

men in Ross had once lived there; but both he and his race had been lost to Scotland in consequence of the compelled emigration so common in the Highlands during the last two ages; and Cousin George came strongly out against the lairds. The chill winter night had fallen on the dark hills and alder-skirted river of Strathcarron, as, turning from off the road that winds along the Kyle of Dornoch, we entered its bleak gorge; and as the shepherd's dwelling lay high up the valley, where the lofty sides approach so near, and rise so abruptly, that for the whole winter quarter the sun never falls on the stream below, we had still some ten or twelve miles of broken road before us. The moon, in her first quarter, hung on the edge of the hills, dimly revealing their rough outline; while in a recess of the stream, far beneath, we could see the torch of some adventurous fisher, now gleaming red on rock and water, now suddenly disappearing, eclipsed by the overhanging brushwood. It was late ere we reached the shepherd's cottage,—a dark-raftered, dimly-lighted erection of turf and stone. The weather for several weeks before had been rainy and close, and the flocks of the inmate had been thinned by the common scourge of the sheep-farmer at such seasons on damp, boggy farms. The beams were laden with skins besmeared with blood, that dangled overhead to catch the conservative influences of the smoke; and on a rude plank-table below, there rose two tall pyramids of braxy-mutton, heaped up each on a corn-riddle. The shepherd,—a Highlander of large proportions, but hard, and thin, and worn by the cares and toils of at least sixty winters,—sat moodily beside the fire. The state of his flocks was not cheering; and, besides, he had seen a vision of late, he said, that filled his mind with strange forebodings. He had gone out after nightfall on the previous evening, to a dank hollow, in which many of his flock had died. The rain had ceased a few hours before, and a smart frost had set in, that filled the whole valley with a wreath of silvery vapor, dimly lighted by the thin fragment of a moon that appeared as if resting on the hill-top. The wreath stretched out its gray folds beneath him,—for he had climbed half-way up the acclivity,