

CHAPTER XXIV.

“Life is a drama of a few brief acts;
The actors shift, the scene is often chang'd,
Pauses and revolutions intervene,
The mind is set to many a varied tune,
And jars and plays in harmony by turns.”

ALEXANDER BETHUNE.

THOUGH my wife continued, after our marriage, to teach a few pupils, the united earnings of the household did not much exceed a hundred pounds per annum,—not quite so large a sum as I had used to think it a few years before; and so I set myself to try whether I could not turn my leisure hours to some account, by writing for the periodicals. My old inability of pressing for work continued to be as embarrassing as ever, and, save for a chance engagement of no very promising kind, which presented itself to me unsolicited about this time, I might have failed in procuring the employment which I sought. An ingenious self-taught mechanic,—the late Mr. John Mackay Wilson of Berwick-on-Tweed,—after making good his upward way from his original place at the compositor's frame, to the editorship of a provincial paper, started, in the beginning of 1835, a weekly periodical, consisting of “Border Tales,” which, as he possessed the story-telling ability, met with considerable success. He did not live, however, to complete the first yearly volume; the forty-ninth weekly number intimated his death; but as the publication had been a