

ESSAYS
ON THE
SUPERSTITIONS
OF THE
HIGHLANDERS OF SCOTLAND:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GAELIC;
AND
LETTERS CONNECTED WITH THOSE FORMERLY
PUBLISHED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM THE MOUNTAINS."

A land of apparitions—empty shades.—Young.

I recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety, and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordained
Should best secure them, and promote them most—
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoyed.—Cowper.

H. G. VOL. I. *He Man*

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1811;

DEDICATION.

TO

SIR WALTER FARQUHAR, BART.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I well know that the recollection of your native land will ever be dear to you,—though the manners and opinions that are about to pass away, and mingle with the things that have been, still retain an interest for you,—and though I should feel pleasure in awakening that interest,—these are not the motives of this address. I know not that I ought, (even though I had the power,) to withdraw your attention from the weighty concerns which continually

engross your time, and exercise your humanity : Nor shall I, however it might gratify my private feelings to do so, take the liberty of expressing here what I think on this last subject ; my intention in this address being merely to have an occasion for saying, that

I am,

With the highest esteem,

Respect, and gratitude,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged and faithful servant,

THE AUTHOR.

TO THE READER.

I CONSIDER this work as a kind of adjunct to those poems and letters of mine which have already met with so much indulgence from the Public. The superstitions of the highlands, and the national manners that blend with, or originate from them, are here fully delineated. In connection with the writings already mentioned, this work completes that picture of highland life, of which my other writings presented casual sketches or broken features.

These volumes are not offered to the public as the result of labour or study. They contain merely the overflowings of a mind filled with retrospective views of the past, and reflections suggested by

deep feeling, and long and close observation among scenes of peculiar interest.

I have been encouraged to pour forth these retrospections, by a conviction that my other writings derived their chief interest from the fidelity of the delineations they presented, and the images they reflected, of a mode of life more primitive than what is usually met with.

The letters added were selected from many others, as in a manner completing the series already published. The author, when no longer connected with scenes so peculiar and so endeared to her recollections, cannot expect to preserve that interest in the minds of others, which she is conscious was in a great measure derived from local circumstances.

Edinburgh, }
May 20. 1811. }

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ESSAYS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

ESSAY I.

*On the Superstitions of the Highlands,
their Origin, and Tendency.*

PREFATORY ESSAY.

Unfold

What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her prison, in this fleshly nook.

MILTON.

WHEN nations, in the progress of knowledge and refinement, have arrived at a high state of cultivation, and are thus enabled to take extensive views of life and manners, from the height to

which they have attained, they begin to look with a mixture of contempt and self-gratulation on those wider regions still inhabited by tribes, as rude and barbarous as their own ancestors have been at a remoter period.

Among others, slowly advancing in gradual progression from rudeness to refinement, we find much to excite our wonder and compassion; yet often feel ourselves compelled to stoop from all the pride of science, to bestow our tribute of esteem or admiration on the talents that sometimes illuminate the gloom of ignorance, or the mild affections and faithful attachments that sometimes endear the abodes of humble simplicity.

The comparison between an uncivilized and highly illuminated people, must certainly be very much in favour of the latter. We should cultivate the garden to very little purpose, if its productions were not more beautiful and more

abundant than those of the wilderness. Yet the natural taste that leads us to wander and to speculate with a kind of nameless pleasure among the wildest recesses of the forest or the fell, does not abate, but exalt our delight in the fertility and beauty of cultivated scenes: On the contrary, the pleasure is heightened by contrast.

The analogy betwixt the sensations I have been describing, and the intellectual pleasure derived from contemplating the human mind in its native state, opposed to that to which the highest culture can exalt it, holds very closely. Were we to land on some savage island, where the foot of man has never trod, nor his hand removed incumbrance or opened access, we should be harrassed with fears and perplexed with intricacies. The tangled luxuriancy of a thorny wild would obstruct our path; and from the gloom of the impenetrable thicket, the

lurking tiger, or the envenomed serpent would seem ready to spring; and at least haunt the startled imagination.

What nature appears to the senses uncultivated and unsubdued by man,—man, savage and unsocial, appears to the understanding, before his mind has been elevated by patriotic, or softened by tender feelings; before he has respected the ties of close affinity, and endeavoured to extend them to his tribe; before he has tasted the sweets of social life, and “the sympathies of love and friendship dear;” nay, before he has been in any degree “smit with the love of sacred song,” the first and surest symptom of unfolding intellect. The solitary, cruel, selfish, and capricious savage, far from forming an object of amusing speculation, fills us with sensations of mingled horror and disgust, such as we feel at the Yahoo pictures of Swift; and make us, like his reader,

shudder at owning our fellow nature with a being so degraded.

But among a people, whose progress towards civilization, is so far advanced, that the feelings of the heart, and the powers of the imagination have been called forth, preceding the light of science, as the morning star and the dusky dawn do the effulgence of the sun. Among such people, the mind finds something to dwell on that is soothing and satisfactory. We contemplate nations in this state, with a feeling like that which every unspoilt mind derives from the innocent prattle of such children as are not confined in artificial trammels, but allowed to express their own thoughts in their own words. We feel all the comparative consciousness, that we can think deeper, and express ourselves better ; yet, making the due allowances, we wonder how they think so soundly, and speak so well.

To this wonder is added the never

failing charm of simplicity, and the delight we take in detecting the first motions as they arise in the untutored breast; and assisting the retrograde view, we love to indulge of our own feelings and opinions, during that guileless period.

These nearly resemble the general motives, that prompts us to explore with a curiosity, ardent and not useless, the characters and manners of nations such as I have described. The philosopher and politician may be stimulated in their researches by many other causes; but these are the leading sentiments of those who merely wish to be pleased and informed.

Whoever has observed the very great pains taken by men of capacious mind and enlightened curiosity, to trace the progress of mind in remote and uncivilized countries, as well as through the remote and obscure periods of local

history or natural records, must wonder at our countrymen in particular. Their diligent search of what is remote, and in a great measure unattainable in the history of mind and manners, and total neglect of what is obvious and within reach, nay, concealed in the recesses of their native country,—is not merely strange, but altogether unaccountable. They have bewildered themselves in endless and fruitless researches, regarding the ancient Scythians and modern Tartars, the Belgæ, the Gauls, the Goths, the more modern Danes. I speak at random, and merely repeat a string of names of which I know very little, and they cannot know very much. In the mean time, their curiosity seems very moderately excited by the greatest of possible curiosities—even by the remains of the most ancient, unmingled, and original people in Europe : of a people who, surrounded by strangers, have preserved

for a series of ages, which no records can trace, their national spirit, their national language, their national habits, their national poetry, and, above all, their national mode of thinking and expressing their thoughts; their stile of manners, and strain of conversation, and still more their local traditions, and family genealogies in one uninterrupted series.

Why has not this wide field for speculation been explored. Why have the lovers of useful knowledge neglected to dig into a mine so rich in science; even that most valuable science, the knowledge of human nature.

But the lovers of this coy science, have too long delayed to follow her to her retreat. In the deep recesses of our Alpine glens, they might have wooed and won the nymph who presides over the hidden treasures of antique lore. In the Celtic Muse, they would have found an Egeria, who would have enlight-

ened them by her mystic counsels, and told them the secrets of other times, now doomed to long oblivion. Now it is too late.

“Tha, caimine Malmhine gu dian.”*

The fair form, where inspiration has for so many ages, awaked the bard, animated the hero, and soothed the lover, is fast gliding into the mist of obscurity, and will soon be no more than a remembered dream, “When the hunter awakes from his noon-day slumber, and has heard in his vision the spirits of the hill.”

The neglect of pretenders to science, in omitting to acquire a language, through which so much is to be known, and the apparent indifference of natives, in not producing at an earlier period, in-

* The literal translation of these words is, “The steps of Malvina drew near. But the metaphorical signification is more properly, The steps of Malvina are departing—they drew near to the awful forms of her fathers, to the “Cloudy Tabernacles,” of souls escaped from suffering and from sorrow.

in the light of a more current language, the hidden treasures of their own, seems equally unaccountable.

