

CHAPTER XX.

“ This while my notion’s ta’en a sklent,
 To try my fate in guid black prent ;
 But still the mair I’m that way bent,
 Something cries, Hoolie !
 I red you, honest man, tak’ tent ;
 Ye’ll shaw your folly.”

BURNS.

My volume of verse passed but slowly through the press ; and as I had begun to look rather ruefully forward to its appearance, there was no anxiety evinced on my part to urge it on. At length, however, all the pieces were thrown into type ; and I followed them up by a tail-piece in prose, formed somewhat on the model of the preface of Pope,—for I was a great admirer at the time of the English written by the “ wits of the reign of Queen Anne,”—in which I gave serious expression to the suspicion that, as a writer of verse, I had mistaken my vocation.

“ It is more than possible,” I said, “ that I have completely failed in poetry. It may appear that, while grasping at originality of description and sentiment and striving to attain propriety of expression, I have only been depicting common images, and embodying obvious thoughts, and this, too, in inelegant language. Yet even in this case, though disappointed, I shall not be without my sources of comfort. The pleasure which I enjoy in composing verses is quite independent of other men’s opinions of them ; and I expect to feel as happy as ever in this amusement, even though assured that others could find no pleasure in reading what I had found so much in writing. It is no small solace to reflect, that the fable of the dog and shadow cannot apply to me, since my pre-