

and that my "book exhibited none, or next to none, of those indications which sanction the expectation of better things to come;" while a fourth, of a more sanguine vein, found in my work the evidence of "gifts of Nature, which the stimulus of encouragement, and the tempering lights of experience, might hereafter develop, and direct to the achievement of something truly wonderful." There were two names in particular that my little volume used to suggest to the newspaper reviewers: the Tam o'Shanter and Souter Johnnie of the ingenious Thom were in course of being exhibited at the time; and it was known that Thom had wrought as a journeyman mason: and there was a rather slim poet called Sillery, the author of several forgotten volumes of verse, one of which had issued from the press contemporaneously with mine, who, as he had a little money, and was said to treat his literary friends very luxuriously, was praised beyond measure by the newspaper critics, especially by those of the Scottish capital. And Thom as a mason, and Sillery as a poet, were placed repeatedly before me. One critic, who was sure I would never come to anything, magnanimously remarked, however, that as he bore me no ill will, he would be glad to find himself mistaken; nay, that it would give him "unfeigned pleasure to learn I had attained to the well-merited fame of even Mr. Thom himself." And another, after deprecating the undue severity so often shown by the bred writer to the working man, and asserting that the "journeyman mason" was in this instance, notwithstanding his treatment, a man of fair parts, ended by remarking, that it was of course not even every man of merit who could expect to attain to the "high poetic eminence and celebrity of a Charles Doyle Sillery."

All this, however, was criticism at a distance, and disturbed me but little when engaged in toiling in the churchyard, or in enjoying my quiet evening walks. But it became more formidable when, on one occasion, it came to beard me in my den.