One who, like the writer of these pages, is not absolutely a native, nor entirely a stranger, but has added the observant curiosity of the latter to the facilities of enquiry enjoyed by the former, might best, if otherwise qualified, explain this paradox. An attempt at such an explanation, will form the subject of the next Essay.

ESSAY II.

On the Obstacles, which so long prevented the Legends and Traditions, preserved in the Celtic or Gaelic Language, from becoming the objects of learned research; and on the Causes which prevented those who understood them from giving them their due value and importance, in what regards General Science.

Be mine to read the visions old,
Which thy awakening bards have told.

WERE I to date back my observations to remote ages, a field of discussion, would be opened much too wide for my present consideration. The poetry of a people of such ancient origin, and unmingled identity, is, however, valuable and curious on many accounts.

First, as it includes so much of their history as continues to exist, or indeed has existed.

Second, as it is a kind of document, for establishing many facts, relative to the manners and sentiments of remote times : and,

Finally, as the great quantity of it, and the singular beauty of much that still remains, account for a certain chivalrous dignity, and refinement of sentiment, not known to exist among the lower classes of any other country.

This is so commingled with the language and the poetry, of which that is the vehicle, that in losing these memorials, the courtesy of manners, and elegance of thought and expression connected with it, is also lost irrecoverably.

That a warlike, musical, and poetical people, should, without the use of letters, in the course of ages, attain those heightened sentiments, and generous feelings

of which I speak, will seem less wonderful as it is more nearly considered.

The Celtæ appear, as far as we can trace them, to have been a spirited, warlike, and self-righted race. Driven back in process of time, to the rocks and fastnesses of their country, by a people whose military skill overpowered their unthought valour, the common suffering formed a stronger bond of union. They loved each other the better, for having endured calamity together.

Their exile from the plains and forests, in which they were wont to roam at large, served both to exasperate them against the common enemy, and to exalt their patriotism, thus concentrated within the bounds of these natural fortresses. Courage and freedom were all that remained to them; and the sense of other privations, made them value more highly the blessings that were left. Enured to all the hardships of the chase,

their only remaining means of sustenance, war had for them no terrors, but those attending the loss of friends, endeared to them by sharing the same dangers and privations, and being urged on by the same wrongs, and animated by the same lofty and honourable feelings.

Amidst their perils and wanderings the imagination was exercised and called forth. They became social, from sharing the same hazards and sufferings, and did not become selfish, because they neither had, or coveted any property, but such as their pre-eminence in valour, and dexterity in hunting procured.

This is exactly the period in which heroic poetry is born : and these are the scenes fitted to awake the sensations that nurse its infancy, and adorn its more advanced state.

Those, who had no possessions but their wives and children, loved these with all the ardour of concentrated affection. As

the rills from many fountains add their collected waters to the stream that winds along the valley its progressive course, enlarging as it advances ; so all this fervour of filial and fraternal affection, poured in with united and redoubled force into that current of kindred attachment, which flowed downwards among the descendants of one Patriarch head of a tribe, enlarging as it proceeded.

Thus the affections of every kind were strengthened and sublimed ; and thus love, pride, courage, patriotism, and independence furnished fuel to that poetic flame which has burnt so clear for ages.

Once kindled, it continued to burn, till the dross of sensuality, and all mean and sordid passions were consumed by its vehemence. To speak without a metaphor, the effect of poetry, so pathetic and sublime, and so generally understood, was the production of a refinement of style and character, which to us appears al]

together incompatible with national poverty, and comparative ignorance; with a total want of letters, and the fine arts. Yet so it was, and it may be worth while to examine still more diligently, why it was so.

In the first place; the great distinction by which these people are marked out, as differing from any other we know, is their unbroken lineage; that uninterrupted series that has descended from the first occupiers of these secluded districts. I must here be supposed to include all the Celtic tribes that remain in any part of Britain; though in regard to the effects resulting from this unbroken line, I can only speak of these I have seen and known.

There is another reason for confining to our own highlanders these observations. They could not apply with equal force to the Welch, because Wales being a principality, possessed a court and

sovereign of its own, living in the centre of the country, and keeping up regal state, forming alliances, giving away places, and receiving and sending embassies. These circumstances, with the fertility and high culture of some parts of that country, were all adverse to the seclusion that nourishes a singular, nay, unique national character.

In the highlands, they knew, or cared very little about their distant monarch. They never saw, or wished to see him. His existence in them excited neither hopes nor fears, excepting for their chiefs, who were to them the objects of exclusive attachment, and reverence. The more so, as they had not been accustomed to contemplate or admire any thing greater. Every one venerated in his chief an attached kinsman and kind protector. And with great reason: for if it so happened that a highland chief was arbitrary or cruel, all the evil properties of his na-

ture were let loose upon adverse clans. To his own he was always partial and indulgent; and should he be even ferocious in disposition, or weak in understanding, he was curbed and directed by the elders of his tribe, who, by inviolable custom, were his standing counsellors, without whose advice no measure of any kind was decided upon.

In Wales, on the contrary, the visible and personal consequence of the chiefs was diminished by the splendour of the court to which they were attached; and the civil wars among different pretenders to the principality, before it was subdued by the English, still further destroyed that intimate cohesion of families and tribes on which this unbroken individuality of character so much depends.

When once the poetic spirit was awakened, it illuminated the race whose deeds it recorded. Patriotic feeling was not only heightened by the local poetry.

and tradition, which reflected on the existing clan the honours of virtues of a long line of ancestry, but the mind was enlarged, and the imagination waked into activity, by these hoarded treasures of the memory.

To make people wise and prudent, and fit for conducting themselves in the world at large, it is necessary that history should hold up to them in her impartial mirror the errors and vices, as well as the wisdom and virtue of the departed. To form the generous and chivalrous spirit, the self-subdued mind, the warm affections to his family—the fond attachments to his clan—the love of story, and of song—the contempt of danger and of luxury—the mystic superstition, equally awful and tender—the inviolable fidelity to every engagement,—and the ardent love of his native heaths and mountains;—To form this character, and to add to its courtesy

intelligence and taste, such as is very rarely, if at all found among other unlettered people, these discriminating records were not necessary.

Though ignorant of letters, the art of conversation, was well understood, and highly cultivated among these mountaineers. Of this conversation, the heroic actions, the wise or humorous sayings, the enterprises, the labours, the talents, or even the sufferings of their ancestors, were the subject. These were sooften, andsofondly descanted on, where all the world abroad was shut out, and the meanest particulars became hallowed by their veneration of the departed, that they were carried on from father to son with incredible accuracy, and fidelity.

I must be supposed to mean such anecdotes as did honour to the memory of their ancestors; departed vice and folly slept in profound oblivion; no one

talked of the faults of conduct, or defects in capacity of any of his forefathers. They might be, perhaps, too faithfully recorded by some rival family; but among a man's own predecessors, he only looked back upon sages and heroes.

And even among the lowest classes, a man entertained his sons and daughters in a winter night by reciting the plaintive melody, or mournful ditty, which his great grandmother had composed on the death of her husband, who had lost his life crossing an overswelling stream, to carry, in time of war, an important message for his chief;—or of her son who perished in trying to bring down the nest of an eagle, which preyed on the lambs of the little community—or who was lost in the drift, while humanely searching for the sheep of a sick or absent neighbour.

These, besides romantic tales of love, faithful and extravagant; and of disinte-

restedness and fidelity, almost incredible, formed the subjects of popular song, and local tradition ; and served as a basis for a pride of family, exalted by a firm belief, not in the importance and antiquity only, but in the merit and talents of their progenitors.

Family pride, thus born and cherished, is never to be eradicated from the bosom of a highlander. If he has the smallest pretensions to high ancestry, he respects himself on that account, and exacts respect from others with a kind of blind confidence though deficient in all exterior claims.

