

country-folks, they might be rendered the staple of a profitable trade; and, removing to the vicinity of Cromarty, for the facilities it afforded in trading to the capital, he launched boldly into the speculation. He erected his two wears with his own hands; built himself a cottage of sods on the gorge of a little ravine sprinkled over with bushes of alder and hazel; entered into correspondence with a London merchant, whom he engaged as his agent; and began to export his fish by two large sloops which plied at this period between the neighboring port and the capital. His fishings were abundant, and his agent an honest one; and he soon began to realize the sums he had expended in establishing himself in the trade.

'Could any one anticipate that a story of fondly-cherished but hapless attachment — of one heart blighted for ever, and another fatally broken — was to follow such an introduction?

The first season of Thomson's speculation had come to a close. Winter set in, and, with scarcely a single acquaintance among the people in the neighborhood, and little to employ him, he had to draw for amusement on his own resources alone. He had formed, when a boy, a taste for reading; and might now be found, in the long evenings, hanging over a book beside the fire. By day he went sauntering among the fields, calculating on the advantages of every agricultural improvement, or attended the fairs and trysts of the country, to speculate on the profits of the drover and cattle-feeder and make himself acquainted with all the little mysteries of bargain-making.

There holds early in November a famous cattle-market in the ancient barony of Ferintosh, and Thomson had set out to attend it. The morning was clear and frosty, and he felt buoyant of heart and limb, as, passing westwards