

the nature of the cohesive agent in the non-calcareous sandstone which I was engaged in hewing. I had sometimes a different, but not less interesting, class of visitors. The town had its small but very choice circle of accomplished intellectual ladies, who, earlier in the century, would have been perhaps described as members of the blue-stocking sisterhood ; but the advancing intelligence of the age had rendered the phrase obsolete ; and they simply took their place as well-informed, sensible women, whose acquaintance with the best authors was regarded as in no degree disqualifying them from their proper duties as wives or daughters. And my circle of acquaintance included the entire class. I used to meet them at delightful tea-parties, and sometimes borrowed a day from my work to conduct them through the picturesque burn of Eathie, or the wild scenes of the Cromarty Hill, or to introduce them to the fossiliferous deposits of the Lias or the Old Red Sandstone. And not unfrequently their evening walks used to terminate where I wrought, in the old chapel of St. Regulus, or in the parish burying-ground, beside a sweet wooded dell known as the "Ladies' Walk ;" and my labors for the day closed in what I always very much relished,—a conversation on the last good book, or on some new organism, recently disinterred, of the Secondary or Palæozoic period.

I had been hewing, about this time, in the upper part of my uncle's garden, and had just closed my work for the evening, when I was visited by one of my lady friends, accompanied by a stranger lady, who had come to see a curious old dial-stone which I had dug out of the earth long before, when a boy, and which had originally belonged to the ancient Castle-garden of Cromarty. I was standing with them beside the dial, which I had placed in my uncle's garden, and remarking, that as it exhibited in its structure no little mathematical skill, it had probably been cut under the eye of the eccentric but accomplished Sir Thomas Urquhart ; when a third lady, greatly younger than the others, and whom I had never seen before, came hurriedly tripping down the garden-walk, and, addressing the other