Poverty does not diminish this pride, though it makes it more unaccountable and intolerable to others. He condescends to the meanest employments without thinking himself degraded. On the contrary, he thinks the employment dignified by his condescending to exercise it. His countrymen think the

same, and his consciousness of inherent dignity, fortified by their respect, supports him under all depression of external circumstances.

He is supported by hope too; looking always forward to the time, when his indefatigable exertions and severe privations shall enable him to resume his place in society. And he is not often disappointed.

Of the support drawn from the conviction, however fallacious, that one is descended from a long line of ancestry; illustrious, not merely for birth, but ennobled by the exercise of all the hardy and long suffering virtues, a striking illustration might be drawn from the conduct of the victims of harsh policy, after the insurrection of the year forty-five. Of the numerous orphans whose fathers perish'd in the field, or by the hands of the executioner, many were driven out at an early age, even in child-

hood, to seek for bread, where their pretensions to respect or compassion were not understood (I speak of the children of gentlemen, and of such as I have personally known) these laboured under every possible disadvantage.

- Their education was in every sense defective: They left home too young to have a distinct impression of the traditional lore, and poetical history, which had in some respects supplied the wants of more formal and liberal instruction to their ancestors: They had not the means of procuring the most common benefits of instruction in many instances, but by going to school in the evening, and rewarding their teachers with a share of the pittance they made shift to earn through the day.

They were often, amidst all these struggles, vain, ignorant, full of prejudice and bigotry, and rankled into acrimonious obstancy, by the illiberal insults, and un-

disguised contempt "of those, whose fathers they would have disdained to set with the dogs of their flock."

In some instances, their capacity was very moderate,—small, it wanted every kind of cultivation; yet, under all these disadvantages and humiliations, such was the inherent power of the lurking principle of honourable pride and generous shame, in supporting these fallen and wretched outcasts, that in no single instance did they by profligacy or dishonesty disgrace their origin.

Despised by the world, they respected each other. Met together like knight errants in disguise, and consoled each other with a proud retrospection of the past, and a sanguine anticipation of the future. Sanguine hope, like popular prophecy, sometimes causes the event it anticipates. There is not one of all these children of calamity who survived their early struggles, but who have contrived,

by persevering industry, or undaunted courage and enterprise, to climb up to their original station; and many have left families highly respectable, and even opulent, on whom they have been most careful to bestow all those advantages of education, of which disastrous circumstances had deprived themselves.

This striking proof of the effect of what one may call a poetical and traditional education, even where its force was diminished by distance, and its traces almost erased by early banishment, may give some idea of its power over the mind, subject from childhood to its influence.

This national character, singular as it was, and invested with features of distinction, that, when investigated, appeared both noble and amiable, was not even, in ancient times, discerned or understood by strangers.

The low country was inhabited by a

people driven at a later period from the south, by successive invaders and oppressors, who were farther advanced in the arts of industry, and the progress of civilization than the highlanders, whom these last regarded as intruders, and who had scarce any thing in common with them.

Though their mountain chiefs were in due time brought to yield a reluctant fealty to the Scottish monarchs, their followers were scarce conscious of this submission, and most unwilling to believe, that a greater man than their own chief existed. No two nations ever were more distinct, or differed more completely from each other, than the highlanders and lowlanders; and the sentiments with which they regarded each other, was at best a kind of smothered animosity.

The lowlander considered the highlander as a fierce and savage depredator,

speaking a barbarous language, and inhabiting a gloomy and barren region, which fear and prudence forbid all strangers to explore. The attractions of his social habits, strong attachments, and courteous manners, were confined to his glens and to his kindred. All the pathetic and sublime charms of his poetry, and all the wild wonders of his records, were concealed in a language difficult to acquire, and utterly despised as the jargon of barbarians by their southern neighbours. If such were the light in which the cultivators of the soil regarded the hunters, graziers, and warriors of the mountains, their contempt was amply repaid by their high spirited neighbours.

They again regarded the lowlanders as a very inferior mongrel race of intruders; sons of little men, without heroism, ancestry, or genius. Mechanical drudges, who could neither sleep with

out on the snow, compose extempore songs, recite long tales of wonder or of love without bread and without shelter, for weeks together, following the chase. Whatever was mean or effeminate, whatever was dull, slow, mechanical, or torpid, was in the highlands imputed to the lowlanders, and exemplified by some allusion to them: while, in the low country, every thing ferocious, or unprincipled—every species of awkwardness or ignorance—of pride or of insolence, was imputed to the highlanders.

No two communities, generally speaking, could hate each other more cordially, or despise each other more heartily. Much of this hatred, however, proceeded from ignorance of each other's character and manners. How this ignorance should have continued so long, and how this mutual prejudice was so obstinate—

ly cherished, remains now to be accounted for.—

Till of late years, letters were unknown in the highlands, except among the highest rank of gentry and the clergy. The first were but partially enlightened at best. Their minds had been early imbued with the stores of knowledge peculiar to their country, and having no view beyond that of passing their lives among their tenants and dependents, they were not much anxious for any other.

If, in some instances, a chief had some taste for literature, the Latin poets engaged his attention more forcibly than the English, which he possibly spoke and wrote, but inwardly despised; and, in fact, did not understand well enough to relish its delicacies, or taste its poetry.

The Catholic clergy, (I speak now of a remote period) were educated abroad, where they had only learned their native

...ngue, and from whence, they only brought the language of the country where they studied.

In some instances, the younger brothers of patrician families were sent early out to lowland seminaries, and immediately engaged in some active pursuit for the advancement of their fortune.

These rarely, scarce ever, returned to reside in the country. If they should, they went too early away to be learned in that species of learning cultivated at home, and were besides taught by their college acquisitions, to hold it cheap as a thing in itself deserving little attention, though they were unconsciously animated by the spirit, and influenced by the power of that very species of attainment, which they had been taught to despise.

The truth is, there has not been in former times, and I think, there hardly is now, a highlander existing, qualified

to taste alike the beauties of composition in his own and the English language, unless such a one be found among the clergy,—the only persons whose mode of life admits of commensurate skill in the delicacies and peculiarities of each. A man who has not a liberal education; added to much taste and some ingenuity, is not able to give the English reader any idea of the peculiar felicity, copiousness, and energy of the Gaelic language.

A highland gentleman's education is never finished at home; and if goes soon out of his own country, as to obtain at an early period a critical knowledge of the English,—the period of awakened fancy and unsophisticated feeling,—the period of wonder and active curiosity,—of enthusiasm and reverie;—in short, the period favourable to strong poetical impressions is over.

In finding what is correct and grama-

eral in another tongue, he has lost much of what is exquisite and expressive in his own. This is the reason why there never was a tolerable translation from the Gaelic, except in one well-known instance, of which I shall say no more here, having already discussed that subject in another place: I only repeat my assertion, that had he been as scrupulous of fidelity, as capable of elegance, no person was so well qualified to translate Gaelic poetry as him to whom I allude—thoroughly understanding both languages, and having both an ear for melody and a taste for poetry.

I have now accounted for the singular fact of so few natives being qualified to make known the peculiarities of this enthusiastic race. The matter of fact, inquirers, who wish to know all that they can acquire without costing them much trouble, can never attain to an intimate knowledge of the cus-

toms, and manners of those people, far less of their very peculiar and difficult language, without making it a principal object, and in bestowing more time and pains than is usually given to matters of mere curiosity.

What appears singular to a stranger, is rendered, by early habit, so familiar to the natives, that they do not think of it as matter of curious speculation. And the illiberal, ignorant, and bigotted prejudice, with which the lowlanders formerly regarded this insulated, and, in a manner, concealed people, whom they only knew as rude warriors or valiant robbers—these prejudices, I say, usurped some power over the mind of every highlander who received the benefit of a lowland education—in fact who had any education at all. He was like the Jewish converts in Portugal, to whom the opinions and manners of their ancestors were a subject of secret and en-

feared veneration, which they closely concealed for fear of the inquisition, yet communicated among themselves, like a species of free masonry.

