

it by obtruding my unworthiness on the Church. Though, mayhap, overstrained in many of its older forms, I fain wish the conviction, in at least some of its better modifications, were more general now. It might be well for all the Protestant Churches practically to hold, with Uncles James and Sandy, that true ministers cannot be manufactured out of ordinary men—men ordinary in talent and character—in a given number of years, and then passed by the imposition of hands into the sacred office ; but that, on the contrary, ministers, when real, are all special creations of the grace of God. I may add, that in a belief of this kind, deeply implanted in the popular mind of Scotland, the strength of our recent Church controversy mainly lay.

Slowly and unwillingly my uncles at length consented that I should make trial of a life of manual labor. The husband of one of my maternal aunts was a mason, who, contracting for jobs on a small scale, usually kept an apprentice or two, and employed a few journeymen. With him I agreed to serve for the term of three years ; and, getting a suit of strong moleskin clothes, and a pair of heavy hob-nailed shoes, I waited only for the breaking up of the winter frosts, to begin work in the Cromarty quarries,—jobbing masters in the north of Scotland usually combining the profession of the quarrier with that of the mason. In the beautiful poetic fragment from which I have chosen my motto, poor Kirk White fondly indulges in the dream of a hermit life,—quiet, meditative, solitary, spent far away in deep woods, or amid wide-spread wastes, where the very sounds that arose would be but the faint echoes of a loneliness in which man was not,—a “ voice of the desert, never dumb.” The dream is that of a certain brief period of life between boyhood and comparatively mature youth ; and we find more traces of it in the poetry of Kirke White than in that of almost any other poet ; simply because he wrote at the age in which it is natural to indulge in it, and because, being less an imitator and more an original than most juvenile poets, he gave it as a portion of the internal experience from which he drew. But it is a dream not restricted to young poets ; the