

MRS. ELIZABETH HAMILTON.

1758—1816.

RATHER more than a century ago, Elizabeth Hamilton, a lively little girl of eight years of age, was in the habit of riding every Monday morning on her old horse Lochaber through the bean and oat fields, and round the broomy knowes and stony craigs which lie near a certain farm-house in the Carse of Gowrie, some four miles distant from Stirling. In that town she was boarded with "a single lady," an acquaintance of her aunt, Mrs. Marshall, and waited on by her own special servant-lass, Isabel Irvine.

Elizabeth Hamilton was Irish by her birth-place, but Scotch by descent and nurture. She came of a "gentle" branch of the "haughty Hamiltons." The estate of Woodhall had been granted by a charter from Pope Honorius to

one of her ancestors, "for good deeds done in the Holy Land in the first Crusade." Her great-grandfather had been as strong on the side of the Kirk in his day; and he quitted Scotland in discontent on the intrusion of the Liturgy, buying an estate in Ulster, and settling in Ireland. His son Charles, who held a civil appointment under Government, married a beauty and an heiress. His wife took the liberty of squandering her own fortune, and so embarrassed him that he was tempted to spend a part of the public money in payment of his private debts. He died broken-hearted before his dishonour was publicly known. His son, Elizabeth Hamilton's father, quitted the university, and entered a mercantile house in London. Being forced to abandon London, owing to ill-health, he began business in Belfast. Here he married, and died early in 1759, a year after the birth of his youngest child Elizabeth, leaving his widow and three children in reduced circumstances. Mrs. Hamilton consented to give Elizabeth, at six years of age, to be brought up by her aunt in Stirlingshire. Elizabeth's mother, an intelli-

gent woman, was only able to visit her girl once. In her ninth year the child was left altogether an orphan, and, like Miss Sukey Blamire, owed to her father's sister the care and affection which surrounded her in childhood and youth. This Aunt Marshall was also something of a character, although in a different style from Aunt Simpson. She was a daughter of that Charles Hamilton who came to so much grief with his beauty and heiress. She had been handsome, clever, and carefully educated. Before she was sixteen, she had been engaged to the eldest son of a baronet. Her father's ruin followed. She was thrown on her own exertions, and was thankful to earn a livelihood by becoming a humble companion to a distant relative of rank, who resided in Bath. On the death of this lady, her daughter, the wife of an old Stirlingshire laird, carried Miss Hamilton home with her. The poor and proud dependant, who, although her friend and mistress was kind-hearted, was expected to make herself useful in a thousand ways, suffered countless mortifications.

At last she consented to accept the addresses of worthy Mr. Marshall, a peasant-born farmer of competent means, to whom Elizabeth Hamilton applied the sentence of Burns, that "he held his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." Such a man was not likely to protest against the introduction of a little orphan niece to fill up pleasantly his honoured wife's leisure. He did not fail, for the thirty-two years of their union, to take a gentle pride in the child as giving life to the otherwise childless home. Elizabeth Hamilton repaid his generosity by as warm affection as daughter ever showed to father.

From Monday till Saturday little Elizabeth scampered up the steep streets of Stirling in order to sit in her place in Mr. Manson's school for boys and girls. There she learnt, first writing (she could already read well), geography, and the use of the globes, at the same time attending a dancing school; next French; and afterwards music on the harpsichord, and drawing. The spirited child had already taken advantage of her country rearing by "paidling"

in the burn in July, and sliding on its ice in December. She had yet other sources of education. She played "the ba'" under the shadow of Mar's Wark and Argyle's Lodging. On Wednesday afternoons, when she was tired of going to "the nuts" and "the blackberries" with the other school-girls, she climbed the Castle Rock and the Abbey Craig, and looked down on the silver Links of the Forth, the green walls of the Ochils, and the wooded vale of Strathmore, far away to the heathery wilds of Monteath and Balquidder, and the rugged blue line of the Grampians, with the towering peak of Benledi. She saw the battle-fields of Bannockburn, Sauchieburn, and Falkirk, as well as the more primitive fighting ground of the Carron, just at the time when Ossian, in the guise of Macpherson, or Macpherson in the guise of Ossian, was making the romantic world ring with the mighty deeds of Fingal. To little Elizabeth Hamilton the suggestive names of "the Bloody Field," "the King's Knot," "Ballingeich's Entry," and "Douglas's Room" were household words. Neither was she a stolid barn-

door child, to use them without association. The old-fashioned little woman, adopted by a childless, elderly couple, and without brothers or sisters to share the adoption, did more than take her patriotic fever betimes. While she had their high places lying stretched out at her feet, she read *Blind Harry* and *Barbour* with a will, and made heroes of *Wallace* and *Robert the Bruce*. At an exceptionally tender age she came across an English translation of the *Iliad*, and extended her regard liberally to *Hector* and *Achilles*.

