

light, that when the lecturer, unable to get audiences, quitted the place, and Walter had no longer opportunity of avenging my cause, I felt a load of anxiety taken from off my mind.

There reached Cromarty shortly after, a criticism that differed considerably from that of Walsh, and restored the shaken confidence of some of my acquaintance. The other criticisms which had appeared in newspapers, literary gazettes, and journals, had been evidently the work of small men; and, feeble and commonplace in their style and thinking, they carried with them no weight,—for who cares anything for the judgment, on one's writings, of men who themselves cannot write? But here, at length, was there a critique eloquently and powerfully written. It was, however, at least as extravagant in its praise as the others in their censure. The friendly critic knew nothing of the author he commended; but he had, I suppose, first seen the depreciatory criticisms, and then glanced his eye over the volume which they condemned; and finding it considerably better than it was said to be, he had rushed into generous praise, and described it as really a great deal better than it was. After an extravagantly high estimate of the powers of its author, he went on to say,—“Nor, in making these observations, do we speak relatively, or desire to be understood as merely saying that the poems before us are remarkable productions to emanate from a ‘journeyman mason.’ That this is indeed the case, no one who reads them can doubt; but in characterizing the poetical talent they display, our observations are meant to be quite absolute; and we aver, without fear of contradiction, that the pieces contained in the humble volume before us bear the stamp and impress of no ordinary genius; that they are bespangled with gems of genuine poetry; and that their unpretending author well deserves—what he will doubtless obtain—the countenance and support of a discerning public. Nature is not an aristocrat. To the ploughboy following his team a-field,—to the shepherd tending his flocks in the wilderness,—or to the rude cutter of stone, cramped over his rough occupation in the wooden shed,—she sometimes dispenses her richest and rarest gifts as liber-