

fluttering in the wind, gave evident signs of habitation. It cost my conductor's one hand an arduous wrench to lay open the lock of the outer door, in front of which he had first to dislodge a very dingy female, attired in an earth-colored gown, that seemed as if starched with ashes ; and as the rusty hinges creaked, and the door fell against the wall, we became sensible of a damp, unwholesome smell, like the breathing of a charnel-house, which issued from the interior. The place had been shut up for nearly two years ; and so foul had the stagnant atmosphere become, that the candle which we brought with us to explore burned dim and yellow like a miner's lamp. The floors, broken up in fifty different places, were littered with rotten straw ; and in one of the corners there lay a damp heap, gathered up like the lair of some wild beast, on which some one seemed to have slept, mayhap months before. The partitions were crazed and tottering ; the walls blackened with smoke ; broad patches of plaster had fallen from the ceilings, or still dangled from them, suspended by single hairs ; and the bars of the grates, crusted with rust, had become red as fox-tails. Mr. M'Craw nodded his head over the gathered heap of straw. " Ah," he said,—“ got in again, I see ! The shutters must be looked to.” “ I dare say.” I remarked, looking disconsolately around me, “ you don't find it very easy to get tenants for houses of this kind.” “ *Very easy!*” said Mr. M'Craw, with somewhat of a Highland twang, and, as I thought, with also a good deal of Highland *hauteur*,—as was of course quite natural in so shrewd and extensive a house-agent, when dealing with the owner of a domicile that would not let, and who made foolish remarks,—“ No, nor easy at all, or it would not be locked up in this way ; but if we took off the shutters, you would soon get tenants enough.” “ O, I suppose so ; and I dare say it is as difficult to sell as to let such houses.” “ Ay, and more,” said Mr. M'Craw : “ it's all sellers, and no buyers, when we get this low.” “ But do you not think,” I perseveringly asked, “ that some kind, charitable person might be found in the neighborhood disposed to take it off my hands as a free gift ? It's terrible to be married for