

of the globe, as inscribed on its rocks, furnishes so strange a record.

Winter passed in the usual pursuits; and I commenced the working season of a new year by assisting my old master to inclose with a stone wall a little bit of ground, which he had bought on speculation, but had failed in getting feued out for buildings. My services, however, were gratuitous,—given merely to eke out the rather indifferent bargain that the old man had been able to drive in his own behalf, for my labors as an apprentice; and when our job was finished, it became necessary that I should look out for employment of a more remunerative character. There was not much doing in the north; but work promised to be abundant in the great towns of the south: the disastrous building mania of 1824–25 had just begun; and, after some little hesitation, I resolved on trying whether I could not make my way as a mechanic among the stone-cutters of Edinburgh,—perhaps the most skilful in their profession in the world. I was, besides, desirous to get rid of a little property in Leith, which had cost the family great annoyance, and not a little money, but from which, so long as the nominal proprietor was a minor, we could not shake ourselves loose. It was a house on the Coal-hill, or rather the self-contained ground-floor of a house, which had fallen to my father by the death of a relative, so immediately before his own death that he had not entered upon possession. It was burdened with legacies to the amount of nearly two hundred pounds; but then the yearly rent amounted to twenty-four pounds; and my mother, acting on the advice of friends, and deeming the investment a good one, had no sooner recovered the insurance-money of my father's vessel from the underwriter, than she handed the greater part of it to the legatees, and took possession of the property in my behalf. Alas! never was there a more unfortunate inheritance or worse investment. It had been let as a public-house and tap-room, and had been the scene of a somewhat rough, and, I dare say, not very respectable, but yet profitable trade; but no sooner