Elizabeth, shrewd and sensible in her quaint baby wisdom, had at hand yet another branch of study, of which she was to become mistress. From the young maid-servant, *Isabel Irvine*, and her kindred, Elizabeth acquired an intimate knowledge of the turns of thought, the failings and prejudices, as well as the virtues, of Scotch peasant women. •

Every Saturday night the child mounted joyfully her *Dobbin*, *Lochaber*, and rode home brimful of school stories. These she dispensed to her indulgent aunt and uncle in the parlour,

and to a not less sympathetic audience in the farm kitchen. Every Sabbath Elizabeth "sat" under an orthodox minister of the Kirk (though her uncle Marshall was an Episcopalian) during two long diets of public worship. After kirk-time she repeated to her aunt the psalms, the catechism, and the heads of the sermon, which were required from her, as from all well-brought-up young Presbyterians of her generation. The grown woman Elizabeth gave her testimony that the discipline was dry and injudiciously rigid, but not without its counterbalancing lessons in self-restraint, patience, and application.

At thirteen Elizabeth left school. She paid visits to Edinburgh and Glasgow, where she had lessons from masters. These visits supplied her with long-cherished memories of college friends, promenades on the Green, carpet dances, "with refreshments at the side-boards." Save for these interludes, the girl's life was not perfectly wholesome. It was a sedentary life. She was shut up with elderly people. One of her duties was to read aloud every evening for the

instruction and amusement of the little home circle. But more than this: Mrs. Marshall was so agreeably surprised by her niece's journal of a Highland tour, that the elder lady showed the manuscript to a friend, who sent it, without the author's knowledge, to a provincial magazine, in which it flourished duly. On the other hand, Elizabeth was cautioned by her aunt to restrain her love of reading; and one day, when on the point of being surprised by visitors, Elizabeth hid Kaimes' "Elements of Criticism" under a sofa cushion (is not the same story told of Fanny Burney?), lest she should be accused by her neighbours of pedantry. In revenge on herself and them, and in sheer dearth of intellectual interest, she took to writing a novel in letters secretly. It was historical, of course, for she had Stirling Castle in her eye; but it was not in old Scotch, for Elizabeth was anxious, at this time, to improve her English. She was, besides, a little frightened at the growing vulgarity of Scotland and the Scotch, to which no writer of eminence had turned his attention since Allan

Ramsay wrote his "Gentle Shepherd," which Mr. Mackenzie kept at the staff's end in his *Lounger*. Her historical period was no later than that of James VI.'s reign. She elected Arabella Stewart as her royal heroine, and transplanted the characters to England. With artlessness and girlish narrowness both of thought and feeling, Elizabeth sketched herself and her only sister, from whom she had been separated nearly all her life, in the sisters Almeria and Matilda. Elizabeth took care to bring up these minor heroines apart, and in the description of their meeting, and the rapid growth of their friendship, the young author sought to foreshadow her own coveted reunion with her sister and their sympathetic attachment.

Another premature, and possibly morbid, effect of this period was that a sceptic of the school of David Hume startled and disturbed Elizabeth's religious faith. It was only after the most searching investigations into the evidences of Christianity that the distressed and dismayed girl could return and rest in peace on the pro-

mises of the Gospel—never again to be disturbed.

Elizabeth's good principles, her calm sense and kindness of temper, prevented her, even at the age of eighteen, from making insurmountable bugbears of adverse circumstances. She was taught (and it was also instinctive in her) to keep intellectual efforts and attainments properly subordinate to moral practice. She had no craving to occupy a chill eminence above her companions, or to be pointed out as a rapt poetess, holding herself removed from notable housekeeping and darning. She was better educated than Miss Sukey Blamire; without the aristocratic pride of Miss Jean Elliot and of Lady Anne Barnard; and she was of stronger and broader, though perhaps less delicate, perceptions than Lady Nairne. Elizabeth Hamilton did not in the end refuse to acknowledge the gift that was in her; but, in her comparatively circumscribed youth, she did not dream of asserting her mental superiority to the people around her.

