

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche
Stockton Turgenev Balzac
Burroughs Vatsyayana Crane
Curtis Tocqueville Verne
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle James Hastings Voltaire Cooke
Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



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**Personal Recollections, from Early
Life to Old Age, of Mary
Somerville**

Mary Somerville

Imprint

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[Pg i]

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

FROM EARLY LIFE TO OLD AGE

OF

MARY SOMERVILLE

WITH

Selections from her Correspondence.

BY HER DAUGHTER, MARTHA SOMERVILLE.

FIFTH THOUSAND.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET,

1874.

[The Right of Translation is reserved.] [Pg ii]

WORKS BY MRS. SOMERVILLE.

THE MECHANISM OF THE HEAVENS. 8vo. 1831.

THE CONNECTION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES. *9th Edition*. Post 8vo. 9s. 1858.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY. *6th Edition*. Post 8vo. 9s. 1870.

MOLECULAR AND MICROSCOPIC SCIENCE. 2 vols. Post 8vo. 21s. 1869.
[Pg iii]

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

MARY SOMERVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION – PARENTAGE – LIFE IN SCOTLAND IN THE LAST CENTURY – EARLY EDUCATION – SCHOOL.

The life of a woman entirely devoted to her family duties and to scientific pursuits affords little scope for a biography. There are in it neither stirring events nor brilliant deeds to record; and as my Mother was strongly averse to gossip, and to revelations of private life or of intimate correspondence, nothing of the kind will be found in the following pages. It has been only after very great hesitation, and on the recommendation of valued friends, who think that some account of so remarkable and beautiful a character cannot fail to interest the public, that I have resolved to publish some detached Recollections of past times, noted down by my mother during the last years of her life, together with a few letters from eminent men and women, referring almost exclusively to her scientific works. A still smaller number of her own letters have been added, either as illustrating her [Pg 1] opinions on events she witnessed, or else as affording some slight idea of her simple and loving disposition.

Few thoughtful minds will read without emotion my mother's own account of the wonderful energy and indomitable perseverance by which, in her ardent thirst for knowledge, she overcame obstacles apparently insurmountable, at a time when women were well-nigh totally debarred from education; and the almost intuitive way in which she entered upon studies of which she had scarcely heard the names, living, as she did, among persons to whom they were utterly unknown, and who disapproved of her devotion to pursuits so different from those of ordinary young girls at the end of the last century, especially in Scotland, which was far more old-fashioned and primitive than England.

Nor is her simple account of her early days without interest, when, as a lonely child, she wandered by the seashore, and on the links of Burntisland, collecting shells and flowers; or spent the clear, cold nights at her window, watching the starlit heavens, whose mysteries she was destined one day to penetrate in all their profound and sublime laws, making clear to others that knowledge which she herself had acquired, at the cost of so hard a struggle.

It was not only in her childhood and youth that my mother's studies encountered disapproval. Not till she became a widow, had she perfect freedom to pursue them. The first person—indeed the only one in her early days—who encouraged her passion for learning was her uncle by marriage, afterwards her father-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Somerville, minister of Jedburgh, a man very much in advance of his century in liberality of thought on all subjects. He was one of the first to discern her rare [Pg 2] qualities, and valued her as she deserved; while through life she retained the most grateful affection for him, and confided to him many doubts and difficulties on subjects of the highest importance. Nothing can be more erroneous than the statement, repeated in several obituary notices of my mother, that Mr. Greig (her first husband) aided her in her mathematical and other pursuits. Nearly the contrary was the case. Mr. Greig took no interest in science or literature, and possessed in full the prejudice against learned women which was common at that time. Only on her marriage with my father, my mother at last met with one who entirely sympathised with her, and warmly entered into all her ideas, encouraging her zeal for study to the utmost, and affording her every facility for it in his power. His love and admiration for her were unbounded; he frankly and willingly acknowledged her superiority to himself, and many of our friends can bear witness to the honest pride and gratification which he always testified in the fame and honours she attained.

No one can escape sorrow, and my mother, in the course of her long life, had her full share, but she bore it with that deep feeling of trust in the great goodness of God which formed so marked a feature in her character. She had a buoyant and hopeful spirit, and though her affections were very strong, and she felt keenly, it was ever her nature to turn from the shadows to all that is bright and beautiful in mortal life. She had much to make life pleasant in the

great honours universally bestowed upon her; but she found far more in the devoted affection of friends, to say nothing of those whose happy lot it has been to live in close and loving intercourse with so noble and gentle a spirit. [Pg 3]

She met with unbounded kindness from men of science of all countries, and most profound was her gratitude to them. Modest and unpretending to excess, nothing could be more generous than the unfeigned delight she shewed in recognising the genius and discoveries of others; ever jealous of their fame, and never of her own.

