

a drinking usage ; and, with God's help, I was enabled to hold by the determination. Though never a strict abstainer, I have wrought as an operative mason for whole twelvemonths together, in which I did not consume half-a-dozen glasses of ardent spirits, or partake of half-a-dozen draughts of fermented liquor. But I do see, in looking back on this my first year of labor, a dangerous point, at which, in the attempt to escape from the sense of depression and fatigue, the craving appetite of the confirmed tippler might have been formed.

The ordinary, long-wrought quarries of my native town have been opened in the old coast-line along the southern shores of the Cromarty Frith, and they contain no organisms. The beds occasionally display their water-rippled surfaces, and occasionally their areas of ancient desiccation, in which the polygonal partings still remain as when they had cracked in the drying, untold ages before. But the rock contains neither fish nor shell ; and the mere mechanical processes of which it gave evidence, though they served to raise strange questions in my mind, failed to interest me so deeply as the wonderful organisms of other creations would have done. We soon quitted these quarries, however, as they proved more than usually difficult in the working at this time, for a quarry situated on the northern shore of the Moray Frith, which had been recently opened in an inferior member of the Lower Old Red Sandstone, and which, as I subsequently ascertained, does in some of its beds contain fossils. It was, however, not to the quarry itself that my first-found organisms belonged. There lies in the Frith beyond, an outlier of the Lias, which, like the Marcus' Cave one referred to in a preceding chapter, strews the beach with its fragments after every storm from the sea ; and in a nodular mass of blueish-gray limestone derived from this ubaqueous bed I laid open my first-found ammonite. It was a beautiful specimen, graceful in its curves as those of the Ionic volute, and greatly more delicate in its sculpturing ; and its bright cream-colored tint, dimly burnished by the prismatic hues of the original pearl, contrasted exquisitely with the dark gray of the matrix which enclosed it. I broke open many