

you will no doubt get a bed ; but the way is lonely, and there have been already several robberies since nightfall." — "I shall take my chance of that," I said. — "Ah, — well, — your best way, then, is to walk straight forwards, at a smart pace, keeping the middle of the highway, and stopping for no one." I thanked the friendly policeman, and took the road. It was a calm, pleasant night ; the moon, in her first quarter, was setting dim and lightless in the west ; and an incipient frost, in the form of a thin film of blue vapor, rested in the lower hollows.

The way was quite lonely enough ; nor were the few straggling travellers whom I met of a kind suited to render its solitariness more cheerful. About half way on, where the road runs between tall hedges, two fellows started out towards me, one from each side of the way. "Is this the road," asked one, "to Newport Pagnell ?" — "Quite a stranger here," I replied, without slackening my pace ; "don't belong to the kingdom even." — "No !" said the same fellow, increasing his speed, as if to overtake me ; "to what kingdom, then ?" — "Scotland," I said, turning suddenly round, somewhat afraid of being taken from behind by a bludgeon. The two fellows sheered off in double quick time, the one who had already addressed me muttering, "More like an Irishman, I think ;" and I saw no more of them. I had luckily a brace of loaded pistols about me, and had at the moment a trigger under each fore-finger ; and though the ruffians — for such I doubt not they were — could scarcely have been cognizant of the fact, they seemed to have made at least a shrewd approximation towards it. In the autumn of 1842, during the great depression of trade, when the entire country seemed in a state of disorganization, and the law in some of the mining districts failed to protect the lieges, I was engaged in following out a course of geologic exploration in our Lothian Coal Field ; and, unwilling to suspend my labors,