With a keen appreciation of intellectual

society, she still took the most cheerful view of the merits of the men and the women in her neighbourhood, and entered into life-long friendships with several of them. It was not till the close of her life, and in self-defence, that she admitted in a letter to Hector Macneil that during her early life in Scotland it had been her lot to encounter few who understood the commerce of intellect, and of these few almost none who would deign to exchange their precious ores for her unpolished pebbles. She afterwards spoke of the change which took place on her going to England, where her gifted and genial brother introduced her to his own associates. Men of learning and men of wit then addressed themselves to her freely, and both men and women of high position and talents treated her on terms of equality. She added humorously, that often she was inclined to quote the nursery rhyme, "Surely this is no me." It is worth while to note her youthful obscurity and her contentment with the fact, when one remembers that Elizabeth Hamilton was one of the first women who lived to redeem

the literary woman from her old, bad reputation of bearing only another name for an arrogant and domineering fool.

It was in Elizabeth's favour, too, that her home was in the country. Ingram's Crook, to which Mr. and Mrs. Marshall removed just as Elizabeth grew up, was a home of much rural beauty.

It is true that we are apt to doubt the existence of genuine admiration for nature at a time when writers were given to expressing such admiration in vague, grandiloquent terms, encumbered with much far-fetched classic imagery. As in the case of Alexander Ross, of Lochlee, the author of the "Fair Shepherdess," these writers have been known to spend the greater part of their lives amid strikingly picturesque scenes without a single reference to them stealing into the works which were composed under such influences. Nevertheless, beauty must have been a thing of beauty to the poet, and must have incorporated itself with his being, though he did not as a rule analyse it, and, after having pulled it to pieces, put into it his personality, and cause it to

smile with his hopes and sigh with his fears. The great exception to this paralysing self-restraint, prior to Wordsworth, was Burns, who in one of his songs records of his Jean,—

“ I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair ;
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air ”.

Ingram's Crook was a cottage with thatched roof, and walls covered with roses and honeysuckle. Its name had a chivalric association, derived from the gallant old English knight, Sir Ingram Umfraville, who, according to the legend, tried to ford the bend of the burn, and was drowned there in the rout after Bannockburn. It was a fit scene for love ; and the love was not the less sincere because it was that of an old wedded couple, gladdened by the devoted duty paid to them by a good and modest young girl. Nor is the song of “ My ain fire-side ” less true because it was written by a wise and benignant old maid of the garret, which is wont, after all, to look better on a close inspection than from a distance.

Both in the virtues and in the faults of her character,—in its sterling cheerfulness and friendliness, in its old-fashionedness and self-consciousness, as well as in its dash of conceit and sententiousness,—Elizabeth Hamilton, like the rest of the world, owed much to her original surroundings.

It had been a happy season for Elizabeth when her brother, five years her senior, came to Scotland to visit her and the rest of his relations there. She did not find him a less affectionate and playful companion because he was inclined to take a fatherly charge of his prim, yet roguish little sister. The brother and sister parted exchanging promises of correspondence, which they kept with “inviolable fidelity.”

It was a happier season still for Elizabeth when she resigned her fancy picture of the meeting with her sister to realise its glad fulfilment, and paid a long visit to her native Ireland. But the reunion, in each instance, was temporary. While the brother in the little family had already got a cadetship in India, the

lamented death of their aunt Marshall, shortly after Elizabeth's return, rendered her life at Ingram's Crook very solitary for a young woman. In her unselfish regard for her uncle's comfort, she tied herself down to her seat at the head of his table, in the chimney-corner, or in the window opposite to him, making light in his widowed home. She hardly ever quitted the old man till his death eight years after. Thus she spent ungrudgingly the flower of her age from her twenty-first to her twenty-ninth year.

The portraits of Elizabeth Hamilton represent her as a slight woman, wearing a shapeless gown, and round the throat such a frill as was sometimes worn in the latter half of the century. She has brown hair, curling over a full forehead; sleepy, yet arch eyes, under marked brows; a straight, large nose; and a soft mouth, with full under lip. The copious letter-writing in which she had already begun to indulge conveys the impression of a well-brought-up young lady, with remarkable clearness of discernment and soundness of judgment. Strong in her untried principles, and with a good deal of self-

satisfaction in that unshaken strength, she was, at the same time, a courageous, cordial, loving-hearted woman. In the sacrifice which she made of her youth in order to solace the old age of the man who had sheltered her childhood, virtue must have been its own reward; while vanity, too, had its sop. But Elizabeth's great source of refreshment ("a second education," as her biographer, Miss .Benger, very correctly calls it) was her correspondence with her deservedly dear brother. The prospect of his return home towards the end of the period, covered, while still a young man, with scholarly distinction, and appointed for an honourable task, must have been very gratifying to Elizabeth.

