

ing terms with that of the Laird. : But his credit is not so respectable, I hear.”

“Gilbert,” said the old man, with much seriousness, “it is ill with a people when they can speak lightly of their clergymen. There is still much of sterling worth and serious piety in the Church of Scotland; and if the influence of its ministers be unfortunately less than it was once, we must not cast the blame too exclusively on themselves. Other causes have been in operation. The church eighty years ago was the sole guide of opinion, and the only source of thought among us. There was, indeed, but one way in which a man could learn to think. His mind became the subject of some serious impression; he applied to his Bible; and, in the contemplation of the most important of all concerns, his newly-awakened faculties received their first exercise. All of intelligence, all of moral good in him, all that rendered him worthy of the name of man, he owed to the ennobling influence of his church; and is it wonder that that influence should be all-powerful from this circumstance alone? But a thorough change has taken place;—new sources of intelligence have been opened up; we have our newspapers and our magazines, and our volumes of miscellaneous reading; and it is now possible enough for the most cultivated mind in a parish to be the least moral and the least religious; and hence, necessarily, a diminished influence in the church, independent of the character of its ministers.”

I have dwelt too long, perhaps, on the conversation of the elder Burns; but I feel much pleasure in thus developing, as it were, my recollections of one whom his powerful-minded son has described—and this after an acquaintance with our Henry M’Kenzies, Adam Smiths, and Dugald Stewarts—as the man most thoroughly acquainted