on me. I fairly tell you that I think your veneration for that gentleman is a sort of infatuation, but in you it is an amiable one, and I should think meanly of myself indeed if I were to take exception at a man for admiring the poetry or the speculative opinions of an author who, having had some provocation, has been ridiculously unjust to me. One thing I am struck with as a wilful blindness and partiality in the paper in question, and that was your passing over entirely the remarkable fact of the said W—— saying little or nothing of the blasphemies against Burns which occur in the *Quarterly*, and which are far more violent and offensive than mine, and pouring out all the vials of his wrath at the *Edinburgh*, which had given him much less provocation. Is it possible for you in your conscience to believe after this that the tirade against the *Edinburgh* critic was dictated by a pure, generous resentment for the injuries done to Burns, and not by a little vindictive feeling for the severities practised on himself. By the way, I think I am *nearly* right in what I have said of Burns; that is, I think the doctrine and morality to which I object is far oftener inculcated in his writings than any other, and is plainly most familiar to his thoughts, though perhaps it was ungenerous to denounce it so strongly.

"I have not written so long a letter these three years. Pray let me hear that you are writing a review of Lord B—— for me in peace and felicity, and that you have resolved to dirty your fingers no more with the quarrels of magazines and booksellers. God bless you!

"Very truly yours, F. JEFFREY."

My father's connection with *Blackwood's Magazine* was such as to make it absolutely necessary, in any record of his life, to give some account of the rise of this periodical, and of the circumstances which led to his becoming so intimately associated with its history. I shall endeavor to do so as briefly as I can. Fortunately, we are now sufficiently removed by time from the controversies of those exciting days, to look at them with perfect calmness, if not impartiality; with something of wonder, it may be, at the fierceness displayed in contests about things which, in our own more peaceful times, are treated with at least the affectation of philosophic indifference; but also, with some admiration of the vigor manifested in supporting what was heartily believed. It is, indeed, impossible for us at this time to realize fully the state of feeling that prevailed in the literature and politics of the years between 1810 and 1830. We can hardly imagine why men, who at heart respected and liked each other, should have found it necessary to hold no communion, but, on the contrary, to wage bitter war because the one was an admirer of the Prince Regent and Lord Castlereagh, the other a supporter of Queen Caroline and Mr. Brougham. We cannot conceive why a poet should be stigmatized as a base and detestable character, merely because he was a Cockney and a Radical; nor can we comprehend how gentlemen, aggrieved by articles in newspapers or magazines, should have thought it necessary to the vindication of their honor, to horsewhip or shoot the printers or editors of the publications in which such articles appeared. Yet in 1817, and the following years, we find such to have been the state of things in the capital of Scotland. Not only was society actually less civilized; but politics, which now happily forms no barrier between men of otherwise congenial minds, then constituted the one great line of demarcation. You were either a Tory and a good man, or Whig and a rascal, and *vice versa*. If you were a Tory, and wanted a place, it was the duty of all good Tories to stand by you; if you were a Whig, your chance was small; but its feebleness was

all the more reason why you should be proclaimed a martyr, and all your opponents profligate mercenaries. If I exaggerate, I am open to correction; but such appears to me to have been the prevailing tone among the men who figured most actively in public life about the time to which this chapter relates. In literature, at that time, the *Edinburgh Review* was supremè. Its doctrines were received, among those who believed in them, as oracular; and in the hands of the small retailers of political and literary dogmas who swore by it, these were becoming insufferably tiresome to the Tory part of mankind, who, singularly enough, had no literary oracle of their own north of the Tweed. I suppose the party being strong in power did not feel the want of such influence. The more ardent and active minds on that side, however, were naturally impatient of the dictatorship exercised by Mr. Jeffrey, and wanted only opportunity to establish an opposing force in the interests of their own venerable creed. That opportunity came, and was vigorously used, too vigorously at first, sometimes cruelly and unjustly, but ultimately with results eminently beneficial.

To begin then at the beginning. In the month of December, 1816, Mr. William Blackwood, who had by uncommon tact and energy, established his character in the course of a few years as an enterprising publisher in Edinburgh, was applied to by two literary men to become the publisher of a new monthly magazine, which they had projected.* These gentlemen were James Cleghorn,† who had acquired some literary position as editor of a *Farmers' Magazine*, and Thomas Pringle,‡ a pleasant writer and poet, who afterwards emigrated to South Africa.§ The idea was good, and the time fitting for the "felt want," which is now pleaded about once a week as the ground for establishing some new journal, was then a serious reality; the only periodical in Edinburgh of any mark besides the *Review* being the *Scots Magazine*, published by Constable, once a highly respectable, but at that time a vapid and

* Mr. Gillies in his *Memoirs* gives the credit of the origin and suggestion to Hogg.—Vol. i., p. 230.

† Mr. Cleghorn was more fortunate in his financial than his literary undertakings, having been the founder of the Scottish Provident Institution, by whom a monument to his memory has been erected in the Edinburgh Warriston Cemetery. He died in May, 1838.

‡ Author of *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa, Ephemerides, &c.*; born 1789, died 1894.

§ By a curious coincidence both these gentlemen were lame, and went on crutches, an infirmity to which ludicrous but most improper allusion is made in the Chaldee MS., where they are described as coming in "skipping on staves."

almost "doited" publication. Messrs. Cleghorn and Pringle had secured the co-operation of several clever writers—among others, Mr. R. P. Gillies and James Hogg—and Mr. Blackwood's sagacious eye at once discerned the elements of success in the project. The arrangements were accordingly proceeded with, on the footing that the publisher and the editors were to be joint proprietors, and share the profits, if any. The first number appeared in April, 1817, under the title of *The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*. The contents were varied and agreeable, but no way remarkable; and a prefatory note to the next number, in which the editors spoke of "Our humble Miscellany," indicates a certain mediocrity of aim which must have been distasteful to the aspiring energy of the publisher, who had very different views of what the Magazine ought to be made. There was no definite arrangement for the payment of contributors. In fact it seems to have been taken for granted that contributions were to be supplied on the most moderate terms, if not altogether gratuitously. I find Mr. Blackwood stating in his subsequent vindication of himself, in reply to the charge of having supplied no money to the editors, that during the six months of their connection, he "had paid them different sums, amounting to £50." He adds, "They will tell you I never refused them any money they applied for. They may perhaps say the money was for contributors; but to this moment I am utterly ignorant of any contributors to whom they either have or were called upon to pay money, excepting some very trifling sums to two individuals."* Perhaps this fact may have something to do with the crisis that soon occurred in the management of the Magazine; at all events, it had not gone beyond two numbers, when editors and publisher found they could not work together. Mr. Pringle was a very amiable man, but his brother editor was a less agreeable person, and with an estimate of his own literary powers considerably higher than that entertained by his sagacious publisher. On the 19th of May the co-editors formally wrote to Mr. Blackwood, letting him know that his interference with their editorial functions could no longer be endured. Mr. Blackwood was probably nothing loath to receive such an intimation, and in the exercise of his rights

* This economical style of work contrasts curiously with the munificence subsequently practised in connection with the Magazine. A few years after this, I find Wilson informing a contributor, "Our pay is ten guineas a sheet," a rate since that time nearly doubled.

as partner and publisher, advertised in the June number of the Magazine that its publication would be discontinued at the end of three months from that date. The editors, thrown adrift by this *coup*, immediately offered their services to Messrs. Constable and Co., as editors of a new series of the *Scots Magazine*, to appear under the title of *The Edinburgh Magazine*; while Mr. Blackwood, after some contention and correspondence, agreed to pay his quondam partners £125 for their share in the copyright of the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*.* In acquiring the copyright of the Magazine, Mr. Blackwood determined to abandon its old title, and give it a name combining the double advantage that it would not be confounded with any other, and would at the same time help to spread the reputation of the publisher.

