

I, however, did look, even at this time, notwithstanding the antecedents of a sadly mis-spent boyhood, to something higher than mere amusement; and, daring to believe that literature, and, mayhap, natural science, were, after all, my proper vocations, I resolved that much of my leisure time should be given to careful observation, and the study of our best English authors. Both my uncles, especially James, were sorely vexed by my determination to be a mason; they had expected to see me rising in some one of the learned professions; yet here was I going to be a mere operative mechanic, like one of themselves! I spent with them a serious hour, in which they urged that, instead of entering as a mason's apprentice, I should devote myself anew to my education. Though the labor of their hands formed their only wealth, they would assist me, they said, in getting through college; nay, if I preferred it, I might meanwhile come and live with them; all they asked in return of me was, that I should give myself as sedulously to my lessons as, in the event of my becoming a mason, I would have to give myself to my trade. I demurred. The lads of my acquaintance who were preparing for college had an eye, I said, to some profession; they were qualifying themselves to be lawyers, or medical men, or, in much larger part, were studying for the Church; whereas I had no wish and no peculiar fitness to be either lawyer or doctor; and as for the Church, that was too serious a direction to look in for one's bread, unless one could honestly regard one's self as *called* to the Church's proper work; and I could not. There, said my uncles, you are perfectly right: better be a poor mason,—better be anything honest, however humble,—than an *uncalled* minister. How very strong the hold taken of the mind in some cases by hereditary convictions of which the ordinary conduct shows little apparent trace! I had for the last few years been a wild boy,—not without my share of respect for Donald Roy's religion, but possessed of none of Donald's seriousness; and yet here was his belief in this special matter lying so strongly entrenched in the recesses of my mind, that no consideration whatever could have induced me to outrage