Nothing was so terrible to the punctilious pride of a highlander as ridicule. To any but his countrymen, he carefully avoided mentioning his customs, his genealogies, and, above all, his superstitions. Nay, in some instances, he affected to speak of them with contempt, to enforce his pretensions to literature or philosophy.

These early impressions, however, and all the curling absurdities and fictions connected with them, only lay dormant in his mind, to be awakened by the first inspiring strain of his native poetry, the blast from the mountain he had first ascended, or the roar of the torrent that was wont to resound by the halls of his fathers.

A more pure and natural mode of re-

ligious belief, too, might seem to have extinguished the lurking enthusiasm and cherished credulity of the young mountaineer. It might appear, that

“ The breath of Heaven had blown its spirit out;

“ And strewn repentant ashes on its head;

but the moment that he felt himself within the stony girdle of the Grampians, though he did not yield himself a prey to implicit belief, and its bewildering terrors and fantastic inspirations, still he resigned himself willingly to the sway of that potent charm, that mournful, yet pleasing illusion, which the combined influence of a powerful imagination and singularly warm affections have created and preserved in those romantic regions. That fourfold band, wrought by music, poetry, tenderness, and melancholy, which connects the past with the present, and the material with the immaterial world, by a mystic and

invisible tie, which all both within its influence feel, yet none free from subjection to the potent spell, can comprehend. This partial subjection to the early habits of resignation to the wilder powers of song and superstition, is a weakness to which no educated and polished Highlander will ever plead guilty. It is a secret sin, and, in general, he dies without confession; for this good reason, that should he confess, he could not have the least hope of absolution. Scorn, even that bitterest of potions, the scorn of fools, would be his certain portion.

Those honest visionaries, who combine "The love of folly with the scorn of fools,"—who feel a secret kindness for the venerable follies of their ancestors, and a contempt for pretenders, who, with greater folly, affect to despise them, take very good care not to plead guilty to the crime of easy belief.

Indeed, to use the language of
poet,

“ What high heart could ever yet sustain
“ The public blast of insolence and scorn.”

Who, that had even himself broke
chains of mental bondage, would
to subject his revered ancestors to
charge of gross folly, from those who
incapable of measuring the height
depths of human strength and weak-

It requires a kind of knowledge
often, attained in the closets of
learned, or in the haunts of the
and the gay, to enable us to asc
how much wisdom and talent is co
tible with a cloudy atmosphere of
imagination. Nor is it easy for
who are, in a great measure, guided
the dictates of plain good sense
proved by the mere elements of
knowledge, to calculate how much
gance, presumption, and folly in

found in minds, whose acquired characteristic is implicit unbelief, if such a phrase be allowable; and who owe this honourable distinction to that emptiness which merely reverberates the opinions of others.

No wonder though the Jews should have sunk into a state ripe for change and destruction, when the community became divided into two sects in pernicious opposition to each other, and to truth.

It is evident, that the Sadducees, who believed neither angel nor spirit, regarded, with infidel contempt, all those who listened for whispers of inspiration, or looked for visions of light.

It seems equally certain, that the Pharisees believed in the existence, and, perhaps, in the occasional appearance of separate spirits. But they supposed them merely agents of divine vengeance to their enemies, or ministers to their bi-

gotry and spiritual pride, having no concern about any of the human race but themselves.

I think it is now pretty evident, why the highlanders, when once enlightened by science, were, betwixt shame and prudence, silent on many of the peculiarities of their original modes of thinking, which, if known, might illustrate the history of the human mind in its progressive state.

Werter looks back with sad complacency, to the days of blessed ignorance, when he knew no limits to the earth. When, being equally a stranger to its shape and its extent, he lay on the banks of a river, pondering on the endless course, as he supposed it, of the stream; and, lost in sublime contemplations on immensity.

What a scope had his imagination. What an expansion had his mind in this progressive pursuit. While the school-

boy, taught to read before he could think, without the least exercise of his intellectual powers, or the remotest comprehension of the subject, repeats after his tutor, that the earth is round. Thus should a person of the highest attainments, the most exquisite taste for all that is beautiful and sublime in nature and composition, and most correct apprehension of moral excellence.

Should such a person as I have been describing, be early and strongly imprest by the wild and the wonderful, amid the solitudes of a dreary country, where every spot is connected with some legend, well known, and fixed in popular belief; and where the most exalted and most pathetic strains of poetry gain double force from being obvious to the least cultured mind; his heart and his imagination could scarce break the ties of early association. Reason might restrain, but could not extinguish that awful and un-

ESSAY III.

*On the Causes which, precluding Strangers from
ling in the Highlands, prevented any know-
ing of the Language or Customs of the Country
from being obtained through such a medium*

And of those ~~demons~~ that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground. MILT

LIKE a broken mirror, whose
ments imperfectly reflect a beau-
countenance, those scattered or di-
tribes still, in the fond affection su-
ing among families, retain the rer-
of the attachments resulting from
original patriarchal government.

In certain remote and secluded
tricts, more of this did very lately
sit, than one would have thought

patible with the influence of worldly customs in the present times. Much of this, however, was owing to the peculiar sacredness of the bond of marriage, in those countries, where the violation of it was regarded with a kind of holy horror: And much to those affinities being for the most part contracted where they strengthened ties previously existing;—where they, in a manner, added links to the chain of memory, as well as to an unbroken succession of family alliances; the subject of those connections delighting to recal the past, and to dwell fondly on the recollected prowess, worth, or dignity of their mutual ancestors.

This accounts, in some measure, for the respect in which the name of spouse is held among these tribes. A good man will necessarily prove a good husband any where. Even a man, not distinguished for any other species of merit,

sometimes makes a tolerable husband to a woman whose beauty has attracted him, and whose qualities of mind or manners are particularly engaging.

In the highlands these prerequisites are not essential. A man who possesses scarce any other virtue, will not fail in this. Characters, otherwise remarkable for levity, turbulence, or immorality, are still kind and generous to the creatures indissolubly united to them; and whom they *feel*, as well as know themselves bound to protect.

Those who imagine these mountaineers personages like Arcadian swains, invariably united to the objects of their first fond affections, will not wonder at this. They will, on the contrary, consider such a state of society as the result of the choice in marriage being generally made from the purest motives.

This, however, is not much oftener the case here than in more polished

countries. Young people are bred, not only with a profound reverence for their parents, but with a kind of implicit confidence in the elders of their tribe. Rash and imprudent attachments produce much amatory poetry, and many exquisite love-~~lorn~~ complaints; for the Celtic muses, above all others, have "skill to complain."

They are said also to occasion sorrow, sickness, and, in some instances, death; They occasion, however, very few ill assorted marriages. A contract of this indissoluble nature is rarely entered into without a solemn consultation of the kindred on both sides; where all advantages are nicely balanced, and where, as in the world, fancy is sometimes sacrificed to convenience.

The highlands, though fertile in hardy and determined spirits, scarce ever produced a Romeo, who had hardiness enough to incense his kindred, by chusing his Juliet from an adverse tribe. Connec-

tion with high lineage and powerful alliances, was a great object among the upper classes. They laid very great stress too upon the character of the parents. What they called a good breed, where the frame of the parents was comely and healthy, and their character stainless. A highlander shuddered at any alliance with crime, and could not easily divest himself of a faith in hereditary propensities.

Last, after these, came the consideration of wealth. Money, literally such, was out of the question, but from the extreme poverty to which the younger branches of good families were liable, shut out as they were from all ordinary resources, small matters to them acquired great importance.

To divest themselves entirely of the consequence attached to what they considered as high birth was impossible; to subsist, on what they considered as de-

cent mediocrity, without some little advantage by marriage; and the very extreme of exertion and self-denial after it, was equally impossible.

