

Andrew remembered the ploughing, as he walked across to begin his sowing, like the good farmer that he was, at the end-rigg. Here was the stump that had resisted gunpowder, leverage and fire, and that now was being tortured by saltpetre, charged in a deep augur hole. Well, it had been a right brave old tree, but the saltpetre would win to the stout oaken heart yet. It was perhaps a step in the right direction, this clearing of the woodland, but all progress seems cruel at first. Here—as he passed over what seemed a particularly smooth bit—the great stone lay hidden that had broken his ploughshare off with a crash, and sent him flying from between the plough-stilts. He would remember that stone for some time! So doubtless would good old Bess, whose patient brown shoulders had borne the brunt of the shock.

Ploughing a field is like ploughing the sea—one needs must have a chart of each to steer safely. That more formidable sea, “whose waves are years,” has no chart. Next winter would see the uprooting of all these stumps, and the felling of more trees beyond. Next spring the plough would pass straight from end to end, and the seed-drill would sow the space which now he was about to sow in the old classic fashion—as they sowed, in intervals of stormy peace, the