Accordingly in October, 1817, appeared for the first time *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (No. VII. from commencement), and it needed no advertising trumpet to let the world know that a new reign (a reign of terror in its way) had begun. In the previous six numbers there had been nothing allowed to creep in that could possibly offend the most zealous partisan of the Blue and Yellow. On the contrary, the opening article of No. I. was a good-natured eulogium on Mr. Francis Horner; the *Edinburgh Review* was praised for its ability, moderation, and good taste; politics were rather eschewed than otherwise; the literary notices were, with one or two exceptions, elaborately commonplace and complaisant, and, in fact, every thing was exemplarily careful, correct, and colorless. No. VII. spoke a different language, and proclaimed a new and sterner creed. Among a considerable variety of papers, most of them able and interesting, it contained not less than three of a kind well calculated to arouse curiosity and excitement, and to give deep offence to sections more or less extensive of the reading public. The first was a most unwarrantable assault on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, which was adjudged to be a "most execrable" performance, and its

* The sum they had demanded was £300, but according to the publisher's accounts, submitted to the law-agent of the editors, the success of the work had not been such as to justify that estimate. The accounts showed that so far from having made profit, the publisher was nearly £140 out of pocket, and that, "even if the whole impression were sold off, there would not be £70 clear profit." According to this estimate, which seems to have satisfied the agent (no other than the afterwards celebrated George Combe), the half share of the editors at the most would have been worth £35. What the number of copies printed was I have no means of knowing; it was, probably, not large, and the fact that the whole impression was not disposed of, gives some ground for the belief that the publisher had reason to be dissatisfied with the management.

author a miserable compound of "egotism and malignity."* The second was an even more unjustifiable attack on Leigh Hunt, who was spoken of as a "profligate creature," a person "without reverence either for God or man." The third was the famous "Chaldee Manuscript," compared with which the sins of the others were almost pardonable in the eyes of a great portion of the public. The effect of this article upon the small society of Edinburgh can now hardly be realized.†

It was evident, in a word, that a new and very formidable power had come into existence, and that those who wielded it, whoever they were, were not men to stick at trifles. The sensation produced by the first number, was kept up in those that followed. There was hardly a number for many months that did not contain at least one attack upon somebody, and the business was gone about with a systematic determination that showed there was an ample store of the same ammunition in reserve. Most people, however virtuous, have a kind of malicious pleasure in seeing others sacrificed, if the process be artistically gone about, and the *Blackwood* tomahawkers were undeniable adepts in the art. Even those who most condemned them, accordingly showed their appreciation of their performances by reading and talking of them, which was exactly the thing to increase their influence. It must not be imagined, however, that the staple of *Blackwood's* contributions consisted of mere banter and personality. These would have excited but slight and temporary notice, had the bulk of the articles not displayed a rare combination of much higher qualities. Whatever subjects were discussed, were handled with a masterly vigor and freshness, and developed a fulness of knowledge and variety of talent that could not fail to command respect even from the least approving critic. The publisher knew too well what suited the public taste, and had too much innate sense and fairness, to allow more than a reasonable

* It is edifying to find this article criticised thus in "Peter's Letters" two years afterwards:— "This is indeed the only one of all the various sins of the Magazine for which I am at a loss to discover not an apology but a motive. . . . The result is bad, and, in truth, very pitiable."

† It is unnecessary here to give any account of this singular *jeu d'esprit*, the history of which will be found sufficiently detailed in Professor Ferrier's excellent Preface to it, in vol. iv. of Wilson's *Works*. I may add this fact only, that it was composed in 53 Queen street, amid shouts of laughter, that made the ladies in the room above send to inquire, in wonder, what the gentlemen below were about. I am informed that among those who were met together on that memorable occasion was Sir William Hamilton, who also exercised his wit in writing a verse, and was so amused by his own performance that he tumbled off his chair in a fit of laughter.

modicum of abuse in the pages of his Magazine. But he had a difficult task in accommodating the inclinations of his fiery associates to the dictates of prudence and justice; appreciating highly, as he did, their remarkable talents, and unwilling to lose their services, it required great tact and firmness to restrain their sharp pens, and he more than once paid dearly, in solid cash, for their wanton and immoderate expressions.*

The public, whether pleased or angry, inquired with wonder where all this sudden talent had lain hid that now threatened to set the Forth on fire. Suspicions were rife; but Mr. Blackwood could keep a secret, and knew the power of mystery. Who his contributors were, who his editor, were matters on which neither he nor they chose to give more information than was necessary. It might suffice for the public to know, from the allegorical descriptions of the Chaldee MS., that there was a host of mighty creatures in the service of the "man in plain apparel," conspicuous among which were the "beautiful Leopard from the valley of the Palm trees," and "the Scorpion which delighteth to sting the faces of men." As for their leader, he was judiciously represented as a veiled person-

* The early defects of the Magazine are nowhere better analyzed than by the very hands that were chiefly engaged in the work. The authors of "Peter's Letters," after pointing out the faults of the *Edinburgh Review*, go on to say: "These faults—faults thus at last beginning to be seen by a considerable number of the old readers and admirers of the *Edinburgh Review*—seem to have been at the bottom of the aversion which the writers who established *Blackwood's Magazine* had against it; but their quarrel also included a very just disapprobation of the unpatriotic mode of considering the political events of the times adopted all along by the *Review*, and also of its occasional irreligious mockeries, borrowed from the French philosophy, or *soi-disant* philosophy of the last age. Their great object seems to have been to break up the monopoly of influence which had long been possessed by a set of persons guilty of perverting, in so many ways, talents on all hands acknowledged to be great. And had they gone about the execution of their design with as much candor and good feeling as would seem to have attended the conception of it, I have little doubt they would very soon have procured a mighty host of readers to go along with them in all their conclusions. But the persons who are supposed to have taken the lead in directing the new forces, wanted many of those qualities which were most necessary to insure success to their endeavors; and they possessed others which, although in themselves admirably fitted for enabling them to conduct their project successfully, tended, in the manner in which they made use of them, to throw many unnecessary obstacles in their way. In short, they were very young, or very inexperienced men, who, although passionately fond of literature, and even well skilled in many of its finest branches, were by no means accurately acquainted with the structure and practice of literature as it exists at this day in Britain. . . . They approached the lists of literary warfare with the spirit at bottom of true knights; but they had come from the woods and the cloisters, and not from the cities and haunts of active men, and they had armed themselves, in addition to their weapons of the right temper, with many other weapons of offence, which, although sanctioned in former times by the practice of the heroes in whose repositories they had found them rusting, had now become utterly exploded, and were regarded, and justly regarded, as entirely unjustifiable and disgraceful by all who surveyed with modern eyes the arena of their exertions."



Mr. Wilson, *alias* "The Leopard."

age, whose name it was in vain to ask, and whose personality was itself a mystery. On that point the public, which cannot rest satisfied without attributing specific powers to specific persons, refused after a time to acknowledge the mystery, and insisted on recognizing in John Wilson the real impersonation of Blackwood's "veiled editor." The error has been often emphatically corrected: let it once again be repeated, on the best authority, that the only real editor *Blackwood's Magazine* ever had was Blackwood himself. Of this fact I have abundant proofs. Suffice it that contributions from Wilson's own pen have been altered, cut down, and kept back, in compliance with the strong will of the man whose name on the title-page of the Magazine truly indicated with whom lay the sole responsibility of the management.

At what precise date my father came into personal communication with Mr. Blackwood does not appear. Before that, however, he had been an anonymous contributor to the Magazine. In the very first number is a poem entitled, "The Desolate Village, a Reverie," with the initial N., which bears strong marks of his style. Some others, similarly signed, and of similar qualities, occur in subsequent numbers. In the Notices to Correspondents in No. II., it is stated that the "Letter on the proposed new translation of the Psalms" was too late for insertion. That letter, which did not appear, is referred to in the following note, without date or signature, in my father's handwriting:—

"SIR:—I enclose a letter for your Magazine from the same anonymous writer who sent you a communication relative to a new translation of the Psalms. If these communications are inserted, and I feel some confidence that they are fitted for a work like the Edinburgh Magazine, I shall take care to send you some little trifle every month. But I prefer remaining anonymous at present, till I see how my communications are appreciated."

How the monthly trifles were appreciated by Mr. Blackwood's two editors, matters not; that they were appreciated by that gentleman himself soon became apparent. Probably enough, some of the anonymous correspondent's contributions gave rise to those differences of opinion between the publisher and the editors, which ended in their separation. One cannot but suspect that the writer

of the paper referred to in the following "Notice to a Correspondent" was either the Leopard or the Scorpion:—"The paper on Craniology by Peter Candid would have appeared in our present number, if it had not contained some improper personal allusions." In the same number (III.), at all events, is a review of "The Craniad," a Poem, which may be given entire.* I have no doubt the cautious editors inserted it with great misgivings as to its containing "improper personal allusions;" very possibly the publisher inserted it without consulting them. It is one of the very few lively things in the *Edinburgh Monthly Magazine*.

