

studying practical geometry, and had glanced approvingly over a series of architectural drawings, which I had just completed; and he now sought me out in consequence, and placed me in charge of a small party which he despatched in advance of his other workmen, and which I was instructed to increase, by employing a laborer or two on arriving at the scene of our future employment.

We were to be accompanied by a carter from a neighboring town; and on the morning fixed for the commencement of our journey, his cart and horse were early at Conon-side to carry across the country the tools required at our new job; but of himself we saw no trace, and about ten o'clock we set off without him. Ascertaining, however, when about two miles on our way, that we had left behind us a lever useful in the setting of large stones, I bade my companion wait for me at the village of Contin, where we expected meeting the carter; and, returning for the tool, I quitted the high road on finding it, and, to save time, and avoid a detour of about three miles, struck across the country direct on the village. My way was, however, a very rough one; and in coming upon the Conon, which it was necessary I should ford,—for, by avoiding the detour, I had missed the bridge,—I found it tolerably heavy in flood. Save for the iron lever which I carried, I would have selected, as my point of crossing, one of the still, deep pools, as much safer to a vigorous swimmer than any of the apparent fords, with their powerful currents, whirling eddies, and rough bottoms. But though the heroes of antiquity—men such as Julius Cæsar and Horatius Coccles—could swim across rivers and seas in heavy armor, the specific gravity of the human subject in these latter ages of the world forbids such feats; and concluding that I had not levity enough in my framework to float across the lever, I selected, with some hesitation, one of the better-looking fords, and, with my trousers dangling from the iron-beam on my shoulder, entered the river. Such was the arrowy swiftness of the current, however, that the water had scarce reached my middle when it began to hollow out the stones and gravel from under my feet,