§ A wife who brought forty cows was a desirable match to one who could not possibly begin the world without such assistance. A thousand marks was a sure irresistible, so late as within fifty years past. Yet custom, necessity, and the habit of laying great weight on alliance, and on a stainless ancestry, in many instances produced matches, in which, at first, affection had little share.

Once married, though the wife should neither excel in beauty or understanding, she borrowed a kind of sacredness from the tie which united her to her husband, and became blended with his very existence. Though perhaps not fitted to awake the raptures or agonies of poetic passion, he was predisposed to regard her as

“ The kind fair friend by nature made his own.”

from her he expected truth, fidelity, and a certain kind of respectful attachment, chastened by

“ Pious awe, and fear to have offended.”

from the habits descended from old times, women looked up to their husbands as the representatives of warriors and of worthies; and as beings, born to protect them by their courage, and provide for them by exertions of a kind of which they themselves were incapable.

The wife, again, independent of mental charms or personal attractions, was endeared to the husband by this tacit homage, and by a tie, more prevalent by far here, than in more polished societies. She was the mother of his children; to her he was indebted for the link that connected him with the future descendants of his almost idolized ancestors.

No highlander ever once thought of himself as an individual. Amongst these people, even the meanest mind was in a manner enlarged by association, by anticipation, and by retrospect. In the most minute, as well as the most serious concerns, he felt himself one of many connected together by ties the most lasting and endearing. He considered himself merely with reference to those who had gone before, and those who were to come after him ; to these immortals who lived in deathless song and heroic narrative ; and to these distinguished beings who were to be born heirs of their fame, and to whom their honours, and, perhaps, their virtues, were to be transmitted.

This might be supposed merely to cherish pride ; but, besides this, it had a highly moral tendency. It was this intimate association with the memory of the past, with the hopes of the future,

and with the interest and honour of his cotemporary kindred, that, mingling with all his thoughts and feelings, set him beyond the reach of every species of egotism, even that of being solely influenced by his own taste and fancy, in the most intimate of all connections. ¶

Whatever might be the motive which produced a marriage, it was very rarely unhappy.

To a genuine highlander, the mother of his children was a character so sacred, that to her he was never deficient in indulgence, or even respect. To her he could forgive any thing, provided her conduct did not impeach the honour of their mutual progeny, or create doubt, where suspicion would be misery.

I cannot here avoid observing the happy effects of plain good sense untutored in the schools, in regulating the most important of all earthly concerns, and of the benign influence of those salu-

tary prejudices by which the reign of the affections is made to supersede that of the passions.

It really harmonizes the mind to contemplate the economy of human life, among those who have been at best considered as a semi-barbarous people, when contrasted with the effects of a vicious and selfish refinement. There, without any depth of reflection, or subtilty of argument, the mere habit of consulting the general good of these most dear to us, in preference to our own fancies and humours, regulates and renders easy the first social duties. There, those who are united together by bonds which cannot be broken without a disarrangement of the whole domestic system, do not think decay of beauty, difference of taste, or even disagreement of temper, sufficient to warrant the very wanderings of attachment. In fact, they have been habituated to think separation an impos-

sible thing ; and it is wonderful how the mind accomodates itself to evils for which it knows no remedy.

Where a man has been accustomed to seek and to find his pleasures in the bosom of his family. Where his children, bred up under his eye, and taught to look for happiness in his favour, rejoice in his smile like flowers in sunshine. Whatever materially affects them becomes with him a paramount consideration.

It could never enter into the minds of such parents, to tear asunder ties the most tender for their own selfish gratification. How dreadful would it appear to those unsophisticated beings to act any part, the result of which must be habituating young minds, whom it is the first human duty to cherish and instruct, to take part with one parent against another ; or, perhaps, lose respect and affection for both. This, indeed, is not

the worst evil of such separations, and such unions as we are daily forced to witness. The opening mind, in the very dawn of intelligence, in the first bloom of purity and delicacy, must be contaminated with the consciousness of guilt, of the most aggravated nature, polluting the source of its existence, and debasing those whom it delights to venerate.

In a highland family, a scene of this nature rarely, if at all, occurred.

If a man did not find his wife's disposition gentle, or her temper amiable, he never supposed that his happiness would be increased by seeking after a mode of felicity, which was not, in the ordinary course of things, permitted. He considered this as he would any chronical distemper, one of the many modes of trial appointed for a state of probation. He no more thought of tearing asunder the union of divine appointment, because it was not productive of unalloyed

felicity, than he would have cut off his leg or his arm, because it was pained by a rheumatic affection. Nothing less than the gangrene of dishonour could induce him to this dividing between soul and spirit, by which the whole system of life is shaken and undermined.

To him any suffering was easier to bear than the thoughts of abandoning, to scorn and reproach, the confiding creature to whom he had vowed protection.—To alienate from him, not only the maternal relatives of his children, but even his children themselves, who could never forgive the dereliction of their mother. The rights of the conjugal tie were indeed, on all sides, guarded by barriers insurmountable.

A man so basely selfish as to prefer the gratification of his own inclination, to the peace and honour of his own family, and the many others intimately

connected with it, would be considered as an outcast from society.

What a contrast does this reverential awe for the sanctity of the marriage bond among those primitive people hold out to modern degeneracy.

Let us now view a near and recent picture of modern refinement—of that contemptible selfishness which, under a pretence of strong attachment, delicate feelings, and a distorted and illegitimate sense of honour, sacrifices to individual and capricious likings and dislikes the peace and honour of families.

Of those who not only divide those whom God, by the laws of their country and their own consent, hath joined together, but root out, from the hearts of their own innocent offspring, the native purity and simplicity, the best affections, and the sweetest hopes of childhood,—even those of being the pride and solace of their mutual parents—of dwell-

ing in peace under their protection,—being blest by their affection and example,—and seeing them together attain a venerable old age, in all the sanctity and comfort of endeared union.

Yet these cruel parents, who thus murder the promise, the innocence, and the hopes of childhood, and undermine the very basis of morality, in the violated feelings of the creatures whom they abandon. These very culprits will talk with horror of the infanticide of China, or of those hottentots, who, when their family is numerous, and food particularly scarce; tie a feeble and unpromising infant to the branches of a tree, and leave it to perish.

The instinct of nature, always powerful, can only be conquered by extremity of misery. Beings wretched and degraded, strangers to comfort, in whose minds long suffering has dulled the moral sense,—who have not even the cor-

dial of hope to support them under inevitable evils, taste not the pleasures of the parental relation. To love and be loved—to train up a creature qualified for the best enjoyments of this world, and the best hopes of the next, is not theirs, even in ideal anticipation :—

“Nature stands check'd, religion disapproves.”

Yet stern necessity presses on the obtuse feelings of those who, having no hope even in this world, are of all men most miserable; and if any degree of sensibility or reflection remain awake in such a mind, they only wake to urge the hand of desperation, by suggesting the mercy of an early dismissal from a life which promises only to be varied by hardship and calamity.

The horrors of shame and despair operating with united force on the mind of an unhappy female, when the veil is about to be torn from secret guilt, and

the gulph of ruin opens before her, has sometimes, in a moment of distraction, produced a deed she would have once feared to name. Pity, however, mingles with the horror awaked by the extreme of wretchedness, that stifles the pleadings of nature in the parental breast.

But if the natural feeling of the unhardened mind shrinks from the deed that consigns back to its Creator the soul unknown to actual suffering, and unstained with actual guilt, how can we look calmly on crimes of a deeper dye, loaded with every possible aggravation.

Have we not seen; nay, do we not daily see, parents blest with every fairest gift of nature—with affluence to gratify every reasonable wish and taste, and information to direct the channels in which their superabundance may flow to adorn and enrich the scenes around them. Parents who walking in the mild light of Christianity, though its precepts should

not have reached their hearts, must have their minds softened by its beneficial influence. Must I add the rest—must I contrast the murder of innocent souls, wantonly committed by parents thus blest and thus enlightened, with the effects of tortured and perverted feeling in the worst extremities of human suffering. Who can bear to hear the fathers, who, after forsaking, corrupting, and dishonouring their own children, talk of the feelings which move them to protect the creature who has renounced the divine protection by seeking theirs. Of the honour which induces them to bind their souls to guilt, sheltered, but not sanctioned by marriage vows.

