

of men such as the Ayrshire Ploughman, the Ettrick Shepherd, the Fifeshire Foresters, the sailors Dampier and Falconer,—Bunyan, Bloomfield, Ramsay, Tannahill, Alexander Wilson, John Clare, Allan Cunningham, and Ebenezer Elliott. And I was taught at this time to recognize the simple principle on which the greater advantages lie on the side of the humbler class. Gradually, however, as I became more inured to a sedentary life, my mind recovered its spring, and my old ability returned of employing my leisure hours, as before, in intellectual exertion. Meanwhile my legendary volume issued from the press, and was, with a few exceptions, very favorably received by the critics. Leigh Hunt gave it a kind and genial notice in his *Journal*; it was characterized by Robert Chambers not less favorably in *his*; and Dr. Hetherington, the future historian of the Church of Scotland and of the Westminster Assembly of Divines,—at that time a licentiate of the Church,—made it the subject of an elaborate and very friendly critique in the *Presbyterian Review*. Nor was I less gratified by the terms in which it was spoken of by the late Baron Hume, the nephew and residuary legatee of the historian,—himself very much a critic of the old school,—in a note to a north-country friend. He described it as a work “written in an English style which” he “had begun to regard as one of the lost arts.” But it attained to no great popularity. For being popular, its subjects were too local, and its treatment of them perhaps too quiet. My publishers tell me, however, that it not only continues to sell, but moves off considerably better in its later editions than it did on its first appearance.

The branch bank furnished me with an entirely new and curious field of observation, and formed a very admirable school. For the cultivation of a shrewd common sense, a bank office is one of perhaps the best schools in the world. Mere cleverness serves often only to befool its possessor. He gets entangled among his own ingenuities, and is caught as in a net. But ingenuities, plausibilities, special pleadings, all that make the stump-orator great, must be brushed aside by the banker. The question with him comes always to be a sternly naked