In the new Magazine, relieved from the editorial incubus, and the embarrassments of a divided responsibility, the genius of Wilson found free scope. Like a strong athlete who never before had room or occasion to display his powers, he now revelled in their exercise in an arena where the competitors were abundant, and the onlookers eagerly interested. Month after month he poured forth the exuberant current of his ideas on politics, poetry, philosophy, religion, art, books, men, and nature, with a freshness and force that seemed incapable of exhaustion, and regardless of obstacles. It was in fact only a change in the form of his activity. In that new and more exciting field he doubtless dealt many a blow, of which, on calm reflection and in maturer years, he saw reason to repent. But without at all excusing the extravagance of censure and the violence of language which often disfigured these early contributions to the Magazine, I cannot say that I have been able to trace to his hand any instance of unmanly attack, or one shade of real malignity. There did appear in the Magazine wanton and unjustifiable strictures on persons such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, with whom he was on terms of friendship, and for whom, in its own pages and elsewhere, he professed, as he sincerely felt, the highest esteem. But when it is well understood that he was never in any sense the editor, and that in these early days of the Magazine the ruling principle seemed to be that every man fought for his own

* *The Craniad, or Spurzheim Illustrated*. A Poem in Two Parts. 12mo. Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1817. "The Craniad is the worst poem we have now in Scotland. The author has it in his power at once to decide the great craniological controversy. Let him submit his skull to general inspection, and if it exhibit a single intellectual organ, Spurzheim's theory is overthrown." The original of this characteristic bit of criticism occurs in a MS. book, described by Mr. Gillies as an "enormous ledger," which, he says, was taken possession of by my father, and filled with "skeletons" of proposed articles. Of these sketches, however, the much mutilated volume contains none, the existing contents being almost entirely poetry.



Mr. Lockhart, *alias* "The Scorpion."

hand, and was surrounded with a cloud of secrecy even from his fellows, it will appear that he had simply the alternative of ceasing to contribute further to the Magazine, or of continuing to do so under the disadvantage of seeming to approve what he really condemned.* That he adopted the latter course is, I think, no stigma on his character; and in after days, when his influence in the Magazine had become paramount, he made noble amends for its former sins.

The staff of contributors whom Mr. Blackwood had contrived to rally round his standard contained many distinguished men. "The Great Unknown," and the venerable "Man of Feeling," were enlisted on his side, and gave some occasional help. Dr. Mc'Crie, the biographer of Knox, and Dr. Andrew Thomson, were solemnly and at much length reproved by an orthodox pamphleteer, styling himself *Calvinus*, for their supposed association with the wicked authors of the Chaldee Manuscript. Sir David Brewster contributed scientific articles, as did also Robert Jameson and James Wilson. Among the other contributors, actual or presumed, were De Quincey, Hogg, Gillies, Fraser Tytler, Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Sir William Hamilton, and his brother,† the author of *Cyril Thornton*. But though all these and more figured in the list of Blackwood's supporters, there were but two on whom he placed his main reliance, the most prolific and versatile of all the band, who between them were capable at any time of providing the whole contents of a Number. These were John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart. Those whose only knowledge of that pair of briefless young advocates was derived from seeing them pacing the Parliament House, or lounging carelessly into Blackwood's saloon to read the newspapers,‡ and pass their jokes on everybody, including themselves,

* Thus it is possible his desire to review Coleridge favorably in the *Edinburgh* may have arisen from a wish to do justice to that great man, the opportunity for which he was denied in the pages of *Blackwood*.

† Thomas Hamilton wrote several works besides *Cyril Thornton*; among others, *Annals of the Peninsular Campaign*, and *Men and Manners in America*. He died in 1842, at the age of fifty-three.

‡ That saloon and its proprietor are thus described by Dr. Peter Morris:—"Then you have an elegant oval saloon lighted from the roof, where various groups of loungers and literary *dilettanti* are engaged in looking at, or criticising among themselves, the publications just arrived by that day's coach from town. In such critical colloquies, the voice of the bookseller may ever and anon be heard mingling the broad and unadulterated notes of its Auld Reekie music; for unless occupied in the recesses of the premises with some other business, it is here that he has his usual station. He is a nimble, active-looking man of middle age, and moves about from one corner to

could have little idea of their power of work, or of the formidable manner in which it was being exercised. That blue-eyed and ruddy-checked poet, whose time seemed to hang lightly enough upon his hands, did not quite realize one's idea of the redoubtable critic whose "crutch" was to become so formidable a weapon. Nor did his jaunty-looking companion, whose leisure seemed to be wholly occupied in drawing caricatures,* appear a likely person, when he sauntered home from Princes street, to sit down to a translation from the German, or to dash off at a sitting "copy" enough to fill a sheet of *Blackwood's Magazine*. The striking contrast in the outward aspect of the two men corresponded truly to their difference of character and temperament—a difference, however, which proved no obstacle to their close intimacy. There was a picturesque contrast between them, which might be simply defined by light and shade; but there was a more striking dissimilarity than that which is merely the result of coloring. Mr. Lockhart's pale olive complexion had something of a Spanish character in it, that accorded well with the sombre or rather melancholy expression of his countenance; his thin lips, compressed beneath a smile of habitual sarcasm, promised no genial response to the warmer emotions of the heart. His compact, finely-formed head indicated an acute and refined intellect. Cold, haughty, supercilious in manner, he seldom won love, and not unfrequently caused his friends to distrust it in him, for they sometimes found the warmth of their own feelings thrown back upon them in presence of this cold indifference. Circumstances afterwards conferred on him a brilliant position, and he gave way to the weakness which seeks prestige from the reflected glory found in rank. The gay coteries of London society injured his interest in the old friends who had worked hand in hand with him when in Edinburgh. He was well depicted by his friend through the mouth of the Shepherd, as "the Oxford collegian, wi' a pale face and a black toozy head, but an e'e like an eagle's;

another with great alacrity, and apparently under the influence of high animal spirits. His complexion is very sanguineous, but nothing can be more intelligent, keen, and sagacious than the expression of his whole physiognomy; above all, the gray eyes and eyebrows, as full of locomotion as those of Catalani."—*Peter's Letters*, vol. ii., pp. 187, 188.

* It is said, with what truth I know not, that clever as Mr. Lockhart was with both pen and pencil, he lacked curiously one gift without which no man can be a successful barrister; he could not, like many other able writers, make a speech. His portfolios show that, instead of taking notes during a trial, his pen must have been busily employed in photographing all the parties engaged, judge, counsel, and prisoner. I avail myself of this opportunity to insert here two specimens of his wonderful power, one taken from the Bench, and another from the Pulpit.



A SCOTCH MINISTER.

“When last in Scotland I was advised to look about among the pulpits, to try whether any living specimen could be found resembling the ancient Scottish worthies. I did so, but was not successful.”—*Dr. Ulrick Sternstare on the Natural Character of the Scots.*—*Blackwood*, vol. iv., p. 329.

and a sort o' lauch about the screwed-up mouth o' him that fules ca'ed no canny, for they couldna' thole the meaning o't." I am fortunate enough to be able to give the capital likeness on page 185, drawn by his own hand, in which the satirist who spared no one, has most assuredly not been flattering to himself.

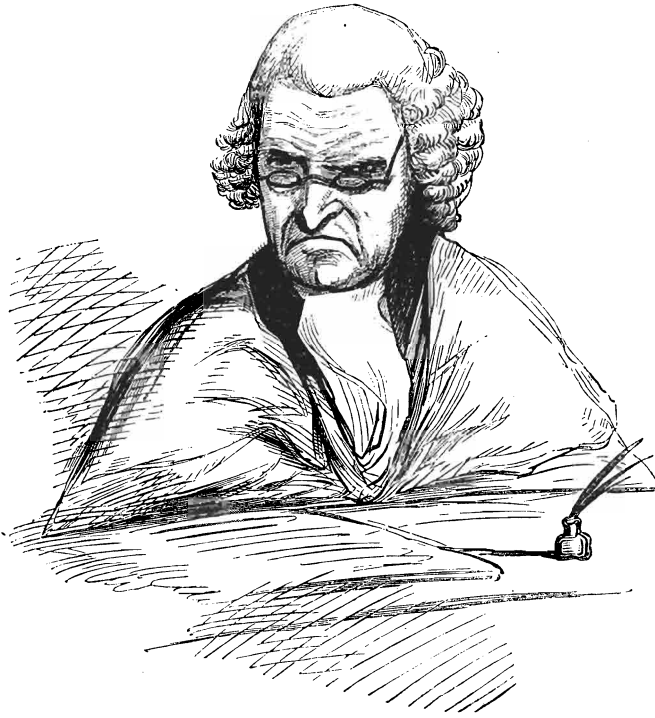
Wilson's appearance in those days is thus described in *Peter's Letters* by Mr. Lockhart:—"In complexion he is the best specimen I have ever seen of the genuine or ideal *Goth*. His hair is of the true Sicambrian yellow; his eyes are of the brightest, and at the same time of the clearest blue, and the blood glows in his cheek with as firm a fervor as it did, according to the description of Jornandes, in those of the 'Bello gaudentes, prælio ridentes Teutones' of Attila." The black-haired Spanish-looking Oxonian, with that uncanny laugh of his, was a very dangerous person to encounter in the field of letters. "I've sometimes thoct, Mr. North," says the Shepherd, "that ye were a wee feared for him yoursel', and used rather, without kennin' t, to draw in your horns." Systematic, cool, and circumspect, when he armed himself for conflict it was with a fell and deadly determination. The other rushed into combat rejoicingly, like the Teutons; but even in his fiercest mood, he was alive to pity, tenderness, and humor. When he impaled a victim, he did it, as Walton recommends, not vindictively, but as if he loved him. Lockhart, on the other hand, though susceptible of deep emotions, and gifted with a most playful wit, had no scruple in wounding to the very quick, and no thrill of compassion ever held back his hand when he had made up his mind to strike. He was certainly no coward, but he liked to fight under cover, and keep himself unseen, while Wilson, even under the shield of anonymity, was rather prone to exhibit his own unmistakable personality.