This does not diminish, far less efface crimes. It is merely a daring attempt of consummate wickedness to force its way into the sanctuary, and level all the distinctions that remain.

“When scarlet vice lifts her triumphant

head," decked with the ensigns of conjugal union, it is not the crime that is hallowed, but the state itself that is degraded. Well might Milton exclaim,

" Hail, wedded love, mysterious law, true source," &c.

and add,

Sole property : In Paradise of all things common else.

Wherever this sole property remains unviolated, the steps of Astrea still linger. And, in some instances, where truth is softened by tenderness, and exalted by congenial virtue and intelligence, " the Paradise of hearts," thus formed, seems like a relic of lost felicity, to remind us not only of the state from which we are fallen, but of that to which we should aspire. Where low-minded selfishness and sensual indulgence, the twin offspring of ease and luxury, assume the garb of refined taste and delicate fastidiousness, this sickly

depravity of a capricious appetite, serves for a pretext to rid themselves of the partner who has palled upon their taste, and procure the charm of variety, heightened by the zest of difficulty and dishonour.

These elegant culprits are not aware, that they are divesting themselves of one of the great privileges of humanity, and reducing themselves to a level with the beasts that perish ; but cannot, like them, perish for ever. Religious sanctions this class of people already despise. Upon those of morality they have already trampled. What then remains to make them endure themselves, or be endured by others? Why, they are still men of taste and refinement, of honour and humanity ; and that to them is quite enough.

They are little aware, that the meanest peasant in an Alpine shed, were he even as careless of religious and

moral sanctions as themselves; would, from the simple dictates of good sense and good taste, regard their gross depravity with disgust.

The titled offenders whose sordid, and abject vileness has obtruded itself on public observation, are strangers to shame; they know they have broken the laws of God and their country; yet in that breach they glory; they are proud of having made such a costly sacrifice to taste and attachment. They know they are wicked, but are upon this principle somewhat vain of being so. But they have so long lost sight of all purity of mind and delicacy of feeling, that they are scarce conscious of being both contemptible and detestable.

It is this that I would have them know. “ Nay, I would have a Starling
 “ taught to speak nothing but infamy;
 “ and give it them to keep their ignominy still in motion.”

From the degrading and odious theme, to which the force of contrast has impelled me, I return to a more pleasing one.

Feeling as if respiring with lightened spirits a purer air, while I return to shew how closely every bond of kindred affection was drawn in consequence of the unviolated sanctity of the nuptial vow among the people I have been describing.

In this state of society, the affections were so much excited, and so many were included in their sphere of action, that no individual sunk under the chilling sensation of being regarded with total indifference. With this perpetual spring of excitement in the mind, a state of apathy, the languor which proceeds from the extinction of hope and fear was impossible.

Every one of the tribe or neighbourhood endeared by affinity or mutual good offices, was in a greater or less de-

gree beloved. This genial climate of the heart, this perpetual spring of the affections softened every hardship, and made privations tolerable, from which we should shrink affrighted. It was in this warm atmosphere, that the flowers of the imagination delighted to unfold, without the aid of culture. Amid the desolation of these these dark heaths and barren rocks, there was a perpetual action, and re-action of fancy and affection. The glow of attachment waked the poetic fire in minds susceptible of the finer impressions, and capable of embodying their conceptions in appropriate language.

Poetry again investing the best feelings of the heart, with the bright imagery and harmonious expression which only genius can supply, exalted and cherished the sentiments which it embellished.

Thus softened and excited, the mind was peculiarly open to every kindly and tender impression; and from the habits and circumstances of their lives, equally tenacious of those it had once received; besides, the likings and dislikes, merely excited by extraneous circumstances, they had all those deepened shades of affection and aversion, produced, by quick perceptions of excellence and demerit; and a singular capacity of discriminating character; these were partly owing to their social habits, living so very much together, affording them all the facilities that could be desired for looking intimately into individual nature. Their intimacy with poetry too, the frequency of that talent among them, and their readiness to exercise it on all occasions, added greatly to their powers of discrimination. All that was estimable and amiable, generous or noble, in character and conduct, received the meed of poetical applause,

and was thus held out as a model for imitation.

Though they spared the feelings of the living in the recorded acts of the dead, much local and temporary satire flew about, rendered more pointed by poetic fancy. Sometimes this was merely a playful and ludicrous exposure of the petty foibles of their friends, but oftener the most poignant ridicule or acrimonious sarcasm pointed at their enemies, or those of the clan. As for the bards by profession, they might most truly say,

“ Whoe'er offends at some unlucky time,

“ Slides into verse and hitches into rhyme.”

It will scarcely be believed by those who imagine, that there can be no refinement, but what is produced by science and luxury, that this salutary ridicule was often applied to reform vain conceit, or boastful arrogance; and that absurdity, indecorum, and what we should

call ill-breeding, was frequently and successfully satirised by the Celtic muses. Indeed, the high sense of propriety, and the delicacy and justness of feeling among the common highlanders, in all that relates to the decencies of life and conversation, could not be otherwise accounted for.

Had Shakespeare been a highlander, he could not have found models among his competitors for his sordid or clownish characters. In that case, we should never have known Launcelot Gobbo, or Launce. However irrelevant all this may seem to the subject in question, it bears close upon the position first laid down in this essay, and tends to render more obvious these peculiarities by which strangers were prevented from residing among a people, whose language was so difficult to learn, and whose customs, while they drew them closer to each other than any other people, were to a

stranger altogether incomprehensible, and in their consequences, tended to exclude him from the benefit of Society. The polish, or at least the amenity which prevailed in their social intercourse, though it was impossible for those who were not intimately acquainted with their language and manners to understand it, formed an additional barrier betwixt them and strangers. The manners of the lower class in other countries appeared to them deficient in courtesy and civility.

Then there really was not room for a stranger, in a country already overpeopled in proportion to its productions. Especially when it is considered, that every inch of ground was occupied by heads of families, who were perhaps the tenth generation on the same spot, and held their lands from a patriarchal chief, to whom and his ancestors they and their forefathers had performed services the

most important. One of these tenants could not be removed to make room for a stranger without giving mortal offence to the whole tribe. Their ideas of morality as well as of attachment, being outraged by such a proceeding. Thus though a stranger passing through the country or merely visiting it, was treated with kindness and indeed with the most liberal hospitality, if he attempted to settle there, he had nothing but prejudice and persecution to expect, by attempting to domicil himself, he lost all the courtesy due to a stranger, without establishing any claims to good will as a friend or neighbour.

Such was the state of society: And so little could a single individual, even in tolerable circumstances do for himself, that a man who did not possess the general good-will, and receive the hourly good offices of his neighbours, lived in the state of an outlaw, excluded from

the comforts, and deprived of the privileges of social life.

This state of alienation, which any one was liable to incur, who was not regarded by the little close rivetted community around him, made it necessary for even natives to sacrifice much of humour and inclination to those on whom they were so dependent.

A stranger found it impossible to live among them without such an entire resignation of his habits, prejudices, and opinions, as none but a mind very liberal, very versatile, and very accommodating could submit to. Unless entirely naturalised, every thing that such a one could attempt would fail, for want of cooperation, without which nothing can be done in these countries. He was hereby subject to petty vexations, and various nameless injuries, destructive to peace, and even dangerous to safety.

Law there had barely power to protect life. The protection of property was matter of convention, understood and acted upon, but by no means including indifferent persons.

If twenty people saw a trespass committed, no one durst, or indeed would incline to witness in favour of a stranger against their own clan. They might have reversed the boast of the philosopher, and said, they loved truth well, but Plato and Socrates, (*i. e.* Donald and Macolm) better.

