

the dyke wi' dirty stanes," to "fash" us. The last-named employment is by far the most painful and trying. In most kinds of severe labor the skin thickens, and the hand hardens, through a natural provision, to suit the requirements of the task imposed, and yield the necessary protection to the integuments below; but the "dirty stanes" of the dyke-builder, when wet as well as dirty, try the reproductive powers of the cuticle too severely, and wear it off, so that under the rough friction the quick is laid bare. On this occasion, and on at least one other, when engaged in building in a wet season in the Western Highlands, I had all my fingers oozing blood at once; and those who think that in such circumstances labor protracted throughout a long day can be other than torture, would do well to try. How these poor hands of mine burnt and beat at night at this time, as if an unhappy heart had been stationed in every finger! and what cold chills used to run, sudden as electric shocks, through the feverish frame!

My general health, too, had become far from strong. As I had been almost entirely engaged in hewing for the two previous seasons, the dust of the stone, inhaled at every breath, had exerted the usual weakening effects on the lungs,—those effects under which the life of the stone cutter is restricted to about forty-five years; but it was only now, when working day after day with wet feet in a water-logged ditch, that I began to be sensibly informed, by a dull, depressing pain in the chest, and a blood-stained, mucoidal substance, expectorated with difficulty, that I had already caught harm from my employment, and that my term of life might fall far short of the average one. I resolved, however, as the last year of my apprenticeship was fast drawing to its close, to complete, at all hazards, my engagement with my master. It had been merely a verbal agreement, and I might have broken it without blame, when, unable to furnish me with work in his character as a master-mason, he had to transfer my labor to another; but I had determined not to break it, all the more doggedly from the circumstance that my Uncle James, in a moment of irritation, had said at its commencement, that he feared I