

ments in the newspapers, and paid duty to make evident the fact. There was a shallow and very ignorant young shoemaker in the place, named Chaucer, a native of the south of Scotland, who represented himself as the grandson of the old poet of the days of Edward III., and wrote particularly wretched doggerel to make good his claim. And, having a quarrel with the Kirk-Session, in a certain delicate department, he had joined the processionists, and celebrated their achievements in a ballad entirely worthy of them. And it was perhaps the severest cut of all, that the recognized leader of the band pronounced Chaucer the younger a greatly better poet than me. There were representations, too, made to my superiors in the banking department at Edinburgh, which procured me a reprimand, though a gentle one; but my superior in Cromarty,—Mr. Ross,—as wise and good a man as any in the direction, and thoroughly acquainted with the merits of the case, was wholly on my side. I am afraid the reader may deem all this very foolish, and hold that I would have been better employed among the rocks, in determining the true relations of their various beds, and the character of their organisms, than in bickering in a petty village quarrel, and making myself enemies. And yet, man being what he is, I fear an ability of efficient squabbling is a greatly more marketable one than any ability whatever of extending the boundaries of natural science. At least so it was, that while my geological researches did nothing for me at this time, my letter in the procession controversy procured for me the offer of a newspaper editorship. But though, in a pecuniary point of view, I would have considerably bettered my circumstances by closing with it, I found I could not do so without assuming the character of the special pleader, and giving myself to the advocacy of views and principles which I really did not hold; and so I at once declined the office, as one for which I did not deem myself suited, and could not in conscience undertake.

I found about this time more congenial employment, though, of course, it occupied only my leisure hours, in writing the memoir of a townsman,—the late Mr. William Forsyth of Cro-