

prenticeship, but much more severely; and I was too palpably sinking in flesh and strength to render it safe for me to encounter the consequences of another season of hard work as a stone-cutter. From the stage of the malady at which I had already arrived, poor workmen, unable to do what I did, throw themselves loose from their employment, and sink in six or eight months into the grave,—some at an earlier, some at a later period of life; but so general is the affection, that few of our Edinburgh stone-cutters pass their fortieth year unscathed, and not one out of every fifty of their number ever reaches his forty-fifth. I accordingly engaged my passage for the north in an Inverness sloop, and took leave of my few friends,—of the excellent foreman of the Niddry squad, and of Cha and John Wilson, with both of whom, notwithstanding their opposite characters, I had become very intimate. Among the rest, too, I took leave of a paternal cousin settled in Leith, the wife of a genial-hearted sailor, master of a now wholly obsolete type of vessel, one of the old Leith and London smacks, with a huge single mast, massive and tall as that of a frigate, and a mainsail of a quarter of an acre. I had received much kindness from my cousin, who, besides her relationship to my father, had been a contemporary and early friend of my mother's; and my welcome from the master her husband—one of the best-natured men I ever knew—used always to be one of the heartiest. And after parting from Cousin Marshall, I mustered up resolution enough to call on yet another cousin.

Cousin William, the eldest son of my Sutherlandshire aunt, had been for some years settled in Edinburgh, first as an upper clerk and manager,—for, after his failure as a merchant, he had to begin the world anew; and now, in the speculation year, he had succeeded in establishing a business for himself, which bore about it a hopeful and promising air so long as the over-genial season lasted, but fell, with many a more deeply-rooted establishment, in the tempest which followed. On quitting the north, I had been charged with a letter for him by his father, which I knew, however, to be wholly commendatory of myself, and so I had failed to deliver it. Cousin