That was the great age of letter-writing—we beg its pardon, of epistolary correspondence—and not of the frittered-away note-writing of to-day. Women, particularly, revelled in such an expression of their opinions and feelings. With a royal disregard to consequences, as well as to heavy postage, they threw themselves on the honour of their correspondents in giving

confidences. The eighteenth century reads better in its formal saws, its determined sprightliness, its airy little flights of sentiment, than the nineteenth will read in its conflicting duties, its complicated motives, its subtleties of analysis. The misfortune is that the fair letter-writers acquired a large resemblance in the practice of their art. There may be, of course, a little more laying down the law here, and of somewhat ponderous vivacity there; a more fatal plunge into bathos on this side, a more comical languishing and coquetting with her own graces, and with a sublime elation in her own laurels on that; but Lucy Aikin's letters might be Elizabeth Hamilton's, Fanny Burney's, Anna Grant's, almost down to Anna Seward's. Still, let us deal gently with these old letter-writers, Scotch and English. The Scotch, be it said, however, have decidedly the best of it, though they, too, want the inimitable freshness and lightness of their French sisters. The letters did not fail in fancy and feeling, however stiffened, spun out, and overlaid. They were written by good and gracious women,

faithfully fond daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, who righteously discharged their obligations, and generously lavished their tenderness—the fragrance of whose works, done a hundred years ago, continues to embalm the workers' names.

Elizabeth Hamilton's earlier letters savour too much of "The Polite Letter-writer," and of "Elegant Extracts;" but there are indications of the benevolent wisdom which threw such a dignity round her in the end, and there are occasionally exquisite touches of human nature.

The absence of their Charles was all that marred Elizabeth's stay with her sister in Ireland. Elizabeth has a little aching fear that she has offended him by taking it upon her to give him good advice, and that he will think (in which he will not be entirely wrong) that he has got a little starched, cynical prude for a younger sister.

There is a pleasing chronicle of the family likeness, on account of which Elizabeth was called "little Charles" at Belfast; and the saucy

fling with which her aunt says, "Aweel, she's muckle better faured!" deserves to be remembered.

The letters abound in wistful wondering how he will look in the black beard which he has grown since they parted, and in conjuring up the old stripling figure playing on the flute, in the vain effort to attain one of the fashionable accomplishments of the day.

Cordial thanks are offered on one occasion for the gift of the muslin which "you mention for a wedding suit." But the thanks are accompanied by the bridling remark, that "if it is to be laid up for that occasion, I don't think it need be in any hurry; but if it arrive in safety, I shall perhaps use the freedom of wearing it beforehand." There are full particulars of the peaceful monotony of domestic life at Ingram's Crook—the quiet, but active mornings spent in farming and housekeeping; the quaint political discussions on the American war between the uncle and the niece at the one-o'clock dinner; the "rattle at the harpsichord;" the brisk game at backgammon; the sedate reading aloud

every evening from seven to eleven of history and travel, with now and then a favourite novel to excite a laugh—a custom not intermitted because she who had instituted it was no longer there to hear.

With a quiver of grateful delight, Elizabeth writes that, after she had gone through the agony of finding the ship in which she believed her brother had sailed, posted as “seen off Cuba in great distress,” she read at length the announcement of its having come into port, and discovered his name in the list of arrivals. She had become more composed by the time she referred to the two “young lady friends” who were keeping her company, and congratulating her on the prospect of her brother’s return. Though they were both resolved to “set their best hats at him” the moment he landed, they “would perhaps debate the propriety of sending their compliments to a young gentleman.”

It was during her life of deep seclusion, and almost complete banishment from society, that Elizabeth experienced such a shipwreck of her womanly hopes and eclipse of her womanly

dreams as compasses the wreck of many a woman's nature. There was a "lad" in the case, and there had been trysts by the Bannockburn, and partings by the white yett or gate of Ingram's Crook; but there was to be no second version of the wedded love which Elizabeth had witnessed between her uncle and aunt. The troth-plight was broken; the fond lover never became the faithful husband.