All the intercourse of life was carried on by a kind of tacit agreement, in an interchange of good offices, that would appear extravagant and romantic any where else. Yet were here so necessary, that it was almost considered a crime to withhold them.

The ground being all uninclosed, it depended entirely on the good faith and good herding of his neighbour, whether

a man ever put a sheaf into his barn. The sheep and cattle too, wandering promiscuously on the hills, the integrity of a man's neighbours was all he had to depend on for their return. Spreaths were only taken by way of gallant interprise by people at a distance; but if in any instance a petty trespass on sheep or goats was committed, a stranger, or a churlish and unpopular character was sure to be the object of such depredation.

David very justly thought himself entitled to some extension of Nabal's hospitality, when he and his men had so long pined on scanty sustenance, while the fat herds and flocks of the thankless churl were feeding round him.

The herds that wandered on the mountains were the objects of equal self-denial and exertions, proceeding from a refinement of integrity, which each by turns practised towards the other with

very great fatigue, and sometimes at the risk of life. A man would drive home his neighbour's sheep overtaken in the whirling drift; bring down cattle from heights which his life was endangered in ascending; or extricate them at the utmost risque from swamps and bogs in spring, when too weak themselves to make the requisite struggle.

To make the importance of this mode of kindness understood, it will be necessary to explain one part of the singular system of life which formerly prevailed in these regions. A highlander's whole wealth consisting of cattle, what he most valued himself upon, was that glory and joy of life, "a fine fold of cows," to use his own favourite phrase. With cows his rents were paid, with cows his daughters were portioned, and his sons established in life.

Were one to tell the most sagacious highlander, that such an one who had no

cows, was notwithstanding possessed of money enough to purchase his whole fold and that he possessed this wealth without being liable to any risque, far less to the terrible contingences to which a highland herd is exposed ; far from being dazzled, he would consider the possessor of this funded wealth as comparatively mean, sordid, and ignorant. And this he would do, on the principle, that if the man had common sense, or the least idea wherein true dignity consisted, he would use this wealth for the purchase of cattle, whose abundance would do him credit in the eyes of his neighbours, and whose encrease would further enrich him. In vain would you urge to him the argument of Shylock, upon running the parallel between barren metal and a fruitful flock, “ I cannot tell—I make it breed as fast.”

A large stock of this kind was here the main object of the two most influ-

encing passions that agitate the more polished world, *avarice* and *vanity*.

A highlander has in some instances much vanity. In this point, indeed half-civilized people exactly agree with the over-civilized. The ignorant and vain, because they know not the just value of the different objects of competition, and expect to be admired or envied for possessing things, which they estimate far above their real worth:—Those who are become the slaves of luxury and artificial desires, again become dead to the finer affections, which are cherished by truth of taste, and simplicity of life. Their moral sense becomes proportionably dull, consequently, to relieve that stagnation of life, which results from the torpor of fancy and feeling, they feed on an imagined superiority, “Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dares not,” derived from the possession of things, of no more value in the estimation.



of wisdom, virtue, or even true taste, than the coloured plumage of the Indian, or the ornamented weapons of the highlander.

Amid these desultory reflections and miscellaneous observations, suggested by the character of the people of whom I speak, the fact I endeavoured to prove seems fully established, I mean the difficulty of a stranger's making any establishment among them.

I have already accounted for the little intelligence, to be obtained from the transplanted, and educated natives, concerning the peculiar habits, and ancient customs, and superstitions of their tribes.

It is now pretty evident, that the few strangers who have ever obtained a precarious and unsafe footing among them, were, from the causes I have detailed, prevented from obtaining, or communicating much of this kind of intelligence.

These difficulties form a kind of apo-

logy, for the incurious dullness, that slumbered with such seeming apathy, beside such sources of interesting speculation, and of the knowledge of human nature, differently modified from what it is, either in the savage, pastoral, or civilized state.

The native would not, and the stranger could not, present a picture of life and manners, so peculiar, so blended of contrarities, a system of thought, and action that seemed in constant opposition to each other. Where the mind "tutored by poetry," and exalted by a kind of chivalrous and heroic sentiment, (influencing even those who were unconscious of its power and origin;) was nourished by a hereditary enthusiasm, calculated to soften and refine the feelings.

Yet where the habits of life, and the lesson early taught of making a merit of endurance, and despising hardships, tended to steel the mind and body to all the

sufferings terminating merely in the individual, a singular combination of circumstances, which never will, or can take place elsewhere, stamped the general character with these extremes of fortitude and tenderness, which one would think incompatible with each other: no studied course of mental culture, could ever produce this effect in a community, scarcely indeed in an individual.

In the common course of things, and among ordinary characters, a life subject to constant exertion, privation, and suffering, is generally adverse to the cultivation of taste, or to those exercises of imagination and feeling, which call forth the finer emotions of the mind. The hero, or the adventurer, is not often a poet or a musician.

It is only in that interval of painful leisure, when self-exiled from the field of glory, that we find Achilles soothing

his rage and grief by listening to the lute; and Ulysses shuts his ears to all songs but those that celebrate the wars of Troy, where he and his compatriots fought and conquered.

Minds hardened by suffering and exertion, are often capable of much generous humanity; but that is not because they are refined, but because they are unspoilt. They have not so many artificial wants, as to need all they can acquire; nor have they learnt that sophistry which is so ingenious in finding arguments against imprudent, and indiscriminate compassion, and which will never endeavour to do good, because such endeavours have often been frustrated, by the folly, or ingratitude, of the objects of them.

Yet the blunt humanity, which is so often met with in uncultured minds, hardened by the blasts of adversity, is deaf and blind to the pains and penal

ties of wounded delicacy. It will bear pains such as it is able to suffer, but understands no other.

In cultivated society, where feeling and imagination predominate in any individual, and are early “fed with food convenient for them,” the character so formed, is very far indeed from that of self-denial, manly exertion, or voluntary privation.

In the habits of civilized life, when taste as connected with feeling and imagination is highly cultivated, a sickly, selfish, and enervating sensibility to pain, to evil, and to injury,—a fastidious, and fantastic passion for external elegance,—a love of ease, almost amounting to disease,—and an illiberal contempt for ordinary duties, ordinary sufferings, and plain unvarnished virtues, are the common result of this species of refinement.

He whose mind has been early, and unconsciously, imprest with a deep sense

of all that is sublime in fortitude, and all that is beautiful in tenderness; to whose imagination the poet and the hero are ever present as models of imitation; who is taught by the first, all the pathos of thought and language, who learns from the last all that is noble in self-conquest, generous shame, inflexible constancy, inviolable fidelity, contempt for pleasure and for ease, and self-devotion for the good of others;—he who thus feels, and acts without claiming praise, or once imagining himself an extraordinary character on that account;—he whose life of continual hardships and privations is softened by the quick sense of musical delight and poetical excellence, and sweetened by all the endearing sympathies of domestic affection;—He, in short, whose hardy and austere habits of life, so counteract his refined and delicate modes of feeling and thinking, as to produce that balance in the mind, so fa-

avourable to moral excellence; where the habits of self-controul, and patient endurance enable the will to limit, without extinguishing, or even diminishing the affections; the character, I say, formed by such a coincidence, and certainly very much dependant on the external circumstances which produce it, the virtues, in short, of habit, and of accident, it would be presumptuous to compare, with those grounded on enlightened and liberal views, the consequence of valuable knowledge and judicious instruction: far less do I here include the meliorating influence of religion, even on those members of a Christian community who are least sensible of its power; because this makes no part of the difference betwixt the people I speak of and more enlightened societies; and because I mean to advert to its effects upon the character I have been describing in another place.

Yet, though I do not claim a rank in moral estimation for my Celtæ, equal to that of the virtuous, who are informed and enlightened, and whose good actions are the result of good feelings judiciously directed, I should be glad to know, whether such beings as I have described, do not hold a place superior to the multitude, who act, in a manner, impulsively without feeling or reflecting; or to the less useful, but more self-important class, who imagine that feeling and reflection with them supersede the necessity of exertion. Still further, does such a character excel "the stoic of the woods, the man without a tear?"

