

points, that in turn were succeeded by others. The herrings by millions, and thousands of millions, were at play around us, leaping a few inches into the air, and then falling and disappearing, to rise and leap again. Shoal rose beyond shoal, till the whole bank of Gullian seemed beaten into foam, and the low popping sounds were multiplied into a roar, like that of the wind through some tall wood, that might be heard in the calm for miles. And again, the shoals extending around us seemed to cover, for hundreds of square miles, the vast Moray Frith. But though they played beside our buoys by thousands, not a herring swam so low as the upper baulk of our drift. One of the fishermen took up a stone, and, flinging it right over our second buoy into the middle of the shoal, the fish disappeared from the surface for several fathoms around. 'Ah, there they go,' he exclaimed,—'if they go but low enough. Four years ago I startled thirty barrels of light fish into my drift just by throwing a stone among them.' I know not what effect the stone might have had on this occasion; but on hauling our nets for the third and last time, we found we had captured about eight barrels of fish; and then hoisting sail,—for a light breeze from the east had sprung up,—we made for the shore with a cargo of twenty barrels."

Meanwhile the newspaper critics of the south were giving expression to all sorts of judgments on my verses. It was intimated in the title of the volume that they had been "written in the leisure hours of a journeyman mason;" and the intimation seemed to furnish most of my reviewers with the proper cue for dealing with them. "The time has gone by," said one, "when a literary mechanic used to be regarded as a phenomenon: were a second Burns to spring up now, he would not be entitled to so much praise as the first." "It is our duty to tell this writer," said another, "that he will make more in a week by his trowel than in half a century by his pen." "We are glad to understand," said a third,—very judiciously, however,—"that our author has the good sense to rely more on his chisel than on the Muses." The lessons taught me were of a sufficiently varied, but, on the whole, rather contradictory character. By one writer I was told that I was a dull, correct fellow, who had written a book in which there was nothing amusing and nothing absurd. Another, however, cheered my forlorn spirits by assuring me that I was a "man of genius, whose poems, with much that was faulty, contained also much that was interesting." A third was sure I had "no chance whatever of being known beyond the limits of my native place,"