

was soon after appointed editor to the *Leeds Times*, through the kind interposition of Mr. Tait, the Edinburgh publisher. He now considered himself settled for life, so that after a short continuance in Leeds he ventured, at the close of 1836, to bid adieu to the love of change, by becoming a married man. Everything now wore the rose-hue of happiness: he had a delightful home and an affectionate partner to animate him in his literary duties; and these duties were so successful, that the journal which he conducted was weekly increasing in circulation. But a cankerworm was at the root of this fair-spreading gourd, and even already it was about to wither. The origin of this is to be found more or less in the nature of provincial journalism over the whole of Britain. Although the *Leeds Times* was a large weekly paper, filled within and without, and so ably managed that its circulation was increasing at the rate of 200 subscribers per week, the salary it afforded was nothing more than £100 per annum. Thus it is that the great political *Jupiter Tonans* of a county town, whose *We* seems to "shake the spheres," is often the miserable thrall of a knot of shareholders, whose only aim is to secure a large dividend at the smallest amount of outlay; and thus he is compelled to occupy a position in society for which his income is totally inadequate. It is, in short, the very perfection of poverty, because the show of respectability eats up the substance: the larder is empty, that the neat drawing-room may be kept up. All this Robert Nicoll soon experienced; and although he was already overtoiled with the labours of his journal, which he performed without an assistant, he found that additional toil must be endured to meet the necessary expenditure of his station. He therefore undertook, in the spring of 1837, the task of writing the leading articles of a journal newly started in Sheffield; and this, with his duties in the *Leeds Times*, which he continued without abatement, soon turned the balance. His health gave way, and his constitution was broken. He continued to struggle on, and perhaps might have rallied for a new life of exertion, for as yet he had only entered his twenty-third year, but the general parliamentary election in the summer of 1837 interposed, in which the representation of Leeds was contested between Sir John Becket and Sir William Molesworth; Nicoll espoused the cause of the latter, and entered the contest with such ardour that his health was injured beyond recovery. Unable any longer to toil at the editorial desk, he returned to Scotland, in the hope that his native air would cure him; but after a few months of painful lingering he died at Laverock Bank, near Edinburgh, on the 9th of December, 1837. It is gratifying to know that his last days were solaced by the kindness of influential friends, whom his genius and virtues had deeply interested in his behalf. After his death a complete edition of his poems was published by Mr. Tait, with a biographical sketch prefixed, from which, and a short article in *Tait's Magazine* by Ebenezer Elliott, we have derived the foregoing particulars.

NIMMO, ALEXANDER, F.R.S.E., M.R.I.A. Among the members of a profession so congenial to the intellectual character of Scotland as that of a civil engineer, Alexander Nimmo deservedly holds an honoured place. He was born at Kirkcaldy, Fifeshire, in 1783. His father, who was distinguished in his own sphere by remarkable talents and acquirements, had originally been a watchmaker, but afterwards kept a hardware store. Alexander's education was commenced at the grammar-school of his native town, afterwards continued for two years at

the university of St. Andrews, and completed at the university of Edinburgh. The result was, that besides being an accomplished scholar in Latin and Greek, he was distinguished for his proficiency in algebra and the higher branches of mathematics. The latter departments, however, by which he was ultimately to be brought into notice, employed the greater part of his attention.

As early occupation was necessary for his limited means, Alexander Nimmo, at the age of nineteen, was obliged to commence the business of life as a schoolmaster. This commencement was honourable to his talents, as well as predictive of his future distinction; for it was as rector of the academy of Inverness, a situation laid open to public competition, which he won by a unanimous vote of the trustees, after an examination of three days, where he had several candidates of high talent for competitors. In this situation his scientific attainments were so highly estimated by Mr. Telford, that the latter recommended him to the parliamentary commission appointed for fixing and determining the boundaries of the Scottish counties. On being employed on this arduous scientific duty Mr. Nimmo accomplished it during the vacations in a manner that gave complete satisfaction. This was attested by a further recommendation of Mr. Telford in his behalf, to the commissioners for reclaiming the bogs of Ireland, by whom he was appointed to the survey. Mr. Nimmo accordingly repaired thither, and not only constructed an admirable series of maps and reports upon the subject, but thoroughly acquainted himself with the character, manners, and necessities of the Irish peasantry, and the best modes of alleviating their poverty. After this survey was finished he made a tour through France, Germany, and Holland, to inspect public works, especially those connected with his new profession.

In consequence of the able manner in which Mr. Nimmo had discharged these public duties, fresh occupations were poured upon him, by which his whole life became one of continual action. The first of these upon his return from the continental tour was the construction of Dunmore harbour, a work of immense difficulty, in consequence of the great depth of water and the heavy roll of the Atlantic to which that coast is exposed. After this followed a commission, in which he was employed by the Fishery Board to make surveys of the harbours of Ireland, and construct harbours and piers all round the coast. Another office connected with this duty, and in which he was employed by the Ballast Board, was to make a chart of the whole coast, which he executed with his usual ability and accuracy. He also compiled a book of sailing directions for St. George's Channel and the Irish coast—a work of high utility in a navigation at that time so imperfectly known, and so full of danger. His services in behalf of Ireland did not here terminate; for, during the great distress of that country in 1822, he was appointed engineer of the western district. The experience which he had formerly acquired while surveying the Irish bogs with a view to their cultivation, was now brought into active practical use; and between the year already mentioned and 1830 he caused £167,000 to be expended in reclaiming waste land, improving what was as yet but partially cultivated, and establishing new settlements, upon which the destitute peasantry were located and employed. The increase of the revenue of that district to the amount of £106,000 per annum was the result of these labours and provident outlay, independently of the industry and comfort which they created, and the moral improvement of the population.