

men; and so the cause of the Establishment was particularly strong in both town and parish. At the beginning of the present century, Cromarty had not its single Dissenter; and though a few of what were known as "Haldane's people" might be found in it, some eight or ten years later they failed in effecting a lodgment, and ultimately quitted it for a neighboring town. Almost all the Dissent that has arisen in Scotland since the Reformation has been an effect of Moderatism and forced settlements; and as the place had known neither, its people continued to harbor within the Church of their fathers, nor wished to change. A vacancy had occurred in the incumbency, during my sojourn in the south, through the death of the incumbent, the respected minister of my childhood and youth; and I found, on my return, a new face in the pulpit. It was that of a remarkable man,—the late Mr. Stewart of Cromarty,—one of at once the most original thinkers and profound theologians I ever knew; though he has, alas! left as little mark of his exquisite talent behind him, as those sweet singers of former ages, the memory of whose enchanting notes has died, save as a doubtful echo, with the generation that heard them. I sat, with few interruptions, for sixteen years under his ministry; and for nearly twelve of these enjoyed his confidence and friendship.

I never could press myself on the notice of superior men, however desirous of forming their acquaintance; and have, in consequence, missed opportunities innumerable of coming in friendly contact with persons whom it would be at once a pleasure and an honor to know. And so, for the first two years, or rather more, I was content to listen with profound attention, to the pulpit addresses of my new minister, and to appear as a catechumen, when my turn came, at his diets of catechising. He had been struck, however, as he afterwards told me, by my sustained attention when at church; and, on making inquiry regarding me among his friends, he was informed that I was a great reader, and, it was believed, a writer of verse. And coming unwittingly out upon him one day as he was passing, when quitting my work-place for the street, he addressed me. "Well, lad," he said, "it is your dinner hour: I hear I have a poet