

an aged widow lady, who had lived apart in quiet gentility on very small means; and, now that she was dead, my aunt saw her vocation gone, and wished that she too could live apart, a life of humble independency, supporting herself by her spinning-wheel, and by now and then knitting a stocking. She feared, however, to encounter the formidable drain on her means of a half-yearly room-rent; and, as there was a little bit of ground at the head of the strip of garden left me by my father, which bordered on a road that, communicating between town and country, bore, as is common in the north of Scotland, the French name of the *Pays*, it occurred to me that I might try my hand, as a skilled mechanic, in erecting upon it a cottage for Aunt Jenny. Masons have, of course, more in their power in the way of house-building than any other class of mechanics. It was necessary, however, that there should be money provided for the purchase of wood for the roof, and for the carting of the necessary stones and mortar; and I had none. But Aunt Jenny had saved a few pounds, and a very few proved sufficient; and so I built a cottage in the *Pays*, of a single room and a closet, as my first job, which, if not very elegant, or of large accommodation, came fully up to Aunt Jenny's ideas of comfort, and which, for at least a quarter of a century, has served her as a home. It was completed before Whitsunday, and I then deliberated on setting myself to seek after employment of a more remunerative kind, with just a little of the feeling to which we owe one of the best known elegiac poems in the language,—the “Man was made to Mourn” of Burns. “There is nothing that gives me a more mortifying picture of human life,” said the poet, “than a man seeking work.” The required work, however, came direct in my way without solicitation, and exactly at the proper time. I was engaged to assist in hewing a Gothic gateway among the woods of my old haunt, Conon-side; and was then despatched, when the work was on the eve of being finished, to provide materials for building a house on the western coast of Ross-shire. My new master had found me engaged in the previous season, amid the wild turmoil of the barrack, in