

CHAPTER XIV.

“Edina! Scotia’s darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers!”

BURNS.

THERE had occurred a sad accident among the Cromarty rocks this season, when I was laboring in Gairloch, which, from the circumstance that it had nearly taken place in my own person about five years before, a good deal impressed me on my return. A few hundred yards from the very bad road which I had assisted old Johnstone of the Forty-Second in constructing, there is a tall inaccessible precipice of ferruginous gneiss, that from time immemorial down to this period had furnished a secure nestling-place to a pair of ravens,—the only birds of their species that frequented the rocks of the Hill. Year after year, regularly as the breeding season came round, the ravens used to make their appearance, and enter on possession of their hereditary home: they had done so for a hundred years to a certainty,—some said, for a much longer time; and as there existed a tradition in the place that the nest had once been robbed of its young birds by a bold climber, I paid it a visit one morning, in order to determine whether I could not rob it too. There was no getting up to it from below: the precipice, more inaccessible for about a hundred feet from its base than a castle-wall, overhung the shore; but it seemed not impracticable from above; and, coming gradually down