

William, like Uncle James, had fully expected that I was to make my way in life in some one of the learned professions; and as his position—though, as the result unfortunately showed, a not very secure one—was considerably in advance of mine, I kept aloof from him, in the character of a poor relation, who was quite as proud as he was poor, and in the belief that his new friends, of whom, I understood, he had now well nigh as many as before, would hold that the cousinship of a mere working man did him little credit. He had learned from home, however, that I was in Edinburgh, and had made not a few ineffectual attempts to find me out, of which I had heard; and now, on forming my resolution to return to the north, I waited upon him at his rooms in Ambrose's Lodgings,—at that time possessed of a sort of classical interest, as the famous Blackwood Club, with Christopher North at its head, used to meet in the hotel immediately below. Cousin William had a warm heart, and received me with great kindness, though I had, of course, to submit to the scold which I deserved; and as some young friends were to look in upon him in the evening, he said, I had to do, what I would fain have avoided, perform penance, by waiting, on his express invitation, to meet with them. They were, I ascertained, chiefly students of medicine and divinity, in attendance at the classes of the University, and not at all the formidable sort of persons I had feared to meet; and finding nothing very unattainable in their conversation, and as Cousin William made a dead set on me “to bring me out,” I at length ventured to mingle in it, and found my reading stand me in some stead. There was a meeting, we were told, that evening, in the apartment below, of the Blackwood Club. The night I spent with my cousin was, if our information was correct, and the *Noctes* not a mere myth, one of the famous *Noctes Ambrosianæ*; and fain would I have seen, for but a moment, from some quiet corner, the men whose names fame had blown so widely; but I have ever been unlucky in the curiosity—though I have always strongly entertained it—which has the personal appearance of celebrated men for its object. I had ere now several times lin-