

IV.

THE COLLIERS OF CARRICK.¹

COMPARATIVELY few of the many hundreds of tourists who flock every summer to that part of Scotland which the guide-books have styled "The Land of Burns" find their way farther south than "Alloway's auld haunted kirk" and the famous "brig" which lay so opportunely in Tam o' Shanter's line of retreat. When the weather is clear they get a distant view of the hills, which rise beyond the Doon into a background that has neither any striking outlines nor sufficient loftiness to form a notable feature in the remoter landscape. And yet if the visitor whose time and route are at his own disposal will bravely penetrate these far uplands, he will find much, both in the way of scenery and of historic and legendary interest, to reward his enterprise. It is a lonely pastoral region, deeply trenched with long and narrow valleys, the seaward portions of which are often well wooded and contrast with the singularly bare though verdant aspect of the high grounds on either side. The whole of that district was called in old times Carrick—a Celtic name still in use among the people, and descriptive of the rugged, rocky character of most of the surface. The bones of the country seem indeed everywhere to be sticking through the scanty skin of soil and turf; and yet

¹ *Good Words*, May 1873.