

on the fire better than aught else I ever heard from him ; nay, I must add, that nothing had I ever found in the writings of the sceptics that had a worse effect on my mind ; and I now mention the circumstance to show how sober in applications of the kind, in an age like the present, a theologian should be. It was some time ere I forgot the ill savor of that dead fly ; and it was to beliefs of a serious and very important class that it served for a time to impart its own doubtful character.

But from the minister whose chapel I oftenest attended, I was little in danger of having my beliefs unsettled by reasonings of this stumbling cast. "Be sure," said both my uncles, as I was quitting Cromarty for the south,—“be sure you go and hear Dr. M'Crie.” And so Dr. M'Crie I did go and hear ; and not once or twice, but often. The biographer of Knox,—to employ the language in which Wordsworth describes the humble hero of the “Excursion,”—

“Was a man

Whom no one could have passed without remark.”

And on first attending his church, I found that I had unwittingly seen him before, and that without remark I had *not* passed him. I had extended one of my usual evening walks, shortly after commencing work at Niddry, in the direction of the southern suburb of Edinburgh, and was sauntering through one of the green lanes of Liberton, when I met a gentleman whose appearance at once struck me. He was a singularly erect, spare, tall man, and bore about him an air which, neither wholly clerical nor wholly military, seemed to be a curious compound of both. The countenance was pale, and the expression, as I thought, somewhat melancholy ; but an air of sedate power sat so palpably on every feature, that I stood arrested as he passed, and for half a minute or so remained looking after him. He wore, over a suit of black, a brown great-coat, with the neck a good deal whitened by powder, and the rim of the hat behind, which was slightly turned up, bore a similar stain. “There is mark about that old-fashioned man,” I said to myself : “who or what can he be ?”