

THE NEW ROAD.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOVECOTE TOWER.

WITH the down for the first time shaved from his face, young Æneas stood in the draughty passage, turning his cocked hat in his hands till the nap had a cow's-lick on it. Chagrin it was that kept the tutor fidgeting outside the door of the study, where at this hour he ought by rights to have a couple of pupils on the march with him and Cæsar's sturdy lads through Gaul. It is one of the solemn days in life for a man when he starts to use a razor: now that the curly down was gone, and Æneas had seen in his glass a youth as boyish as he always shamefully felt himself to be, he rued the rash act that seemed to rob him in a moment of his manhood. He had come for the evening lesson with his pupils, feeling somewhat like a man half-naked in a dream, but, like the usual dreamer in these circumstances, hopeful no one might observe his own confusion at the absence of a beard—a small one at the best: he had come prepared at most for the bantering of Margaret Duncanson, eager to have it past; and now the skirmish was postponed! That was to make a double call upon his courage, and the supply he had flogged up for this