

much kindness, too, from the late Principal Baird. The venerable Principal, when on one of his Highland journeys,—benevolently undertaken in behalf of an educational scheme of the General Assembly, in the service of which he had travelled, after he was turned of seventy, more than eight thousand miles,—had perused my Verses and Letters; and, expressing a strong desire to know their author, my friend the editor of the *Courier* despatched one of his apprentices to Cromarty, to say that he thought the opportunity of meeting with such a man ought not to be neglected. I accordingly went up to Inverness, and had an interview with Dr. Baird. I had known him previously by name as one of the correspondents of Burns, and the editor of the best edition of the poems of Michael Bruce; and, though aware at the time that his estimate of what I had done was by much too high, I yet felt flattered by his notice. He urged me to quit the north for Edinburgh. The capital furnished, he said, the proper field for a literary man in Scotland. What between the employment furnished by the newspapers and the magazines, he was sure I would effect a lodgment, and work my way up; and, until I gave the thing a fair trial, I would, of course, come and live with him. I felt sincerely grateful for his kindness, but declined the invitation. I did think it possible, that in some subordinate capacity,—as a concocter of paragraphs, or an abridger of parliamentary debates, or even as a writer of occasional articles,—I might find more remunerative employment than as a stone-mason. But though I might acquaint myself in a large town, when occupied in this way, with the world of books, I questioned whether I could enjoy equal opportunities of acquainting myself with the occult and the new in natural science, as when plying my labors in the provinces as a mechanic. And so I determined that, instead of casting myself on an exhausting literary occupation, in which I would have to draw incessantly on the stock of fact and reflection which I had already accumulated, I should continue for at least several years more to purchase independence by my labors as a mason, and employ my leisure hours in adding to