Such were the two principal contributors to *Blackwood* when it broke upon the startled gaze of Edinburgh Whigdom, like a fiery comet "that with fear of change perplexes monarchs." Not without reason did the adherents of the "Blue and Yellow" wish ill to the formidable new-comer, for, apart from its undeniable offences against good feeling and taste, there was a power and life about the Magazine that betokened ominously for the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of the great Review. In spite of its errors, the substantial merits of the Magazine securely established its popu-

larity, and in the course of a few years it became recognized throughout Britain as the most able and interesting periodical work that had ever been published.

In noticing the early contributors, it would not do to pass over Mr. Robert Sym, whose pseudonym of "Timothy Tickler" became as familiar to its readers as that of Christopher North himself. That "noble and genuine old Tory," as the Shepherd calls him, was Wilson's uncle, and in his hospitable house in George Square, *alias* "Southside," the contributors to the Magazine had many a merry gathering. He was a fine-looking, elderly gentleman, of uncommon height and aristocratic bearing, his white hair contrasting strikingly with the youthful freshness of his complexion. "Tickler," says the Shepherd, "is completely an original, as any one may see who has attended to his remarks; for there is no sophistry there; they are every one his own. Nay, I don't believe that North has, would, or durst put a single sentence into his mouth that had not proceeded out of it. No, no; although I was a scapegoat, no one, and far less a nephew, might do so with Timothy Tickler.* His reading, both ancient and modern, is boundless; his taste and perception acute beyond those of other men; his satire keen and biting; but at the same time his good-humor is altogether inexhaustible, save when ignited by coming in collision with Whig or Radical principles. At a certain period of the night our entertainer knew by the longing looks which I cast to a beloved corner of the dining-room what I was wanting; then with 'Oh, I beg your pardon, Hogg, I was forgetting,' he would take out a small gold key, that hung by a chain of the same precious metal to a particular button-hole, and stalk away, as tall as life, open two splendid fiddle-cases, and produce their contents, first the one and then the other, but always keeping the best to himself. I'll never forget with what elated dignity he stood straight up in the middle of that floor and rosined his bow: there was a twist of the lip and an upward beam of the eye that was truly sublime; then down we sat side by side and began. . . . At the end of every tune we took a glass, and still our enthusiastic admiration of the Scottish tunes increased, our energies of execution were redoubled, till ultimately it became, not only a complete and well-contested race, but a trial of strength to deter-

* But all the papers in *Blackwood*, signed "Timothy Tickler," were not written by Mr. Sym, Mr. Hogg notwithstanding.



A SCOTCH JUDGE.

mine which should drown the other. The only feelings short of ecstasy that came across us in these enraptured moments were caused by hearing the laugh and joke going on with our friends, as if no such thrilling strains had been flowing. But if Sym's eye chanced to fall on them, it instantly retreated upwards again in mild indignation.*

The Shepherd himself was not the least remarkable among that set of remarkable men. In spite of qualities that made it impossible perfectly to respect him, his original genius and good-natured simplicity made him a favorite with them all, until his vanity had become quite unendurable. He plumed himself immensely on being the real originator of the Magazine, and of the Chaldee MS. He was a very frequent contributor, but, in addition to his own genuine compositions, he got the credit of numberless performances, both in prose and verse, which he had never beheld till they appeared under his name in the pages of the Magazine. This was a part of that system of mystification practised in the management, which has never been carried so far in any other publication, and undoubtedly contributed very greatly to its success. The illustrious example of Sir Walter Scott had given encouragement to this species of deception, and the editor and writers of *Blackwood* thought themselves quite at liberty, not only to perplex the public by affixing all sorts of fictitious names and addresses to their com-

* The following epitaph on Tickler, from the *Noctes*, is worthy of extraction:—

“ Pray for the soul
Of Timothy Tickler;
For the Church and the bowl
A determined stickler.

“ Born and bred in the land
Where Fyne herrings they munch,
And a capital hand
At concocting of punch.

“ From that great bumper school
To Auld Reekie he came,
And drew in a stool
To his desk in the same.

“ But, though W. S.,
And ambitious to thrive,
Even his foes must confess
Cheated no man alive.

“ Neither harried poor gentry
Of house or of land,
Nor bolted the country
With cash in his hand.

“ Where tall as a steeple,
And thin as a shadow,
He towered o'er the people
In the Links or the Meadow.

(*Chorus*.)—With a pipe in his cheek
And a goblet before him,
Every night of the week
In *sæcula sæculorum*.”

Mr. Sym was born in 1750 and died, in 1844.

munications,* but to put forth their *jeux d'esprit* occasionally under cover of the names of real personages who had never dreamed of so distinguishing themselves. This was certainly carrying the system to a most unwarrantable length; but it must be allowed that in the case of the two individuals most played upon in this respect, the liberty was taken by no means amiss. "The Shepherd" was one of these, and he rather enjoyed the fame which was thus thrust upon him in addition to his own proper deserts.† He gives a most amusing account of his sufferings at the hands of Lockhart, whom he describes as "a mischievous Oxford puppy, dancing after the young ladies, and drawing caricatures of every one who came in contact with him." "I dreaded his eye terribly," he says, "and it was not without reason, for he was very fond of playing tricks on me, but always in such a way that it was impossible to lose temper with him. I never parted company with him that my judgment was not entirely jumbled with regard to characters, books, and literary articles of every description."‡ Lockhart continued to keep his mind in the utmost perplexity for years in all things that related to the Magazine. The Shepherd was naturally anxious to know whose the tremendous articles were that made so much sensation monthly, and having found by experience that he could extract no information out of Sym or Wilson, he would repair to Lockhart to ask him, awaiting his reply with fixed eye and a beating heart: "Then, with his cigar in his mouth, his one leg flung carelessly over the other, and without the symptom of a smile on his face, or one twinkle of mischief in his dark gray eye, he would father the articles on his brother, Captain Lockhart, or Peter Robertson, or Sheriff

* In the early numbers of the Magazine one meets a perfect host of these mythical personages, and the impression conveyed to the credulous reader must have been that contributions were flowing in from remarkable persons in all quarters of the empire. There was really so much variety and individuality imparted to these imaginary characters that it was very difficult to perceive that the same writer was assuming the guises of William Wastle, Esq., and Dr. Ulrich Sternstare, and Philip Kempferhausen, and the Baron Lauerwinkel.

† His expressions of opinion on the subject varied according to his mood, but his sober judgment of the matter is on record in his own words:—"My friends in general have been of opinion that he (Wilson) has amused himself and the public too often at my expense; but, except in one instance, which terminated very ill for me, and in which I had no more concern than the man in the moon, I never discovered any evil design on his part, and thought it all excellent sport. At the same time, I must acknowledge that it was using too much freedom with any author to print his name in full to poems, letters, and essays which he himself never saw. I do not say he has done this, but either he or some one else has done it many a time." This was written in 1832. Of Wilson's own kind feeling to Hogg, see letter of 1833.

‡ Hogg's *Memoirs*.

Cay, or James Wilson, or that queer, fat 'body,' Dr. Scott, and sometimes on James and John Ballantyne, and Sam Anderson, and poor Baxter. Then away I flew with the wonderful news to my other associates, and if any remained incredulous, I swore the facts down through them; so that before I left Edinburgh I was accounted the greatest liar that was in it except one."* The simple Shepherd by and by found out that these conspirators had made up their minds to act on O'Doherty's principle, of never denying any thing they had *not* written, or ever acknowledging any thing they *had*. He accordingly thought himself safe in thenceforth signing his name to every thing he published. "But as soon," he says, "as the rascals perceived this, they signed my name as fast as I did. They then continued the incomparable *Noctes Ambrosianæ* for the sole purpose of putting all the sentiments into the Shepherd's mouth which they durst not avowedly say themselves, and these, too, often applying to my best friends."†

A single instance will show to what lengths this system of deception, for it can be called nothing else, was carried. In the articles on Leigh Hunt, already mentioned, he was accused, among other things, of having pestered his friend Hazlitt to review him in the *Edinburgh*. Soon after—I find from Leigh Hunt's "Correspondence," recently published—he wrote to Lord Jeffrey the letter given below.‡ Which of the writers in *Blackwood* perpetrated this very wicked joke I know not, but its point lay in the fact that Sir J. G. Dalryell, with whose name so great a liberty had been taken, was perhaps of all men then in Edinburgh the one who, as a good Whig, regarded *Blackwood's Magazine* with most abhorrence. A cor-

* Hogg's *Memoirs*.