In similar circumstances there are women who think it no shame, but rather a kind of redeeming glory, to sink every other faith and blessing in the one faith and blessing which they have hopelessly lost. Elizabeth Hamilton was endowed with strength of character, and had been well educated; and her misfortune had a different effect. She did not suffer as a Spartan woman might have suffered; she did not hug her sorrow in her own brave breast; but, like a Christian woman, she rose above it in every quality by the exercise of which she might help and cheer her fellow-creatures. It is in allusion to this great trial of her youth, that, in her old age, and with pathetic jest, she

reflects upon the huge mistake which was made by the dull, matter-of-fact friend who, deceived by Elizabeth's forced and feverish gaiety, pointed her out when she was really walking wearily in the dim darkness of her forlornness, as "a creature who could never be wae!"

With her brother's return occurred one of those crises when events crowd and jostle each other in an otherwise eventless history. Ingram's Crook was irradiated by Charles Hamilton's presence while he stayed at home and wrote his history of the Rohilla war. Then came Elizabeth's first visit along with him to London, where he went to settle, with the purpose of translating from the Persian the code of Mussulman laws—the arduous undertaking for which he had been so honourably chosen.

The dawn of a new life for Elizabeth was darkened by her uncle Marshall's death—the sudden snapping after long decay of an old man's life. The change involved Elizabeth's quitting Ingram's Crook and joining her brother, who had had five years' leave of absence granted him for his important task.

But long before this period had expired Charles Hamilton died an early death. His health had been undermined by a foreign climate and severe study ; and rapid consumption found him a ready prey. This was the great calamity of Elizabeth Hamilton's life. In allusion to it she said deliberately, "With him died my last hopes of earthly happiness." There was reason in what she said. Her youth was already gone ; one friend, who might have been "a nearer one still," had been weighed in the balance and found wanting ; and her sister had married and settled in Ireland. But Elizabeth was wont to record thankfully the gradual rising, above the sombre grey of the horizon, of new prospects in life, new interests, new friends, and new powers and sources of usefulness. In the midst of premature infirmity and confirmed bad health, she was fain to look back and reckon up humbly what had been the numerous blessings of her lot, and to praise God for "every year" being "happier than the last."

In the end the family difficulties of Mrs. Blake (Katherine Hamilton) became such as rendered

it desirable that she should reside with Elizabeth. From that time the sisters lived together, staying for four years after their brother's death either in Suffolk or in Berkshire. The two women were a comfort to each other, leading almost as quiet and purely domestic a life as that of Elizabeth and her uncle Marshall at Ingram's Crook. If youth had carried away with it its buoyant hopes, no less than its tumult of bliss and anguish, the sisters were now slowly recovering from the blow which had stunned them; learning more perfectly the great lesson of resignation, and regaining heart for venturing once more in the world's business.

Charles Hamilton had occasionally urged on his bosom friend and dearest sister Bess, that the pleasure and the profit which she diffused by her personal influence, she might diffuse still more widely by writing. In 1785 she had sent a contribution to *The Lounger*, which was received and accepted by the editor without any knowledge of the author. Partly in obedience to her brother's wishes, partly under the influence of Dr. Gregory and the members of his

family, with whom she had latterly become acquainted, she published in succession her novels of "The Hindoo Rajah" and "The Modern Philosophers," and her popular tale, "The Cottagers of Glenburnie." These books had decided merit, and did their work in their day. "The Cottagers of Glenburnie," the most unpretending of the three, lives still. Isabel Irvine's little mistress of the Stirling school-days had grown a middle-aged literary woman; and not simply a literary woman, but an enlightened philanthropist. She recalled the Isabel Irvines of her youth, with their stumbling-blocks and fetters, and contrasted these unfavourably (as Mary Berry did on visiting Scotland) with what she believed to be the greater advantages, in social respects, enjoyed by the better specimens of English labourers' families with which she had come in contact during her sojourn in the south. She wrote "The Cottagers of Glenburnie" with a will, for the benefit of her humbler countrywomen. To her credit and to theirs, the tale did wonders in remedying the evil she condemned—the fatal

vis inertia of "I canna be fashed," which lingers, now, chiefly as a tradition of darker ages. Not without its pleasant side is the anecdote that the veritable Isabel Irvine, whom her young mistress had taken pains to instruct and train, lived to read "The Cottagers of Glenburnie" in a copy sent to her by the author. Nay, more, it is on record that Isabel lent out her copy at "a penny the read;" thus, Scotch-woman-like, not only glorying in spreading her old mistress's fame and usefulness, but having an eye to her own private interest in the transaction.

