

said, chiefly with a controversial bearing, about the excellent religious influence of our parochial seminaries, I never knew any one who owed other than the merest smattering of theological knowledge to these institutions, and not a single individual who had ever derived from them any tincture, even the slightest, of religious feeling. In truth, during almost the whole of the last century, and for at least the first forty years of the present, the people of Scotland were, with all their faults, considerably more Christian than the larger part of their schoolmasters. So far as I can remember, I carried in my memory from school only a single remark at all theological in its character, and it was of a kind suited rather to do harm than good. In reading in the class one Saturday morning a portion of the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, I was told by the master that that ethical poem was a sort of alphabetical acrostic ; a circumstance, he added, that accounted for its broken and inconsecutive character as a composition. Chiefly, however, from the Sabbath-day catechisings to which I had been subjected during boyhood by my uncles, and latterly from the old divines, my Uncle Sandy's favorites, and from the teachings of the pulpit, I had acquired a considerable amount of religious knowledge. I had thought, too, a good deal about some of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, in their character as abstruse positions,—such as the doctrine of the Divine decrees, and of man's inability to assume the initiative in the work of his own conversion. I had, besides, a great admiration of the Bible, especially of its narrative and poetical parts ; and could scarce give strong enough expression to the contempt which I entertained for the vulgar and tasteless sceptics who, with Paine at their head, could speak of it as a weak or foolish book. Farther, reared in a family circle, some of whose members were habitually devout, and all of whom respected and stood up for religion, and were imbued with the stirring ecclesiastical traditions of their country, I felt that the religious side in any quarrel had a sort of hereditary claim upon me. I believe I may venture to say, that previous to this time I had never seen a religious man badgered for his religion, and much in a