† *Ibid.*

‡ "DEAR SIR:—I trouble you with this, to say, that since my last I have been made acquainted with the atrocious nonsense written about me in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and that nothing can be falser than what is said respecting my having asked and pestered Mr. Hazlitt to write an article upon my poem in the *Edinburgh Review*. I never breathed a syllable to him on the subject, as anybody who knows me would say for me at once, for I am reckoned, if any thing, somewhat over fastidious and fantastic on such matters. I received last night a letter, signed John Erchom (Graham?) Dalryell, advocate, the author of which tells me at last that he is the writer of the article, and that he did not mean to attack my private character! He only attacked the bad principles I evinced in my writings. You may conceive by this that this letter is a strange mixture of affected airs and real paltering. I have written this evening to Edinburgh, according to the signature, to ask whether Mr. Dalryell (if there is such a person) avows himself the author of the letter. But I am taking up your time with these matters. I merely wished, in the first instance, to state what I have mentioned above.

"Believe me, my dear sir, most sincerely yours,

"18 LISBON GROVE, 1817."

"LEIGH HUNT.

respondent informs me that he recollects well Sir John coming to him in a state of violent agitation, to show the letter he had just received from Leigh Hunt, enclosing the pretended confession of authorship by himself. "Oh, the villany of these fellows!" exclaimed the persecuted Baronet.* It was in truth a most unscrupulous trick.

But the most elaborate and successful of these mystifications, of all which I suspect the invention must be attributed to Lockhart, was that about Dr. Scott, of Glasgow, or "the Odontist," as he dubbed him. I am not aware, indeed, of any other instance of this kind of joke being carried out so steadily and with such entire success. The doctor was a dentist, who practised both in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but resided chiefly in the latter city,—a fat, bald, queer-looking, and jolly little man, fond of jokes and conviviality, but with no more pretensions to literary or poetic skill than a *street porter*. To his own and his friends' astonishment he was introduced in *Blackwood's Magazine* as one of its most valued contributors, and as the author of a variety of clever verses. There was no mistake about it, "Dr. James Scott, 7 Miller street, Glasgow," was a name and address as well known as that of Mr. Blackwood himself. The ingenious author had contrived to introduce so many of the Doctor's peculiar phrases, and references to his Saltmarket acquaintances, that the Doctor himself gradually began to believe that the verses were really his own, and when called on to sing one of his songs in company, he assumed the airs of authorship with perfect complacency. The "Odontist" became recognized as one of Blackwood's leading characters, and so far was the joke carried, that a volume of his compositions was gravely advertised in a list of new works, prefixed to the Magazine, as "in the press."† Even

* He had been held up to ridicule, under a most horrible disguise, in the "Chaidce MS.," for which, however, he had the satisfaction of receiving damages in an action brought against the publisher.

† Had the volume ever appeared, it would have proved a very unique collection. One of the songs attributed to him became so popular, and is really so admirable in its kind, as to be worth reproducing here as a specimen of these curious lyrics. There is no doubt that Mr. Lockhart was the author.

"CAPTAIN PATON'S LAMENT.

"Touch once more a sober measure, and let punch and tears be shed,
For a prince of good old fellows, that, alack-a-day, is dead!
For a prince of worthy fellows, and a pretty man also,
That has left the Saltmarket in sorrow, grief, and woe.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

the acute publisher, John Ballantyne, Hogg relates, was so convinced of the Odontist's genius, that he expressed a great desire to be introduced to so remarkable a man, and wished to have the honor of being his publisher. The Doctor's fame went far beyond Edinburgh. Happening to pay a visit to Liverpool, he was immediately

" His waistcoat, coat, and breeches were all cut off the same web,
Of a beautiful snuff-color, or a modest genty drab;
The blue stripe in his stocking round his neat slim leg did go,
And his ruffles of the cambric fine they were whiter than the snow.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" His hair was curled in order, at the rising of the sun,
In comely rows and buckles smart that about his ears did run;
And before there was a toupée that some inches up did grow,
And behind there was a long queue that did o'er his shoulders flow.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" And whenever we forgathered, he took off his wee three-cockit,
And he proffered you his snuff-box, which he drew from his side-pocket;
And on Burdett or Buonaparte he would make a remark or so,
And then along the plainstones like a provost he would go.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" Now and then upon a Sunday he invited me to dine,
On a herring and a mutton-chop, which his maid dressed very fine;
There was also a little Malmsey, and a bottle of Bordeaux,
Which between me and the Captain passed nimbly to and fro.
Oh, I ne'er shall take pot-luck with Captain Paton no mo!

" Or if a bowl was mentioned, the Captain he would ring,
And bid Nelly run to the Westport, and a stoup of water bring;
Then would he mix the genuine stuff, as they made it long ago,
With limes that on his property in Trinidad did grow.
Oh, we ne'er shall taste the like of Captain Paton's punch no mo!

" And then all the time he would discourse so sensible and courteous,
Perhaps talking of last sermon he had heard from Dr. Porteous,
Or some little bit of scandal about Mrs. So and So,
Which he scarce could credit, having heard the *con*, but not the *pro*.
Oh, we ne'er shall hear the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" Or when the candles were brought forth, and the night was fairly setting in,
He would tell some fine old stories about Minden-field or Dettingen;
How he fought with a French major, and dispatched him at a blow,
While his blood ran out like water on the soft grass below.
Oh, we ne'er shall hear the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" But at last the Captain sickened, and grew worse from day to day,
And all missed him in the coffee-room, from which he now stayed away;
On Sabbath, too, the Wee Kirk made a melancholy show,
All for wanting of the presence of our venerable beau.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

" And in spite of all that Cleghorn and Corkindale could do,
It was plain, from twenty symptoms, that death was in his view;
So the Captain made his testament, and submitted to his foe,
And we laid him by the Ram's-horn kirk; 'tis the way we all must go.
Oh, we ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!

welcomed by the literary society of the town as the "glorious Odon-tist" of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and received a complimentary dinner, which he accepted in entire good faith, replying to the toast of the evening with all the formality that became the occasion.

But the spirit of fun and mischief that prompted these outrageous jokes did not confine itself to practising them on the outer world. The overflowing satire of the inventors was turned by them even upon one another. In a very clever but rather tedious composition of Lockhart's, called the "Mad Banker of Amsterdam," he pokes his fun at his friends all round. There was a society in Edinburgh called the "Dilettanti" club, of which Wilson was President. They came in for a sketch, and he begins with his friend the President:—

"They're pleased to call themselves *The Dilettanti*,
The President's the first I chanced to show 'em;
He writes more malagrugrosly than Dante,
The City of the Plague 's a shocking poem;
But yet he is a spirit light and jaunty,
And jocular enough to those who know him;
To tell the truth, I think John Wilson shines
More o'er a bowl of punch than in his lines."

It is said that my father chanced to see the proof-sheet by accident before it went to press, and instantly dashed in immediately after the above stanza, not a little to the chagrin of the author, the following impromptu lines:—

"Then touched I off friend Lockhart (Gibson John),
So fond of jabbering about Tieck and Schlegel,
Klopstock and Wieland, Kant and Mendelssohn,
All high Dutch quacks like Spurzheim or Feinagle;
Him the Chaldee yclept the Scorpion;
The claws but not the pinions of the eagle
Are Jack's; but though I do not mean to flatter,
Undoubtedly he has strong powers of satire."

The troubles in which the publisher and supporters of the *Magazine* became involved commenced, as has been seen, with its very first number under the new *régime*. The assaults on Coleridge

"Join all in chorus, jolly boys, and let punch and tears be shed,
For this prince of good old fellows that, alack-a-day, is dead!
For this prince of worthy fellows, and a pretty man also,
That has left the Saltmarket in sorrow, grief, and woe!
For it ne'er shall see the like of Captain Paton no mo!"

For a complete copy of this lyric see *Blackwood*, vol v., p. 735.



