

would no more persist in being a mason than I had done in being a scholar; and so I wrought perseveringly on; and slowly and painfully, rood after rood, the wall grew up under our hands. My poor master, who suffered even more from chopped hands and bleeding fingers than I did, was cross and fretful, and sometimes sought relief in finding fault with his apprentice; but, sobered by my forebodings of an early death, I used to make no reply; and the hasty, ill-tempered expressions in which he gave vent virtually to but his sense of pain and discomfort, were almost always followed by some conciliatory remark. Superstition takes a strong hold of the mind in circumstances such as those in which I was at this time placed. One day, when on the top of a tall building, part of which we were throwing down to supply us with materials for our work, I raised up a broad slab of red micaceous sandstone, thin as a roofing slate, and exceedingly fragile, and, holding it out at arm's length, dropped it over the wall. I had been worse than usual all that morning, and much depressed; and, ere the slab parted from my hand, I said,—looking forward to but a few months of life,—I shall break up like that sandstone slab, and perish as little known. But the sandstone slab did not break up; a sudden breeze blew it aslant as it fell; it cleared the rough heap of stones below, where I had anticipated it would have been shivered to fragments; and, lighting on its edge, stuck upright like a miniature obelisk, in the soft green sward beyond. None of the Philosophies or the Logics would have sanctioned the inference which I immediately drew; but that curious chapter in the history of human belief which treats of signs and omens abounds in such postulates and such conclusions. I at once inferred that recovery awaited me; I was “to live and not die;” and felt lighter, during the few weeks I afterwards toiled at this place, under the cheering influence of the conviction.

The tenant of the farm on which our work was situated, and who had been both a great distiller and considerable farmer in his day, had become bankrupt shortly before, and was on the eve of quitting the place, a broken man. And his forlorn cir-