

laid. It was remarked in the place, that the walls built by Uncle David never bulged or fell; and no apprentice or journeyman of his was permitted, on any plea, to make "slight work." Though by no means a bold or daring man, he was, from sheer abstraction, when engrossed in his employment, more thoroughly insensible to personal danger than almost any other individual I ever knew. On one occasion, when an overloaded boat, in which he was carrying stones from the quarry to the neighboring town, was overtaken by a series of rippling seas, and suddenly sank, leaving him standing on one of the thwarts submerged to the throat, he merely said to his partner, on seeing his favorite snuff-mull go floating past, "Od, Andro man, just rax out your han' and tak in my snuff-box." On another, when a huge mass of the boulder clay came toppling down upon us in the quarry with such momentum, that it bent a massive iron lever like a bow, and crushed into minute fragments a strong wheelbarrow, Uncle David, who, older and less active than any of the others, had been entangled in the formidable debris, relieved all our minds by remarking, as we rushed back, expecting to find him crushed as flat as a botanical preparation, "Od, I draid, Andro man, we have lost our good barrow." He was at first of opinion that I would do him little credit as a workman; in my absent fits I was well-nigh as impervious to instruction as he himself was insensible to danger; and I labored under the further disadvantage of knowing a little, as an amateur, of both hewing and building, from the circumstance, that when the undertakings of my schoolboy days involved, as they sometimes did, the erection of a house, I used always to be selected as the mason of the party. And all that I had learned on these occasions I had now to unlearn. In the course of a few months, however, I did unlearn it all; and then, acquiring in less than a fortnight a very considerable mastery over the mallet,—for mine was one of the not very unfrequent cases in which the mechanical knack seems, after many an abortive attempt, to be caught up at once,—I astonished Uncle David one morning by setting myself to compete with him, and by hewing