It is not uncommon to see persons who hold in youth opinions in advance of the age in which they live, but who at a certain period seem to crystallise, and lose the faculty of comprehending and accepting new ideas and theories; thus remaining at last as far behind, as they were once in advance of public opinion. Not so my mother, who was ever ready to hail joyfully any new idea or theory, and to give it honest attention, even if it were at variance with her former convictions. This quality she never lost, and it enabled her to sympathise with the younger generation of philosophers, as she had done with their predecessors, her own contemporaries.

Although her favourite pursuit, and the one for which she had decidedly most aptitude, was mathematics; yet there were few subjects in which she did not take interest, whether in science or literature, philosophy or politics. She was passionately fond of poetry, her especial favourites being Shakespeare and Dante, and also the great Greek dramatists, whose tragedies she read fluently in the original, being a good classical scholar. She was very fond of music, and devoted much time to it in her youth, and she painted from nature with considerable taste. The latter was, perhaps, the recreation in which she most delighted, from the opportunity it afforded her of contemplating the wonderful beauty of the world, which was a never-failing source of intense enjoyment to her, whether she watched the [Pg 4] changing effects of light and shade on her favourite Roman Campagna, or gazed, enchanted, on the gorgeous sunsets on the bay of Naples, as she witnessed them from her much-loved Sorrento, where she passed the last summers of her life. All things fair were a joy to her—the flowers we brought her from our

rambles, the sea-weeds, the wild birds she saw, all interested and pleased her. Everything in nature spoke to her of that great God who created all things, the grand and sublimely beautiful as well as the exquisite loveliness of minute objects. Above all, in the laws which science unveils step by step, she found ever renewed motives for the love and adoration of their Author and Sustainer. This fervour of religious feeling accompanied her through life, and very early she shook off all that was dark and narrow in the creed of her first instructors for a purer and a happier faith.

It would be almost incredible were I to describe how much my mother contrived to do in the course of the day. When my sister and I were small children, although busily engaged in writing for the press, she used to teach us for three hours every morning, besides managing her house carefully, reading the newspapers (for she always was a keen, and, I must add, a liberal politician), and the most important new books on all subjects, grave and gay. In addition to all this, she freely visited and received her friends. She was, indeed, very fond of society, and did not look for transcendent talent in those with whom she associated, although no one appreciated it more when she found it. Gay and cheerful company was a pleasant relaxation after a hard day's work. My mother never introduced scientific or learned subjects into general conversation. When they were brought forward by [Pg 5] others, she talked simply and naturally about them, without the slightest pretension to superior knowledge. Finally, to complete the list of her accomplishments, I must add that she was a remarkably neat and skilful needlewoman. We still possess some elaborate specimens of her embroidery and lace-work.

Devoted and loving in all the relations of life, my mother was ever forgetful of self. Indulgent and sympathising, she never judged others with harshness or severity; yet she could be very angry when her indignation was aroused by hearing of injustice or oppression, of cruelty to man or beast, or of any attack on those she loved. Rather timid and retiring in general society, she was otherwise fearless in her quiet way. I well remember her cool composure on some occasions when we were in great danger. This she inherited from her father, Admiral Sir William Fairfax, a gallant gentleman who distinguished himself greatly at the battle of Camperdown. [1]

My mother speaks of him as follows among her "Recollections," of which I now proceed to place some portions before the reader. [Pg 6]

My father was very good looking, of a brave and noble nature, and a perfect gentleman both in appearance and character. He was sent to sea as midshipman at ten years of age, so he had very little education; but he read a great deal, chiefly history and voyages. He was very cool, and of instant resource in moments of danger.

One night, when his little vessel had taken refuge with many others from an intensely violent gale and drifting snow in Yarmouth Roads, they saw lights disappear, as vessel after vessel foundered. My father, after having done all that was possible for the safety of the ship, went to bed. His cabin door did not shut closely, from the rolling of the ship, and the man who was sentry that night told my mother years afterwards, that when he saw my father on his knees praying, he thought it would soon be all over with them; then seeing him go to bed and fall asleep, he felt no more fear. In the morning the coast was strewn with wrecks. There were no life-boats in those days; now the lives of hundreds are annually saved by the noble self-devotion of British sailors.

