

was, as I had anticipated, very stupid ; and must have looked, I suppose, even more obtuse than I actually was ; for my temporary superior the agent, having gone to Edinburgh a few days after my arrival, gave expression, in the head bank, to the conviction that it would be in vain attempting making "yon man" an accountant. Altogether deficient in the cleverness that can promptly master isolated details, when in ignorance of their bearing on the general scheme to which they belong, I could literally do nothing until I had got a hold of the system ; which, locked up in the ponderous tomes of the agency, for some little time eluded my grasp. At length, however, it gradually unrolled itself before me, in all its nice proportions, as one of perhaps the completest forms of "book-keeping" which the wit of man has yet devised ; and I then found that the details which, when I had approached them as if from the outside, had repulsed and beaten me back, could, like the outworks of a fortress, be commanded from the centre with the utmost ease. Just as I had reached this stage, the regular accountant of the branch was called away to an appointment in one of the joint stock banks of England ; and the agent, again going into Edinburgh on business, left me for the greater part of a day in direction of the agency. Little more than a fortnight had elapsed since he had given his unfavorable verdict ; and he was now asked how, in the absence of the accountant, he could have got away from his charge. He had left *me* in the office, he said. What! the *Incompetent*? O, that, he replied, is all a mistake ; the *Incompetent* has already mastered our system. The mechanical ability, however, came but slowly ; and I never acquired the facility, in running up columns of summations, of the early taught accountant ; though, making up by diligence what I wanted in speed, I found, after my first few weeks of labor in Linlithgow, that I could give, as of old, an occasional hour to literature and geology. The proof-sheets of my book began to drop in upon me, demanding revision ; and to a quarry in the neighborhood of the town, rich in the organisms of the Mountain Limestone, and overflowed by a bed of basalt so regularly columnar, that one of the