The publication of her books brought Elizabeth Hamilton—become Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton—with honour on the stage of literature. She and her sister now settled at Bath. The brilliant Bath of Jane Austen and Fanny Burney was familiar to Elizabeth, through listening in girlhood to the reminiscences of her aunt Marshall, who had lived there in her office of "humble companion" during the palmiest days of the great English watering-place. Aunt Marshall had loved to recall Bath and its cele-

brities, when time had plucked the personal sting from their associations.

Elizabeth Hamilton lived and wrote during an interregnum in letters both in England and Scotland. In England, Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, Sir Joshua, Garrick, and their set had passed away; William Cowper, in his self-banishment at Olney, and Hayley, little dreaming that he would be forgotten in a single generation, save for his vanity and his friendships, were only inaugurating the next great *régime* of Scott, Byron, Moore, Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. The London where Elizabeth Hamilton received her tribute of praise had just seen the last of the highly majestic queens of letters—Mrs. Montague and Mrs. Chapone. Mrs. Barbauld was laying down the sceptre, and consenting to be private and homely. Still more unassuming was Mrs. Barbauld's gentle, well-informed niece, Lucy Aikin. Joanna Baillie was of the same generation, and so was Madame D'Arblay, when she managed to come across from France at intervals, before she settled finally in her native country. Amongst

these ladies, Horace Walpole's favourite, Mary Berry, flitted now and then like a star from another sphere — not without a suspicion of wilfulness and condescension when she found herself at any time in the act of leaving Strawberry Hill for Hampstead. Elizabeth Hamilton was on friendly terms with the most of her compeers. She was particularly friendly with her countrywoman, Joanna Baillie—to whom she could talk, among other things, of old Glasgow, its college and green.

It was not till 1803, nearly ten years after the death of her brother, that Elizabeth Hamilton ended a long, rambling, enjoyable tour of the English lakes by revisiting Scotland. Her journey was in some respects a triumphal progress. She had before this published the "Letters on Education," which won the approbation of Dugald Stewart, and was now engaged in writing, from restricted sources, the "Memoirs of Agrippina." A few months' residence in Edinburgh, with the "open sesame" Elizabeth Hamilton possessed to its most cultivated society, so delighted her, that having no par-

ticular tie to England, she made up her mind to remove thither with her sister. In George Street, Edinburgh, instead of in Bath, their home was fixed from this time.

Edinburgh was no longer the Edinburgh which Burns found it—when Robertson and Blair were the censors of literature, when stately Lord Glencairn and queer Lord Buchan were his patrons, and Jane, Duchess of Gordon, his hostess. Neither was it yet the Edinburgh when Sir Walter made a summer of winter in Castle Street, nor when Wilson, Hogg, and young Lockhart perpetrated the Chaldean manuscript. Dugald Stewart was there; so were Playfair and Alison; and there was some word of an accomplished young Mr. Scott, who, although he walked the Parliament House, had begun housekeeping at Lasswade. Mrs. Brunton, a minister's wife in the city, was taking advantage of the more liberal days in the Kirk to write "Self-Control," without bringing scandal upon her husband. Mrs. Grant of Laggan had migrated from the "mountains" to the town. A "long," awkward woman, with

the affectation of a drawl, and with a difficulty in hearing, she was gifted with a comprehensive mind and a warm heart. Mrs. Cockburn no longer presided over her piquant suppers, or issued her *bons mots* and squibs, like an old Frenchwoman of quality. Lady Anne Lindsay had long flown to London, and was on the eve of a farther flight to the Cape of Good Hope. Mrs. Keith Murray had vanished in the shades of Balcarres. Of all the old notabilities, only dignified Miss Jean Elliot, of the Minto family, remained. She still resided in her house in Brown Square, and went out for an airing in her sedan-chair.

Elizabeth Hamilton immediately took rank among the wisest and best of a select company. The Government, to its credit, granted her an annuity. For twelve years, amid fast-failing health, she was engaged in every intellectual, charitable, and truly religious enterprise of old Edinburgh. After she was a complete invalid and largely a prisoner in her own room, until her death at Harrogate in 1816, in her fifty-ninth year, her house was a chosen meeting-

place for all those engaged in higher objects. In the end, Elizabeth Hamilton had gone to England for change of air and scene, which had often proved beneficial to her before, but was powerless then. Unpretending and reverent in her religious profession always, her death was in keeping with her life. She set her house in order—what was left of it for her thus to set—resigned herself into God's hands, imploring his pardon through his Son, and looking to Him for glory, honour, and immortality. She blessed her friends—the oldest and kindest of them, her sister—and died peacefully.