My mother was the daughter of Samuel Charters, Solicitor of the Customs for Scotland, and his wife [Pg 7] Christian Murray, of Kynymont, whose eldest sister married the great grandfather of the present Earl of Minto. My grandmother was exceedingly proud and stately. She made her children stand in her presence. My mother, on the contrary, was indulgent and kind, so that her children were perfectly at ease with her. She seldom read anything but the Bible, sermons, and the newspaper. She was very sincere and devout in her religion, and was remarkable for good sense and great strength of expression in writing and conversation. Though by no means pretty, she was exceedingly distinguished and ladylike both in appearance and manners.

My father was constantly employed, and twice distinguished himself by attacking vessels of superior force. He captured the first, but was overpowered by the second, and being taken to France, remained two years a prisoner on parole, when he met with much kindness from the Choiseul family. At last he was exchanged, and

afterwards was appointed lieutenant on board a frigate destined for foreign service. I think it was the North American station, for the war of Independence was not over till the beginning of 1783. As my mother knew that my father would be absent for some years, she accompanied him to London, though so near her confinement that in returning home she had just [Pg 8] time to arrive at the manse of Jedburgh, her sister Martha Somerville's [2] house, when I was born, on the 26th December, 1780. My mother was dangerously ill, and my aunt, who was about to wean her second daughter Janet, who married General Henry Elliot, nursed me till a wetnurse could be found. So I was born in the house of my future husband, and nursed by his mother—a rather singular coincidence.

During my father's absence, my mother lived with great economy in a house not far from Burntisland which belonged to my grandfather, solely occupied with the care of her family, which consisted of her eldest son Samuel, four or five years old, and myself. One evening while my brother was lying at play on the floor, he called out, "O, mamma there's the moon rinnin' awa." It was the celebrated meteor of 1783.

Some time afterwards, for what reason I do not know, my father and mother went to live for a short time at Inveresk, and thence returned to Burntisland, our permanent home.

This place, in which my mother's early life was spent, exercised so much influence on her life and pursuits, [Pg 9] that I am happy to be able to give the description of it in her own words.

Burntisland was then a small quiet seaport town with little or no commerce, situated on the coast of Fife, immediately opposite to Edinburgh. It is sheltered at some distance on the north by a high and steep hill called the Bin. The harbour lies on the west, and the town ended on the east in a plain of short grass called the Links, on which the townspeople had the right of pasturing their cows and geese. The Links were bounded on each side by low hills covered with gorse and heather, and on the east by a beautiful bay with a sandy beach, which, beginning at a low rocky point, formed a bow and then stretched for several miles to the town of Kinghorn, the distant part skirting a range of high precipitous crags.

Our house, which lay to the south of the town, was very long, with a southern exposure, and its length was increased by a wall covered with fruit-trees, which concealed a courtyard, cow-house, and other offices. From this the garden extended southwards, and ended in a plot of short grass covering a ledge of low black rocks washed by the sea. It was divided into three parts by narrow, almost unfrequented, lanes. These gardens yielded abundance [Pg 10] of common fruit and vegetables, but the warmest and best exposures were always devoted to flowers. The garden next to the house was bounded on the south by an ivy-covered wall hid by a row of old elm trees, from whence a steep mossy bank descended to a flat plot of grass with a gravel walk and flower borders on each side, and a broad gravel walk ran along the front of the house. My mother was fond of flowers, and prided herself on her moss-roses, which flourished luxuriantly on the front of the house; but my father, though a sailor, was an excellent florist. He procured the finest bulbs and flower seeds from Holland, and kept each kind in a separate bed.

The manners and customs of the people who inhabited this pretty spot at that time were exceedingly primitive.

Upon the death of any of the townspeople, a man went about ringing a bell at the doors of the friends and acquaintances of the person just dead, and, after calling out "Oyez!" three times, he announced the death which had occurred. This was still called by the name of the Passing-bell, which in Catholic times invited the prayers of the living for the spirit just passed away.

There was much sympathy and kindness shown on these occasions; friends always paid a visit of [Pg 11] condolence to the afflicted, dressed in black. The gude wives in Burntisland thought it respectable to provide dead-clothes for themselves and the "gude man," that they might have a decent funeral. I once saw a set of grave-clothes nicely folded up, which consisted of a long shirt and cap of white flannel, and a shroud of fine linen made of yarn, spun by the gude wife herself. I did not like that gude wife; she was purse-proud, and took every opportunity of treating with scorn a poor neighbour who had had a *misfortune*, that is, a child by her husband before marriage, but who made a very good wife. Her

husband worked in our garden, and took our cow to the Links to graze. The wife kept a little shop, where we bought things, and she told us her neighbour had given her "mony a sair greet"—that is, a bitter fit of weeping.

