

CHAPTER VIII.

“Now, surely, thought I, there’s enou’
To fill life’s dusty way ;
And who will miss a poet’s feet,
Or wonder where he stray !
So to the woods and wastes I’ll go,
And I will build an ozier bower ;
And sweetly there to me shall flow
The meditative hour.”

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

FINLAY was away ; my friend of the Doocot Cave was away ; my other companions were all scattered abroad ; my mother, after a long widowhood of more than eleven years, had entered into a second marriage ; and I found myself standing face to face with a life of labor and restraint. The prospect appeared dreary in the extreme. The necessity of ever toiling from morning to night, and from one week’s end to another, and all for a little coarse food and homely raiment, seemed to be a dire one ; and fain would I have avoided it. But there was no escape, and so I determined on being a mason. I remembered my Cousin George’s long winter holidays, and how delightfully he employed them ; and, by making choice of Cousin George’s profession, I trusted to find, like him, large compensation, in the amusements of one half the year, for the toils of the other half. Labor shall not wield over me, I said, a rod entirely black, but a rod like one of Jacob’s peeled wands, chequered white and black alternately.