

sunny spot on its banks; an' mony a time an' aft hae I waded through its shallows, when a boy, to set my little scantling-line for the trouts an' the eels, or to gather the big pearl-mussels that lie sae thick in the fords. But its bonny wooded banks are places for enjoying the day in, no for passing the nicht. I kenna how it is: it's nane o' your wild streams, that wander desolate through desert country, like the Avon, or that come rushing down in foam and thunder, owre broken rocks, like the Foyers; or that wallow in darkness, deep, deep in the bowels o' the earth, like the fearfu' Auldgraunt; an' yet no ane o' these rivers has mair or frightfuler stories connected wi' it than the Conon. Ane can hardly saunter owre half a mile in its course frae where it leaves Contin till where it enters the sea, without passing owre the scene o' some frightful auld legend o' the kelpie or the water-wraith. And ane o' the maist frightful-looking o' these places is to be found among the woods o' Conon House. Ye enter a swampy meadow, that waves wi' flags an' rushes like a cornfield in harvest, an' see a hillock covered wi' willows rising like an island in the midst. There are thick mirk woods on ilka side: the river, dark an' awesome, an' whirling round and round in mossy eddies, sweeps away behind it; an' there is an auld burying-ground, wi' the broken ruins o' an auld Papist kirk on the tap. Ane can still see among the rougher stanes the rose-wrought mullions of an arched window an' the trough that ance held the holy water. About twa hunder years ago, — a wee mair, maybe, or a wee less, for ane canna be very sure o' the date o' thae auld stories, — the building was entire; an' a spot near it, where the wood now grows thickest, was laid out in a cornfield. The marks o' the furrows may still be seen amang the trees. A party o' Highlanders were busily engaged a'e day in