The howdie, or midwife, was a person of much consequence. She had often to go far into the country, by day and by night, riding a cart-horse. The neighbours used to go and congratulate the mother, and, of course, to admire the baby. Cake and caudle were handed round, caudle being oatmeal gruel, with sugar, nutmeg, and white wine. In the poorest class, hot ale and "scons" were offered.

Penny-weddings were by no means uncommon in my young days. When a very poor couple were [Pg 12] going to be married, the best man, and even the bridegroom himself, went from house to house, asking for small sums to enable them to have a wedding supper, and pay the town fiddler for a dance; any one was admitted who paid a penny. I recollect the prisoners in the Tolbooth letting down bags from the prison windows, begging for charity. I do not remember any execution taking place.

Men and old women of the lower classes smoked tobacco in short pipes, and many took snuff—even young ladies must have done so; for I have a very pretty and quaint gold snuff-box which was given to my grandmother as a marriage present. Licensed beggars, called "gaberlunzie men," were still common. They wore a blue coat, with a tin badge, and wandered about the country, knew all that was going on, and were always welcome at the farm-houses, where the gude wife liked to have a crack (gossip) with the blue coat, and, in return for his news, gave him dinner or supper, as might be. Edie Ochiltree is a perfect specimen of this extinct race. There was another species of beggar, of yet higher antiquity. If a man were a cripple, and poor, his relations put him in a hand-barrow, and wheeled him to their next neighbour's door, and left him there. Some one came out, gave him oat-cake [Pg 13] or peasemeal bannock, and then wheeled him to the next door; and in this way, going from house to house, he obtained a fair livelihood.

My brother Sam lived with our grandfather in Edinburgh, and attended the High School, which was in the old town, and, like other boys, he was given pennies to buy bread; but the boys preferred

oysters, which they bought from the fishwives, the bargain being, a dozen oysters for a halfpenny, and a kiss for the thirteenth. These fishwives and their husbands were industrious, hard-working people, forming a community of their own in the village of Newhaven, close to the sea, and about two miles from Edinburgh. The men were exposed to cold, and often to danger, in their small boats, not always well-built nor fitted for our stormy Firth. The women helped to land and prepare the fish when the boats came in, carried it to town for sale in the early morning, kept the purse, managed the house, brought up the children, and provided food and clothing for all. Many were rich, lived well, and sometimes had dances. Many of the young women were pretty, and all wore—and, I am told, still wear—a bright-coloured, picturesque costume. Some young men, amongst others a cousin of my own, who attempted to intrude into one of these balls, got pelted with fish offal by the women. The village [Pg 14] smelt strongly of fish, certainly; yet the people were very clean personally. I recollect their keeping tame gulls, which they fed with fish offal.

Although there was no individual enmity between the boys of the old and of the new or aristocratic part of Edinburgh, there were frequent battles, called "bickers," between them, in which they pelted each other with stones. Sometimes they were joined by bigger lads, and then the fight became so serious that the magistrates sent the city guard—a set of old men with halberds and a quaint uniform—to separate them; but no sooner did the guard appear, than both parties joined against them.

Strings of wild geese were common in autumn, and I was amused on one occasion to see the clumsy tame fat geese which were feeding on the Links rise in a body and try to follow the wild ones.

As the grass on the plot before our house did not form a fine even turf, the ground was trenched and sown with good seed, but along with the grass a vast crop of thistles and groundsel appeared, which attracted quantities of goldfinches, and in the early mornings I have seen as many as sixty to eighty of these beautiful birds feeding on it.

My love of birds has continued through life, for only two years ago, in my extreme old age, I lost a pet mountain sparrow, which for eight years was my [Pg 15] constant companion: sitting on my

shoulder, pecking at my papers, and eating out of my mouth; and I am not ashamed to say I felt its accidental death very much.

Before the grass came up on this plot of ground, its surface in the evening swarmed with earthworms, which instantly shrank into their holes on the approach of a foot. My aunt Janet, who was then with us, and afraid even to speak of death, was horrified on seeing them, firmly believing that she would one day be eaten by them—a very general opinion at that time; few people being then aware that the finest mould in our gardens and fields has passed through the entrails of the earthworm, the vegetable juices it contains being sufficient to maintain these harmless creatures.