Mr. Gibson Lockhart, *alias* Baron Lauerwinkel, *alias* William Wastle, *alias* Dr. Ulrick Sternstare, *alias* Dr. Peter Morris, etc., as sketched by himself.

and Hunt might have been overlooked by the Edinburgh public; but the Chaldee MS., though in reality a joke in comparison, raised a storm of solemn indignation, which it required all the courage and energy of the publisher to bear up against. In a second edition of the Magazine, which was very rapidly called for, the obnoxious article was withdrawn,* doubtless much to the disappointment of purchasers. For in fact the outcry, which at first seemed to threaten the extinction of the Magazine, was the best possible stimulant to its success. It throve on opposition, and waxed more bold and provoking as the enemy showed more sensitive appreciation of its power. But for some time the publisher's position was no enviable one, as may be gathered from the second of two following letters from Mrs. Wilson to her sister in England:—

“EDINBURGH, *December 18, 1817.*

“I hope you got your last number of the Magazine; I have been so busy *working* that I have not had time to look at it. The first thing in it, on the ‘Pulpit Eloquence of Scotland,’ is written by Mr. Lockhart, a young advocate, a friend of Mr. Wilson’s. I believe there is not much of Mr. W.’s in the last number. I think there is something about the Lament of Tasso; that is his. You were right in your conjecture about Mr. Hogg’s production; his prose compositions are not in the happiest style; there will be another of his in the next number,—a letter addressed to C. K. Sharpe, Esq. Another article in it, entitled, ‘On the late National Calamity,’ is Mr. W.’s; and the one on Mr. Alison’s pulpit eloquence is written by a son of his. A review of Mandeville is by Mr. Lockhart. There is something besides of Mr. W.’s; but I don’t exactly know what it is. I think it is about Old Masters.”

“*May 20, 1818.*

“The number that comes out to-day is pronounced a very good one, and I suppose you will soon have it. The articles written by Mr. W. are those ‘On Truth,’ the ‘Fudge Family in Paris,’ Childe Harold, canto 4th, and Horace Walpole’s Letters. The letter to

* The following note was prefixed to the November number:—“The editor has learned with regret that an article in the first edition of No. VII, which was intended as a *jeu-d’esprit*, has been construed so as to give offence to individuals justly entitled to respect and regard; he has, on that account, withdrawn it in the second edition, and can only add that, if what has happened could have been anticipated, the article in question certainly never would have appeared.”

Dr. Chalmers is by Mr. Lockhart. I am not quite sure if Mr. W. will have any thing in the next *Edinburgh Review*, but I hope he will, and I will tell you what it is when I know.

“You asked if Ensign O’Doherty was a fictitious character; he is, and was created by a Mr. Hamilton, a particularly handsome and gentlemanly young man in the army; he is a brother of Sir William Hamilton, a friend of Mr. Wilson’s, whom you may have heard me mention. The city of late has been in a state of pleasing commotion owing to a *fracas* which took place last week between Blackwood and a Mr. Douglas from Glasgow, a disgusting, vulgar, conceited writer; whose name was mentioned in one of Nicol Jarvie’s letters* in the Magazine, which gave the gentleman such high offence, that after mature deliberation he determined on coming to Edinburgh, and horsewhipping Mr. Blackwood. Accordingly, about a week since he arrived; and one day as the worthy bookseller was entering his shop, Mr. D. followed him, and laid his whip across his shoulder; and before Mr. B. had time to recover from his surprise, Mr. D. walked off without leaving his address. Mr. B. immediately went out and bought a stick; and, accompanied by Mr. Hogg, went in search of Mr. D., whom at last they detected just about to step into a coach on his return to Glasgow. Mr. B. immediately attacked him, and beat him as hard as he could, and then permitted him to take his place in the coach, and proceed home, which he did. I have given you a long story, which I fear you cannot feel the least interest in; but as you take the Magazine, you will not be wholly indifferent to the fate of the publisher, whose conduct on the late occasion is thought perfectly correct; the other man everybody thinks has acted like a fool.”

Nothing was left undone to spread the fame and fear of Blackwood. Formidable announcements of forthcoming criticisms were monthly advertised, to keep expectation on the stretch. The very titles of the serial articles indicated uncommon fertility of invention, and a terrible faculty for calling names. There were articles on “The Cockney School of Poetry,” on “The Pluckless School of Politics,” on “The Gormandizing School of Eloquence.” There were letters to literary characters by Timothy Tickler, by Frederick Baron von Lauerwinkel, by Dr. Olinthus Petre, T. C. D., by

* *Blackwood*, January and March, 1818.

Ensign O'Doherty, by Mordecai Mullion, and a host of others too numerous to mention. The variety and mystification thus produced undoubtedly gave great additional zest to the writing; and this apparently multitudinous host of contributors danced about the victims of their satire with a vivacity and gleefulness which the public could not but relish even when it condemned. After all, and giving their full weight to the censures which were justly incurred by many of these compositions, there is much truth in the following remarks, in a vindication of itself prefixed to the Magazine a few years after:—"For a series of years, the Whigs in Scotland had all the jokes to themselves; they laughed and lashed as they liked; and while all this was the case, did anybody ever hear them say that either laughing or lashing were among the seven deadly sins? People said at times, no doubt, that Mr. Jeffrey was a more gentlemanly Whig than Mr. Brougham; that Sydney Smith grinned more good-humoredly than Sir James Mackintosh, and so forth, but all these were satirists, and, strange to say, they all rejoiced in the name." While I cannot agree with the statement following these remarks, that the only real offence of Blackwood's contributors was their being Tories, there is no doubt, I think, that that circumstance greatly aggravated their sins in the eyes of their opponents.*

The faults in question were, however, in themselves sufficiently grave, and may now be referred to, it is hoped, without risk of rekindling the old embers. The worst of them undoubtedly, for which even "Dr. Peter Morris" could afterwards see no apology, was the attack on the venerable Playfair, which appeared in 1818, in the September number of the Magazine, under the guise of a "Letter to the Rev. Professor Laugner, occasioned by his writing in the Königsberg Review: by the Baron von Lauerwinkel."† In

* Insolence and personality have very seldom been altogether wanting in the vigorous youth of journalism, and some of the ablest periodicals that have ever appeared have incurred the most censure in this respect. The *Edinburgh Review* cannot by impartial judges be pronounced to have been immaculate. The *Quarterly* is open to the same remark; and *Fraser's Magazine*, that most philosophic and well-conducted periodical, for some time seemed bent on out-doing the early style of Blackwood, after its older sister had subsided into propriety and self-restraint.

† This mischievous composition professed to be a translation from a German periodical (a literary stratagem, by the way, which probably set the example which Mr. Carlyle, among others, has turned to such frequent and effective purpose), and was thus introduced:—"The Königsberg Review, conducted by the late ingenious M. Mundwerk, was a few years ago very much admired in Germany by numerous readers, who took delight in seeing infidel and unpatriotic opinions maintained by men of acknowledged wit and talent. Strange as the circumstance may appear.

a previous letter under the signature of "Idoloclastes," a strong remonstrance had been addressed to Dr. Chalmers on his support of the *Edinburgh Review*, in which, with great professions of respect and admiration both for Chalmers and Jeffrey, there was mingled a most offensive strain of rebuke on the subject of infidel principles, which were alleged to be characteristic of the Review. In the pretended letter to Professor Laugner, these charges were repeated with still greater violence of language, and combined with the same professions of regret and esteem. The excellent Professor of Natural Philosophy was broadly accused of having turned his back on the faith which he once preached,* and allied himself with a band of unprincipled wits and insidious infidels. The author of both these letters was Mr. Lockhart, and they are striking specimens of that unpleasant power which led his own familiar friends to attribute to him, in their allegorical description, the character of the *Scorpion*. For calm, concentrated sting it would be hard to find six pages to match the Letter of the Baron Lauerwinkel.† The very natural indignation excited by this attack on one of the most amiable and eminent men of whom Edinburgh could then boast, attained its climax in the publication of a pamphlet, called *Hypocrisy unveiled and Calumny detected, in a Review of Blackwood's Magazine*. The author wielded a powerful pen, and fixing on Wilson and Lockhart as the special objects of his criticism, accused them both in very unvarnished terms of conduct disgraceful to men of letters and gentlemen. His own style, indeed, was not the most choice, his elaborate periods being thickly strewn with all the harshest epithets to be found in the dictionary.

it is nevertheless true that this journal numbered among its supporters several clergymen of the Lutheran Church. One of these was the late celebrated preacher, Hammerschlag (Dr. Chalmers was here pointed at), another was Professor Laugner of the University of Königsberg. The indignation of the zealous and worthy Baron von Lauerwinkel was excited," &c.

* Professor Playfair was parish minister of Liff and Bervie from 1773 to 1782. He became assistant to Professor Ferguson in 1785, and in 1805 resigned the chair of Mathematics for that of Natural Philosophy, which he occupied till his death, in 1819.