Elizabeth Hamilton, with her fortitude and stanchness, strenuously defended castle-building from the strictures with which it has been visited by many Christian moralists. She alleged that imagination was not sufficiently cultivated as a moral power and safeguard (she might have added, as a great element of faith); and that by allowing oneself to picture what one would be—above all, in character and act—there might be an excellent balance maintained against inordinate self-esteem. But per-

haps few girls indulge the speculation which caused Elizabeth to write in her youth at Ingram's Crook :—

“ And straight I in the glass surveyed
 An antique maiden much decayed,
 Whose languid eye and pallid cheek
 The conquering power of time bespeak
 But though deprived of youthful bloom,
 Free was my brow from peevish gloom
 A cap, though not of modern grace,
 Hid my grey hairs, and deck'd my face.
 No more I fashion's livery wear,
 But cleanly neatness all my care.
 Whoe'er had seen me must have said,
 There goes one cheerful, pleased old maid ”

Perhaps as few old women have lightened heavy hours inflicted on them by chronic gout in employing their crippled hands to write such cheery welcomes to old age as this :—

“ Is that Auld Age that's tirling at the pin ?
 I trow it is—then haste to let him in.
 Ye're kindly welcome, frien' ; sae dinna fear
 To show yoursel', ye'll cause nae trouble here.
 * * * * *
 But far frae shirking ye as a disgrace,
 Thankfu' I am to have lived to see your face ;
 Nor sall I e'er disown ye, nor tak pride
 To think how long I micht your visit hide ;

Doing my best to mak ye weel respectet,
 I'll no fear for your sake to be neglectet.
 But now ye're come, and through a' kind o' weather,
 We're doomed frae this time forth to jog thegither;
 I'd fain mak compact wi' ye firm and strong,
 On terms o' fair giff-gaff to haud out long;
 Gin thou't be civil, I sall liberal be:
 Witness the lang, lang list of what I'll gie.
 First, then, I here mak ower for gude and aye
 A' youthfu' fancies, whether bright or gay;
 Beauties and graces too I wad resign them,
 But sair I fear 't wad cost ye fash to fin' them,
 For 'gainst your daddy Time they couldna stand,
 Nor bear the grip o' his unsosy hand.
 But there's my skin, whilk ye may further crunkle,
 And write your name at length in ilka wrunkle;
 On my brown locks ye've leave to lay your paw,
 And bleach them to your fancy, white as snaw;
 But lookna, Age, sae wistfu' at my mouth,
 As gin ye langed to pu' out ilka tooth;
 Let them, I do beseech, still keep their places,
 Though gin ye wish't, ye're free to paint their faces.

* * * * *

I ken by that fell glower and meaning shrug
 Ye'd slap your skinny fingers on each lug;
 And now fain ye are, I trow, and keen,
 To cast your misty powders in my e'en;
 But O, in mercy spare my poor wee twinklers,
 And I for aye sall wear your crystal blinkers.
 Then 'bout my lugs I'd fain a bargain mak,
 And gie my hand that I sall ne'er draw back
 Weel, then—wad ye consent their use to share,
 'T wad serve us baith, and be a bargain rare.

Thus I wad hae't when babbling fools intrude
 Gabbling their noisy nonsense lang and loud,
 Or when ill-nature, weel brushed up by wit
 Or sneer sarcastic, taks its aim to hit ;
 Or when detraction, meanest slave o' pride,
 Spies out wee fauts and seeks great worth to hide,
 Then mak me deaf—as deaf as deaf can be,
 At sic a time my lugs I lend to thee.
 But when in social hour ye see combined
 Genius and wisdom—fruits o' heart and mind,
 Good sense, good humour, wit in playfu' mood,
 And candour e'en frae ill extracting good,
 Oh ! then, auld frien', I maun hae back my hearing,
 To want it then would be an ill past bearing.