My mother was very much afraid of thunder and lightning. She knew when a storm was near from the appearance of the clouds, and prepared for it by taking out the steel pins which fastened her cap on. She then sat on a sofa at a distance from the fire-place, which had a very high chimney, and read different parts of the Bible, especially the sublime descriptions of storms in the Psalms, which made me, who sat close by her, still more afraid. We had an excellent and beautiful pointer, called Hero, a great favourite, who generally lived in the garden, but [Pg 16] at the first clap of thunder he used to rush howling indoors, and place his face on my knee. Then my father, who laughed not a little at our fear, would bring a glass of wine to my mother, and say, "Drink that, Peg; it will give you courage, for we are going to have a rat-tat-too." My mother would beg him to shut the window-shutters, and though she could no longer see to read, she kept the Bible on her knee for protection.

My mother taught me to read the Bible, and to say my prayers morning and evening; otherwise she allowed me to grow up a wild creature. When I was seven or eight years old I began to be useful, for I pulled the fruit for preserving; shelled the peas and beans, fed the poultry, and looked after the dairy, for we kept a cow.

On one occasion I had put green gooseberries into bottles and sent them to the kitchen with orders to the cook to boil the bottles uncorked, and, when the fruit was sufficiently cooked, to cork and tie up the bottles. After a time all the house was alarmed by loud explosions and violent screaming in the kitchen, the cook had corked the bottles before she boiled them, and of course they ex-

ploded. For greater preservation, the bottles were always buried in the ground; a number were once found in our garden with the fruit in high preservation which had been [Pg 17] buried no one knew when. Thus experience is sometimes the antecedent of science, for it was little suspected at that time that by shutting out the air the invisible organic world was excluded—the cause of all fermentation and decay.

I never cared for dolls, and had no one to play with me. I amused myself in the garden, which was much frequented by birds. I knew most of them, their flight and their habits. The swallows were never prevented from building above our windows, and, when about to migrate, they used to assemble in hundreds on the roof of our house, and prepared for their journey by short flights. We fed the birds when the ground was covered with snow, and opened our windows at breakfast-time to let in the robins, who would hop on the table to pick up crumbs. The quantity of singing birds was very great, for the farmers and gardeners were less cruel and avaricious than they are now—though poorer. They allowed our pretty songsters to share in the bounties of providence. The shortsighted cruelty, which is too prevalent now, brings its own punishment, for, owing to the reckless destruction of birds, the equilibrium of nature is disturbed, insects increase to such an extent as materially to affect every description of crop. This summer (1872), when I was at Sorrento, even the olives, grapes, and oranges [Pg 18] were seriously injured by the caterpillars—a disaster which I entirely attribute to the ruthless havoc made among every kind of bird.

My mother set me in due time to learn the catechism of the Kirk of Scotland, and to attend the public examinations in the kirk. This was a severe trial for me; for, besides being timid and shy, I had a bad memory, and did not understand one word of the catechism. These meetings, which began with prayer, were attended by all the children of the town and neighbourhood, with their mothers, and a great many old women, who came to be edified. They were an acute race, and could quote chapter and verse of Scripture as accurately as the minister himself. I remember he said to one of them—"Peggie, what lightened the world before the sun was made?" After thinking for a minute, she said—"Deed, sir, the question is mair curious than edifying."

Besides these public examinations, the minister made an annual visit to each household in his parish. When he came to us, the servants were called in, and we all knelt while he said a prayer; and then he examined each individual as to the state of his soul and conduct. He asked me if I could say my "Questions"—that is, the catechism of [Pg 19] the Kirk of Scotland—and asked a question at random to ascertain the fact. He did the same to the servants.

When I was between eight and nine years old, my father came home from sea, and was shocked to find me such a savage. I had not yet been taught to write, and although I amused myself reading the "Arabian Nights," "Robinson Crusoe," and the "Pilgrim's Progress," I read very badly, and with a strong Scotch accent; so, besides a chapter of the Bible, he made me read a paper of the "Spectator" aloud every morning, after breakfast; the consequence of which discipline is that I have never since opened that book. Hume's "History of England" was also a real penance to me. I gladly accompanied my father when he cultivated his flowers, which even now I can say were of the best quality. The tulips and other bulbous plants, ranunculi, anemones, carnations, as well as the annuals then known, were all beautiful. He used to root up and throw away many plants I thought very beautiful; he said he did so because the colours of their petals were not sharply defined, and that they would spoil the seed of the others. Thus I learnt to know the good and the bad—how to lay carnations, and how to distinguish between the leaf and fruit buds in pruning fruit trees; this kind of knowledge [Pg 20] was of no practical use, for, as my after-life was spent in towns, I never had a garden, to my great regret.

