

it already vied in every branch of learning with the most favoured countries. Scotsmen," he adds," whose dwellings and whose food were as wretched as those of the Icelanders of our time, wrote Latin verses with more than the delicacy of Vida, and made discoveries in science which would have added to the renown of Galileo." High intellectual cultivation and great simplicity, nay, rudeness, of manners, with an entire unacquaintance with what are now the common arts of life, existed in the same race, and, though the conventionalisms gained ground as the years passed by, continued to do so till at least the commencement of the present century. Not a few of the best writers and most vigorous thinkers Britain ever produced bore about them all the sharp-edged angularity of that early state of society in which every individual, instead of being smoothed down to a common mediocre standard, carries about him, like an unworn medal, the original impress stamped upon him by nature; and they were thus not only interesting as men of large calibre, but also as the curious *characters* of a primitive age. We have not only no such writers or thinkers now as Hume, Robertson, Kames, and Adam Smith, but no such *characters*. In some respects, however, society seems to have improved in well-nigh the degree in which it has become less picturesque. Lockhart remarks, in his "Life of Burns," that there was at least one class with which the poet came in contact in Edinburgh, that, unlike its clerical literati, were "shocked by his rudeness or alarmed by his wit." He adds, that among the lawyers of that age, "wine-bibbing and the principle of jollity was indeed in its high and palmy state; and that the poet partook largely in these tavern scenes of audacious hilarity, which then soothed, as a matter of course, the arid labours of the northern *noblesse de la robe*." And then he goes on to show, that there is too much reason to fear that Burns, who had tasted but rarely of such excesses in Ayrshire,