

see, far in the distance, the blue vista of the Great Valley with its double wall of jagged and serrated hills, and directly in the opening, the gray, diminished spires of Inverness. We reach a brown mossy stream, of just volume enough to sweep away the pebbles and shells that have been strewed in its course by the last tide; and see, on turning a sudden angle, the precipices cleft to their base by the ravine that has yielded its waters a passage from the interior.

We enter along the bed of the stream. A line of mural precipices rises on either hand — here advancing in ponderous overhanging buttresses, there receding into deep, damp recesses, tapestried with ivy, and darkened with birch and hazel. A powerful spring, charged with lime, comes pouring by a hundred different threads over the rounded brow of a beetling crag, and the decaying vegetation around it is hardening into stone. The cliffs vary their outline at every step, as if assuming in succession all the various combinations of form that constitute the wild and the picturesque; and the pale hues of the stone seem, when brightened by the sun, the very tints a painter would choose to heighten the effect of his shades, or to contrast most delicately with the luxuriant profusion of bushes and flowers that wave over the higher shelves and crannies. A colony of swallows have built from time immemorial under the overhanging strata of one of the loftier precipices; the fox and badger harbor in the clefts of the steeper and more inaccessible banks. As we proceed, the dell becomes wilder and more deeply wooded; the stream frets and toils at our feet — here leaping over an opposing ridge — there struggling in a pool — yonder escaping to the light from under some broken fragment of cliff. There is a richer profusion of flowers, a thicker mantling of ivy and honeysuckle; and after passing a semicircular inflection of the bank, that waves