

These stanzas are, as the great Scotch critic well remarked, at once "touching," "graphic," and "elegant ;" and certainly exhibit no trace of what Johnson well terms the narrow conversation" to which untaught men in humble circumstances "are inevitably condemned." But regarding the difficulties with which Mr Maclagan has had to contend, we must quote from himself. "That a working man," we find him saying, "should write and publish a volume of verse, is no phenomenon ; many of the brightest lights of literature in all countries have toiled for years at the press, the plough, the loom, and the hammer. That wealth and education in themselves have never made a true minstrel, is proverbial ; nevertheless, they are powerful allies in his favour. Take, for instance, a youth from school, ten years of age, and bind him at thirteen or fourteen to a laborious trade. See him working ten hours a-day for years without intermission,—struggling to unravel, meanwhile, the mysteries of literature, science, and art, without assistance or encouragement,—and you will find that he has many hard battles to fight before he can hope to attain even standing-room in the literary arena. Such, literally, has been the position of the author of the present volume." Let us remark, however, that untaught men possessed of the true poetic faculty are usually, in one important respect, happier in their genius than untaught men whose intellect is of the reflective cast, and their bent scientific. The poets are developed much earlier, and lose less in life. Ramsay began to publish his poems in detached broad-sheets, in his five-and-twentieth year ; Burns in his twenty-sixth year had written the greater part of his Kilmarnock volume, including his "Twa Dogs," "Halloween," and the "Cottar's Saturday Night ;" Alexander Wilson produced his "Watty and Meg" at the same age ; and the writings of both Tannahill and Allan Cunningham saw the light ere either writer was turned of thirty. But self-taught men of science have usually to