† Much as these letters were to be condemned, however, it is but fair to observe that the example had been shown on the other side. A voluminous and vehement writer, *Calvinus*, already referred to, had inflicted not less than five pamphlets on the public, addressed to Dr. McCrie and Dr. Andrew Thomson on their sinful alliance with *Blackwood's Magazine*. In thundering sentences, garnished with plentiful texts of Scripture, he calls upon them to "remember the fate of that priest who associated himself with the infidel compilers of the *Encyclopédie*," and hopes that no priest in this country is willing to let it be supposed that he receives wages from a till that is replenished by the dissemination of blasphemy. Similar remonstrances and insinuations were very frequently levelled against Dr. Brewster; and there can be no doubt that such attacks were calculated to provoke retaliation.

But much of his censure went home to the mark, and he pledged himself, in conclusion, if the subjects of his criticism did not amend their ways, to return to the charge "with less reserve, and more personal effect."* Who the author of this philippic was remained a secret, but there is now no reason to doubt that he was himself a well-known member of the legal body. His allusions to Wilson and Lockhart were too pointed to be passed without notice, and both sought redress in the mode then considered necessary for the vindication of the character of gentlemen. The author of the pamphlet received these communications as might have been expected, he declined to reveal his identity, but printed the correspondence.†

* In furtherance of this purpose he announced as preparing for publication "A Letter to the Dean and Faculty of Advocates on the propriety of expelling the Leopard and the Scorpion from that hitherto respectable body."

† From the *Scotsman*, Saturday, October 24, 1818:

"To the Author of *Hypocrisy Unveiled*."

"SIR:—As it is no part of a manly disposition to use insulting epithets to an unknown enemy, who may perhaps have resolved to remain unknown, I shall not, at present, bestow any upon you. So long as you remain concealed you are a nonentity; and any insults offered by me to a person in that situation might probably not be felt to carry with them any degradation to him, and certainly would not be felt as conferring any triumph upon me. It is probable, however, that you will come forward from your concealment, when you feel that you cannot continue in it without the consciousness of cowardice. I therefore request your name and address, that I may send a friend to you to deliver my opinion of your character, and to settle time and place for a meeting, at which I may exact satisfaction from you for the public insults you have offered to me."

"53 QUEEN STREET, Friday, Oct. 23, 1818."

"JOHN WILSON."

"To the Author of *Hypocrisy Unveiled*."

"SIR:—I have no wish to apply epithets of insult to you till I know who you are. If you suppose yourself to have any claim to the character of a gentleman, you will take care that I be not long without this knowledge. I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

"23 MAITLAND STREET, Thursday, Oct. 22, 1818."

"J. G. LOCKHART."

"To John Wilson, Esq., Advocate."

"Friday, 23d October."

"SIR:—The note which I understand to have been forwarded to you by my publisher, will have explained why I did not receive your communication till within these few hours.

"If you be not a principal conductor or supporter of *Blackwood's Magazine*, you have no reason for addressing me. If you be not the author or furnisher of materials for an attack on Mr. McCormick, which you yourself stated to be *highly unjustifiable*, and of which you denied all knowledge *upon your honor*; if you be not the author of a most abusive attack on your friend, Mr. Wordsworth; if you did not, by an unfounded story, prevail with Mr. Blackwood's former editors to insert that attack; if you be not the secret traducer of Mr. Playfair, Mr. Hazlitt, and Mr. Coleridge; if you be not the wanton and cruel reviler of those gentlemen named in my pamphlet, with whom you had lived in habits of friendship; if you be not one of the principal vomitaries of that calumnious and malignant abuse which has, through the medium of *Blackwood's Magazine*, been poured out on all that is elevated, worthy, or estimable; if you be not the writer of one or other of the letters addressed in the name of Z. to Mr. Leigh Hunt, and if you do not take shelter under a quotation from Junius, and submit to be publicly stigmatized by him as a coward and a scoundrel,—then you have nothing to say to me, for I speak only of the writer or writers who have committed these enormities. But if all or any of these things apply

When Mr. Lockhart found that the author would not reveal himself, he appears to have concerned himself no more about the matter, but to have relieved his feelings by caricaturing all the parties concerned in his friend's literary "*Ledger*." "The Leopard" and "The Scorpion," as drawn in the "*Ledger*," will be found on pages 165, 169.

The following admirable letter, addressed at this time to my father, by his friend the Rev. Robert Morehead,* seems, in spite of its length, to be worthy of insertion here. I have no doubt it produced a considerable impression on his mind, though at the time his indignation at the charges of the pamphleteer made him rather impatient of remonstrance:—

to you, in that case you have lost every claim to the character of a gentleman, and have no right whatsoever to demand that satisfaction which is due only to one who has been unjustly accused.

"The cause, besides, in which I have engaged is a public one; it is that of right feeling against all that is vile, treacherous, and malignant. My vocation is not ended; I have pledged myself to the public to watch your proceedings, and, if occasion shall require, to give a more ample exposition of your conduct and character—to inflict a more signal chastisement on your crimes. This pledge *shall be redeemed*.

"Do not think that I shall be deterred, by any threat, from discharging the duty I have thus imposed on myself, or that I shall be so weak as, by a premature avowal of my name, to deprive myself of the means.

"Prove to the satisfaction of the public that the charges which I have made are unfounded, or that they do not apply to you; or, as you yourself ask of Mr. Hunt:—'Confess that you have done wrong,—make a clean breast of it,—beg pardon of your God and of your country for the iniquity of your polluted pen,—and the last to add one pang to the secret throbbings of a contrite spirit,' the first to meet your challenge, if then renewed, shall be, sir, your, etc.,

"THE AUTHOR OF 'HYPOCRISY UNVEILED.'

"P. S.—As Mr. Lockhart obviously acts in concert with yourself, I have made the same answer to him which I now make to you."

* This estimable man was for many years an Episcopalian clergyman in Edinburgh. He was presented to the rectory of Easington, Yorkshire, in 1832, and died there in December, 1842.

Mr. Morehead, as may be gathered from the above letter, was a dear friend of my father's, but shortly after this date he became editor of *Constable's Magazine*; and it is to be regretted that, "in that lamentable madness of the time which drove high-minded and honorable men from their propriety," my father, by the unscrupulous liberty of his pen in *Blackwood's Magazine*, gave offence to Mr. Morehead, who, justly displeased, wrote an indignant letter to him, begging that personal allusions should cease as far as he was concerned, and promising that, on his part, he should abstain from any allusion to the Professor in his Magazine. I am happy to be able to say the terms of peace were observed, as their friendship remained unbroken. A notice of Mr. Morehead is made a dozen years later in a *Noctes*, which exhibits my father's real estimate of the author of *Dialogues on Natural and Revealed Religion*.

"*Shepherd*.—I love that man."

"*North*.—So do I, James, and so do all that know him personally—his talents, his genius, and, better than both, his truly Christian character, mild and pure."

"*Shepherd*.—And also bright."

"*North*.—Yes, bright :

'In wit a man—simplicity a child.'

—*Noctes*, May, 1830.

“*Sunday Evening.*

“MY DEAR WILSON :—I trust you will forgive me for addressing you on a subject which has been running in my head all week, and has incapacitated me, I believe, from reading or writing, for whenever I attempted either, your image, or the image of some other person or thing connected with *Blackwood's Magazine*, immediately took its station in my brain, and prevented any other idea from obtaining an entrance.

“I have frequently thought of writing to you, yet I have always drawn back, from an aversion to appear to be giving advice or intermeddling in an affair with which I have nothing to do, separate from the interest which every one who knows you must take in you. I hear, however, that you have called on me to-day, and I cannot any longer refrain from saying something to you, though perhaps it may be rather incoherent, on the unpleasant circumstances of the last week. That blame must attach to you and your friend Lockhart for the delinquencies of *Blackwood's Magazine* I am afraid must be admitted ; but even if the blame should not go the full length of the accusations which are made against you, I have myself too distinct a conception of the hazards accompanying mysterious and secret composition, and the temptations which it throws in the way of men of imagination and genius (much inferior to either of yours), that I can conceive, in the heat of writing, your trespassing very much upon the limits of propriety or a due regard for the common courtesies and regulations of social life. As it is impossible, too, for another person to enter into all the feelings which may have actuated you on different occasions, I can imagine that you may have done what you are stated to have done, without deserving those imputations which have been thrown upon you. Indeed I cannot, for my own part, think any thing very bad of you. You have always appeared to me a person of high and noble character, and I should be very sorry to view you in any other light. I am not at all, however, surprised that torrents of abuse should be thrown upon you, both in private and public, and I cannot say that the world is unjust in this retaliation.