George the Third was so popular, that even in Burntisland nose-gays were placed in every window on the 4th of June, his birthday; and it occasionally happened that our garden was robbed the preceding night of its gayest flowers.

My father at last said to my mother,—"This kind of life will never do, Mary must at least know how to write and keep accounts." So at ten years old I was sent to a boarding-school, kept by a Miss Primrose, at Musselburgh, where I was utterly wretched. The change from perfect liberty to perpetual restraint was in itself a great trial; besides, being naturally shy and timid, I was afraid of strangers,

and although Miss Primrose was not unkind she had an habitual frown, which even the elder girls dreaded. My future companions, who were all older than I, came round me like a swarm of bees, and asked if my father had a title, what was the name of our estate, if we kept a carriage, and other such questions, which made me first feel the difference of station. However, the girls were very kind, and often bathed my eyes to prevent our stern mistress from seeing that I was perpetually in tears. A few days after [Pg 21] my arrival, although perfectly straight and well-made, I was enclosed in stiff stays with a steel busk in front, while, above my frock, bands drew my shoulders back till the shoulder-blades met. Then a steel rod, with a semi-circle which went under the chin, was clasped to the steel busk in my stays. In this constrained state I, and most of the younger girls, had to prepare our lessons. The chief thing I had to do was to learn by heart a page of Johnson's dictionary, not only to spell the words, give their parts of speech and meaning, but as an exercise of memory to remember their order of succession. Besides I had to learn the first principles of writing, and the rudiments of French and English grammar. The method of teaching was extremely tedious and inefficient. Our religious duties were attended to in a remarkable way. Some of the girls were Presbyterians, others belonged to the Church of England, so Miss Primrose cut the matter short by taking us all to the kirk in the morning and to church in the afternoon.

In our play-hours we amused ourselves with playing at ball, marbles, and especially at "Scotch and English," a game which represented a raid on the debatable land, or Border between Scotland and England, in which each party tried to rob the [Pg 22] other of their playthings. The little ones were always compelled to be English, for the bigger girls thought it too degrading.

Lady Hope, a relative of my mother, frequently invited me to spend Saturday at Pinkie. She was a very ladylike person, in delicate health, and with cold manners. Sir Archibald was stout, loud, passionate, and devoted to hunting. I amused myself in the grounds, a good deal afraid of a turkey-cock, who was pugnacious and defiant. [Pg 23]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Sir William Fairfax was the son of Joseph Fairfax, Esq., of Bagshot, in the county of Surrey, who died in 1783, aged 77, having served in the army previous to 1745. It is understood that his family was descended from the Fairfaxes of Walton, in Yorkshire, the main branch of which were created Viscounts Fairfax of Emly, in the peerage of Ireland (now extinct), and a younger branch Barons Fairfax of Cameron, in the peerage of Scotland. Of the last-named was the great Lord Fairfax, Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the Parliament, 1645-50, whose title is now held by the eleventh Lord Fairfax, a resident in the United States of America.

[2] Wife of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Somerville, minister of Jedburgh, already mentioned (p. 2). Dr. Somerville was author of Histories of Queen Anne and of William and Mary, and also of an autobiography.

CHAPTER II.

FREEDOM—RELIGIOUS EDUCATION—JEDBURGH.

My mother remained at school at Musselburgh for a twelvemonth, till she was eleven years old. After this prolonged and elaborate education, she was recalled to Burntisland, and the results of the process she had undergone are detailed in her "Recollections" with much drollery.

Soon after my return home I received a note from a lady in the neighbourhood, inquiring for my mother, who had been ill. This note greatly distressed me, for my half-text writing was as bad as possible, and I could neither compose an answer nor spell the words. My eldest cousin, Miss Somerville, a grown-up young lady, then with us, got me out of this scrape, but I soon got myself into another, by writing to my brother in Edinburgh that I had sent him a bank-knot (note) to buy something for me. The school at Musselburgh was expensive, and I was reproached with having cost so much money in vain. My mother said she would have [Pg 24] been contented if I had only learnt to write well and keep accounts, which was all that a woman was expected to know.

This passed over, and I was like a wild animal escaped out of a cage. I was no longer amused in the gardens, but wandered about