* * * *

Nae matter—hale and soun' I'll keep my heart,
 Nor frae a crumb o' 't sall I ever part,
 Its kindly warmth will ne'er be chilled by a'
 The cauldest breath your frozen lips can blaw :
 Ye needna fash your thumb, auld carle, nor fret,
 For there affection sall preserve its seat,
 And though to tak my hearing ye rejoice,
 Yet spite o' you I'll still hear friendship's voice ;
 Thus though ye tak the rest, it sha'na grieve me,
 For ae blythe spunk o' spirits ye maun leave me.
 And let me tell ye in your lug, Auld Age,
 I'm bound to travel wi' ye but ae stage ;
 Be't long or short, ye canna keep me back,
 An' when we reach the end o' 't, ye maun pack,
 For there we part for ever, late or ear'
 Another gude companion meets me there,
 To whom ye—will he, nill he—maun me bring ;
 Noi think that I'll be wae, and laith to spring

Frae your poor dozened side, ye carle uncouth,
 To the blest arms of everlasting youth.
 By time whate'er ye've rifled, stow'n, or ta'en,
 Will a' be gi'en wi' interest back again.

* * * * *

Now a's tauld

Let us set out upon our journey cauld
 Wi' nae vain boasts, nor vain regrets tormented,
 We'll e'en jog on the gate, quiet and contented "

So Elizabeth Hamilton raises her cracked voice to greet old age, as she reads aloud these lines to her little family circle in George Street.

Her last work, written a year before her death, was "Hints to the Patrons and Directors of Public Schools." Taking up the system of Pestalozzi, she urged, as she had done in her "Letters on Education," the cultivation of metaphysics as the foundation of education. "Sound good sense," modesty, and kindness "eminently characterised" her prose writings. In some respects she forms, in them, a link between Hannah More and Miss Edgeworth.

It was on Elizabeth Hamilton's return home, after an absence of six months, during which she had, at the pressing request of a nobleman,

presided for a season over his motherless family, that in the exhilaration of her restoration to her "ain folk," she wrote "My ain fireside."

This song, which is the "Home, sweet Home" of Scotland, has peculiar and individual merits. "Home, sweet Home" is more local, and yet it is more vague in its very sentimentality. "My ain fireside" is the fervent utterance of Scotch independence, and of affection concentrated into a few rugged channels. Elizabeth Hamilton, as shown in her song, had the aristocratic bias and the enthusiastic loyalty of her countrymen, but her purely human instinct was very much stronger. She was faithful to that "blude" which "is thicker than water," and to the perfect regard which friendship ought to mean. Though she was what the world of her day would have called "a polite woman," she had a true and warm-hearted woman's detestation of form, for form's sake, and for every shade of guile and hypocrisy. She had a gracious woman's bountiful gladness when gladness is meet; and she had withal something of the poet's suggestive appropriateness of epithet

and figure, as seen in her line of the "bonnie blythe blink o' my ain fireside." As with poets generally, her enjoyment was keen in proportion to the sharpness of her pain: she had known the happiness which is so great that it brings tears into the eyes, and points back inevitably to the days and the sorrows which are gone—but not forgotten, their mark and their fruit being left behind them. It only remains to be said that "My ain fireside" has shared the plague of popularity, having grown or fallen into many different versions since its author wrote it.

MY AIN FIRESIDE.

OH! I hae seen great anes, and sat in great ha's,
'Mong lords and 'mong ladies a' covered wi' brows;
At feasts made for princes, wi' princes I've been,
Where the grand shine o' splendour has dazzled my e'en;
But a sight sae delightfu', I trow, I ne'er spied,
As the bonnie blythe blink o' my ain fireside.
My ain fireside, my ain fireside,
O cheery's the blink o' my ain fireside.
My ain fireside, my ain fireside,
O there's nought to compare wi' my ain fireside.

Ance mair, Gude be praised, round my ain heartsome
ingle,

Wi' the friends o' my youth I cordially mingle ;
Nae forms to compel me to seem wae or glad,
I may laugh when I'm merry, and sigh when I'm sad ;
Nae falsehood to dread, and nae malice to fear,
But truth to delight me, and friendship to cheer ;
Of a' roads to happiness ever were tried,
There's nane half so sure as ane's ain fireside.

My ain fireside, my ain fireside,
O there's nought to compare wi' my ain fireside

When I draw in my stool on my cosy hearthstane,
My heart louns sae light I scarce ken't for my ain ;
Care's down on the wind, it is clean out o' sight,
Past troubles they seem but as dreams o' the night
There but kind voices, kind faces I see,
And mark saft affection glent fond frae ilk e'e ;
Nae fleechings o' flattery, nae boastings o' pride,
'Tis heart speaks to heart, at ane's ain fireside.

My ain fireside, my ain fireside,
O there's nought to compare wi' ane's ain fireside.

END OF VOL. I.