“The person who has written the anonymous letter to you does not act perhaps in the most chivalrous manner possible, not to let himself be known ; but I rather think he is in the right, and as I am one of those people who are disposed to believe all things, I

imagine he is really what he gives himself out to be—a person unconnected with the matters in dispute, and determined, from a sense of justice, to defend what he thinks the cause of violated public tranquillity.

“If he had been himself a party, he would have written with more bitterness, and been less disposed to make stupid quotations. All this, however, my dear Wilson, unpleasant as it is at present, may be attended with a very excellent result, if you will allow it to be so. Both you and Lockhart are, I think, designed for much higher things than the game you are playing. I believe that, with the wantonness of youth and conscious power about you, which you do not care much how you exhibit, you are really desirous of doing good; and that you are anxious to root out of the world false sentiments in politics and religion, with a perfect unconcern who may entertain them. This is the best view to take of you; and in this kind of crusade, you are heedless what shock you may give to individuals, whose feelings yet deserve to be consulted, and with whom the public will, in general, take part. I really think nothing less than a Divine commission, such as Joshua received to extirpate the Canaanites, could justify the way in which you are throwing around you poisoned arrows against those whom you surmise to be infidels. When you go beyond a certain mark, you lose your aim. While with all the eloquence that you can muster, you will never persuade the reasonable part of the nation that the *Edinburgh Review* has for its insidious, skulking design to make as many Jacobins and infidels as it can, I suppose the character of that publication is pretty well understood. Nobody takes it up in the notion that they will receive religious instruction from it, or that the writers are very competent to give it; but nobody of sense supposes, whatever slips it may sometimes have made, that its object and secret view is to pull down Christianity; and particularly, no one who knows Mr. Playfair conceives that this is one of his darling contemplations and schemes, whatever may be his opinions upon the subject of Revelation, which nobody has any business to rake out. I believe the only slip he is supposed to have committed in the *Review*, was something on the subject of miracles; and what he says is, I imagine, defensible enough, and reconcilable to a belief in Christianity. Then as to politics, although here, too, there may be various offences, yet I believe the general

drift of the politics of the *Edinburgh Review* is felt by the nation to have on the whole a good tendency. If you and your friend persist in writing in *Blackwood's Magazine*, I exhort you strenuously to make that Magazine what you are capable of making it; to take the hint which has been given you; to take warning from the awkward perplexities in which it has involved you, and from which it would be idle to attempt to extricate yourselves entirely, and henceforth to avoid unhandsome personalities. I do not say, spare the *Edinburgh Review*; on the contrary, where you find in it any sentiment that you think militating either against the Constitution or Christianity, by all means expose it; but do not impute motives to the writers which you cannot think exist. Your readers will go more thoroughly along with you if you are temperate, and give that Review the credit which it deserves, and speak of its authors rather as men who do not see the whole truth, than as men who are wittingly blind. If you cannot get the regulation of that Magazine into your own hands, but must have your writings coupled with party politics and personalities, which you yourselves disapprove of, I really think, for your own credit, you should have nothing to do with it; for there is not a piece of abomination in the Magazine which will not be fathered upon one or other of you; and neither Christianity nor Toryism is at present in so low a state that there is any necessity to suffer martyrdom."

The following letter from my father about the same time appears to have been addressed to Mr. Morehead, in reference to a suspicion of Mr. Macvey Napier having been the author of the pamphlet. It betrays the keenness of his feelings on the subject:—

"53 QUEEN STREET,
Half-past Ten, Wednesday, 1817.

"MY DEAR SIR:—Your message to me from Mr. Napier would have been perfectly satisfactory, even had I had any suspicion that he was the author of the pamphlet. But knowing Mr. Napier to be a gentleman and a man of education, I could not have suspected him to be a blackguard and a villain. Had public rumor forced me at any time to ask him if he was the author of that pamphlet, the question would have been accompanied with an ample apology for putting it, for, without that, the question would itself have been

an insult. Assure Mr. Napier of this, and that I am sorry he should have been put under the necessity by disagreeable and stupid rumor of disowning that of which I know his nature to be incapable. Had I suspected Mr. Napier, and yet "alluded" to him as the object of my suspicion, I should have acted like an idiot and a coward. In a case like this, suspicion is not to be so intimidated. Should I ever suspect any man, I will send with privacy a friend to him; he may be a man of some nerve, and if ever he avows himself he will require them all. My affection and friendship for you never can suffer any abatement. But may I gently say to you, this villanous and lying pamphlet has been read by you with feelings, and has left on your mind an impression, which I did not imagine such a publication could have created in you towards your very attached friend,

"J. WILSON."

Not the least of the ill results of that unhappy letter of the Baron Lauerwinkel was the interruption of the friendly relation between my father and Jeffrey. The latter conveyed his sentiments on the subject in these manly and honorable terms:—

"CRAIGCROOK HOUSE, 13th October, 1818.

"MY DEAR SIR:—I take the liberty of enclosing a draft for a very inconsiderable sum, which is the remuneration our publisher enables me to make for your valuable contribution to the last number of the *Edinburgh Review*; and though nobody can know better than I do, that nothing was less in your contemplation in writing that article, it is a consequence to which you must resign yourself, as all our other regular contributors have done before you.

"And now, having acquitted myself of the awkward part of my office with my usual awkwardness, I should proceed to talk to you of further contributions, and . . . to save editorial disquisition on the best style of composition for such a journal, if I had not a still more awkward and far more painful subject to discuss in the first place.

"You are said to be a principal writer in, and a great director and active supporter of Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*. In the last number of that work there is an attack upon my excellent friend Mr. Playfair, in my judgment so unhandsome and uncandid,

that I really cannot consent either to ask or accept of favors from any one who is aiding or assisting in such a publication.

“I have not the least idea that you had any concern in the composition of that particular paper, and perhaps I have been misinformed as to the nature and extent of your connection with the work in general. But if it be as I supposed, and if you still profess to take the same interest in that Magazine, I do not see that we can possibly co-operate in any other publication.

“I have no right, certainly, and I am sure I have no intention to rebuke you for any opinions you may entertain, or any views you may have formed of the proper way of expressing them; but if you think the scope and strain of the paper to which I allude in any degree justifiable, I can only say that your notions differ so widely from mine, that it is better that we should have no occasion to discuss them. To me, I confess, it appears that the imputations it contains are as malignant as they are false; and having openly applied these epithets to them, whenever I have had occasion to speak on the subject, I flatter myself that I do not violate the courtesy which I unfeignedly wish to observe towards you, or act unsuitably with the regard which I hope always to entertain for you, if I plainly repeat them here, as the grounds of a statement with which no light considerations could have induced me to trouble you.

“I say, then, that it is *false* that it is one of the principal objects, or any object at all, of the *Edinburgh Review* to discredit religion, or promote the cause of infidelity. I who have conducted the work for nearly fifteen years should know something of its objects, and I declare to you, upon my honor, that nothing with that tendency has ever been inserted without its being followed with sincere regret, both on my part and on that of all who have any permanent connection with the work. That expressions of a light and indecorous nature have sometimes escaped us in the hurry of composition, and that, in exposing the excesses of bigotry and intolerance, a tone of too great levity has been sometimes employed, I am most ready with all humility to acknowledge; but that any thing was ever bespoken or written by the regular supporters of the work, or admitted, except by inadvertence, with a view to discredit the truth of religion, I most positively deny, and that it is no part of its object to do so, I think must be felt by every one of its candid readers.

“In the second place, I say it is false that Mr. P. lent his support to the *Review* in order to give credit and currency to its alleged infidel principles.

“And, finally, it is false that the writings which he has contributed to it have had any tendency to support those principles, or are intended to counteract the lessons which he once taught from the pulpit.”

It is much to be regretted that my father's reply to this letter is not extant. What it may have been can only be conjectured. I can have no doubt that he would not attempt to justify the malignant article. But he was not a man to abandon his associates even when he disagreed with them. He had cast in his lot with *Blackwood* and its principles, and was resolved to stand by them at all hazards.

CHAPTER IX.

ANN STREET. — MORAL PHILOSOPHY CHAIR.

1820.

AN eventful life seldom falls to the lot of the man of letters. His vicissitudes and excitements are for the most part confined to an arena in which he figures little before the public gaze. In this sense Wilson's life was uneventful; but the constitution of his nature, both physical and mental, made it impossible that it should ever become uninteresting or monotonous. It may be said that he threw himself into the very heart of existence, and found in the lowliest things on earth a hidden virtue that made them cease to be vulgar in his eyes. For fundamentally, though that I know is not the general opinion, he was as much a philosopher as a poet, and had that true instinct, that electric rapidity of glance, that enables a man to penetrate through the forms of things to their real meaning and essence. And when free from the bias of passion or prejudice, his judgment was most accurate. Caprice or change in regard to principles, or persons, or tastes, was no part of his character.