

round it, to float it away. He had seen, he told me, stones of very considerable size floated off by ice on the shore opposite his cottage, in the upper reaches of the Cromarty Frith: ice was an agent that sometimes "walked off with great stones;" whereas he had no evidence whatever that the fairies had any powers that way; and so he accepted the agent which he knew, as the true one in the removal of the travelled stone, and not the hypothetical agents, of which he knew nothing. Such was the natural philosophy of old John; and in this special instance geologic science has since fully confirmed his decision. He was chiefly a favorite among us, however, from his even and cheerful temper, and his ability of telling humorous stories, that used to set the barrack in a roar, and in which he never spared himself, if the exhibition of a weakness or absurdity gave but point to the fun. His narrative of a visit to Inverness, which he had made when an apprentice lad, to see a sheep-stealer hung, and his description of the terrors of a night-journey back, in which he fancied he saw men waiving in the wind on almost every tree, till, on reaching his solitary barrack, he was utterly prostrated by the apparition of his own great-coat suspended from a pin, has oftener than once convulsed us with laughter. But John's humorous confessions, based as they always were on a strong good sense, that always saw the early folly in its most ludicrous aspect, never lowered him in our eyes. Of his wonderful skill as a workman, much was incommunicable; but it was at least something to know the principles on which he directed the operations of what a phrenologist would perhaps term his extraordinary faculties of *form* and *size*; and so I recognize old John as one of not the least useful nor able of my many teachers. Some of his professional lessons were of a kind which the south and east country mason would be the better for knowing. In that rainy district of Scotland of which we at this time occupied the central tract, rubble walls built in the ordinary style leak like the bad roofs of other parts of the country; and mansion-houses constructed within its precincts by qualified workmen from Edinburgh and Glasgow have been found to admit the water