

in such torrents as to be uninhabitable, until their more exposed walls had been slated over like their roofs. Old John, however, always succeeded in building water-tight walls. Departing from the ordinary rule of the builder elsewhere, and which on the east coast of Scotland he himself always respected, he slightly elevated the under beds of his stones, instead of laying them, as usual, on the dead level ; while along the edges of their upper beds he struck off a small rude champer and by these simple contrivances, the rain, though driven with violence against his work, coursed in streams along its face, without entering into the interior and soaking through.

For about six weeks we had magnificent weather,—clear sunny skies and calm seas ; and I greatly enjoyed my evening rambles amid the hills, or along the sea-shore. I was struck, in these walks, by the amazing abundance of the wild flowers which covered the natural meadows and lower hillslopes,—an abundance, as I have since remarked, equally characteristic of both the northern and western islands of Scotland. The lower slopes of Gairloch, of western Sutherland, of Orkney, and of the northern Hebrides generally,—though for the purposes of the agriculturist, vegetation languishes, and wheat is never reared,—are by many degrees richer in wild flowers than the fat loamy meadows of England. They resemble gaudy pieces of carpeting, as abundant in petals as in leaves. Little of the rare is to be detected in these meadows, save, perhaps, that in those of western Sutherland a few Alpine plants may be found at a greatly lower level than elsewhere in Britain ; but the vast profusion of blossoms borne by species common to almost every other part of the kingdom, imparts to them an apparently novel character. We may detect, I am inclined to think, in this singular floral profusion, the operation of a law not less influential in the animal than in the vegetable world, which, when hardship presses upon the life of the individual shrub or quadruped, so as to threaten its vitality, renders it fruitful in behalf of its species. I have seen the principle strikingly exemplified in the common tobacco plant, when reared in a northern country in the open air.