I have been thus minute in explaining the influence of poetry and local habit upon character; because, in fact, their poetry, which contains their history, and the philosophy of their moral sentiment, is the only key to the knowledge of their ancient character

and customs. What still remains, ~~and~~ gain, of that character and those customs, when well understood, forms the best comment on their poetry, and affords the most convincing proof of its authenticity.

It is no wonder that such bright gleams of all that is noble and delicate in thought and feeling, breaking out from the obscurity of imputed barbarism, should astonish ignorance, and provoke incredulity. But the tinge of all the fine colours of this antique enthusiasm, is still obvious in the thought, speech, and action, of every unsophisticated highlander. Who that sees and feels its influence, can deny, or even doubt, its existence?

ESSAY IV.

1. *The particular State of Society, in which a Belief of the Existence of separate Spirits, and their re-appearance, most probably Originated.*
2. *An Attempt to assign the Motives of such belief in the Earlier Periods of Society.*

“ Those, to whom the world unknown,
“ With all its shadowy shapes is shown.”

COLLINS.

WE have been accustomed to hear a great deal of “vulgar prejudice.” The very name of superstition is enough to recal this favourite phrase to the recollection, not only of the poorer retailers of phrases, but to the more wealthy manufacturers of them: not only to those who willingly adopt the thoughts and

■

words of others; but to many who
gine they think and act for themse

Although the title of this Essay
lead the reader to suppose it is me
support vulgar prejudice; it will, o
contrary, begin with combating a
vulgar and a very general one.

But let us first examine what v
prejudice is: Is it not belief take
on slight grounds, received withou
amination, and cherished from mer
fish adherence to an opinion, becaus
have once avowed it?

Such, then, is the prejudice by v
we are taught to conclude, that th
lief of spectral appearances, implyin
continued existence of the spirits o
departed, first originated among n
of the lower order. The weak, tl
mid, and the ignorant.

The ground of this belief, or p
dice, seems to be, that among min
this description, the dread of sup

tural agency still lingers; while more powerful, and more enlightened intellects, have long since conquered those visionary terrors.

This prevailing idea, shews very little attention to the progress and exercise of the faculties of the human mind. The authors of this superstitious belief, must at least have been possessed of a vigorous imagination, which is no attribute of a feeble intellect. Those assigned to their inferiors in capacity their own mode of belief, and were implicitly followed by them, through all the regions of doubt and fear, thus opened to them.

In process of time, as the dawn of intelligence began to brighten, those possessing superior powers of intellect, climbed to higher stations, and took wider views; while ignorance and folly grovelled on, contented with the worn-out opinions which their superiors, in their progressive march, had thrown away.

This process cannot be more clearly illustrated than by another, which annually takes place in the capital, the last stage of which, any one may have an opportunity of seeing every May-day in its most public streets. It is well known, how fancy and ingenuity are exhausted, and wealth lavished, in the yearly exhibition of the noble and the elegant, on the birth-day of the Sovereign. This "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious dress," however, proves but a splendid incumbrance when the show is over. It is soon therefore divested of the jewels that adorn it, and dismissed to the green room, or some less creditable place of exhibition: Nothing can be more rapid than the declension and fall of finery, when it ceases to be either elegant or useful.

On the first of May, those robes of ceremony sink to their last stage of degradation. On that day, chimney-sweep-

ing boys, in a kind of grotesque female attire, may be seen decked in faded wreaths, and torn plumage dragging along tarnished trains, still gleaming withinsel and spangles, that once adorned the forms of beauty, and glittered in the presence of royalty. Yet, how would we be laughed at, who should assert, that those individual chimney-sweepers, or others of the same description, were the first inventors, and original weavers of those dresses! To be serious, it is nearly as easy, from the analogies of what we know, with what we only conjecture, to trace the first belief of apparitions to their origin, as many other things which we trace through a chain of consequences to some remote cause, in a manner, which satisfies, if it does not convince us.

Young, in one of his early poems, says,

“ This earth is for my verse too small a bound;
“ Attend me, all ye glorious worlds around.”

The aspiration which dictated this wish, to burst the barriers of mortality in search of new forms of being less limited than our own, is common to every mind susceptible at once of tenderness and sublimity. This desire may be differently modified by circumstances, and may be differently directed by education; but in powerful minds, replete with imagination and feeling, it every where exists. Every where, too, it forms an invisible and undefinable link between those spirits that still endure the probatory state allotted to them, and those who have already

“ Done their task, and ta'en their wages.”

This description of feeling more particularly applies to those who have been-nursed in the bosom of fond affection, and in the habits of deep thoughtfulness,

amid the solitudes of a wild and gloomy country.

When strong attachment, and the reveries of a fertile and sublime imagination were thus indulged, to such characters, the limited views to which their senses were confined, only served to suggest images of somewhat yet unseen, but not to fill up the capacity of a powerful, though uncultured intellect. The dim light of tradition, the profound reflection suggested by subjects so important, yet so mysterious, and the secret whispers of the aspiring soul, all led them forward to the limits of space, and prompted them to look for something beyond it. Thus prepared, intense meditation, which ever leads forward the awakened soul in search of something,

“ Still out of reach, but never out of view,”

would be more excited by the appearances and motions of the heavenly bodies: These, like the wheels which

Milton describes after the prophet Eze-
kiel, " each appear instinct with spirit."

To a mind intelligent, though unin-
formed, thus disposed to grasp eagerly,
though blindly, at the future and invisible,
what could more exalt the contemplation,
or crowd the mind with images of things
unseen, than being deprived of the object
of concentrated and lasting affection,
such as is peculiar to retired and primi-
tive habits of life, and glows with most
fervor in the strongest minds? In the
course of the vain search made by the
desponding spirit, for the soul with which
it longs to re-unite, it finds the wish, the
eager desire, and finally the lively hope
of immortality. What we eagerly wish,
we readily believe!

I am now confining my probable con-
jectures (which, after all, is the utmost
to which I pretend) to the remote ages,
when society had assumed that form,
among the people of whom I speak,

which the oldest poetry and tradition have brought down to us.

We shall hereafter see, that the acquisition of religious knowledge while religion itself was clouded with superstition, far from diminishing these visionary modes of thinking, only gave them a more extended basis, and reduced them to a more regulated form; nay, even established them into a confirmed system of general belief.

To recur to the period previous to the light of revelation being in any degree diffused in those obscure abodes of primitive life: During this dim dawn of intelligence, no reason appeared why the spirit, still supposed to exist in a separate state, should not still cherish the pure affections and generous sentiments which made it lovely and beloved, while imprisoned in mortality. To such enthusiastic beings as we have been contemplating, it could not appear unlikely, that spirits

so attached and so lamented, should assume some semblance of their wonted form and countenance. That they should come in the hour of deep sorrow and silent recollection to soothe the solitary mourner, to assist his fond retrospections, and to cheer him with hopes of a future meeting in some state, no longer incident to change or separation. The state of mind thus presupposed, was quite sufficient to give familiar voices to the winds of night, and well-known forms to the mists of the morning. Thus it is most likely that the first apparitions were the offspring of genius and sensibility, nursed by grief and solitude. These phantoms however, which exalted the musings of the superior order of souls, and lent them wings to hover over the obscure abyss of futurity, were not long confined to their visionary solitudes.

On the contrary, they soon became topics of vulgar discussion, and popular he-

lief; the fancied forms which were now supposed to people solitude, added horror to obscurity, and doubtless gave new terrors to guilt; but then they also furnished fresh materials for craft and credulity to work upon, and administered to folly the means of propogating absurdity. True, but we are speaking of the infancy of society, the only state in which it can frequently happen, that the strong mind, either stung by remorse, or instigated by affection, endeavours to pursue the object of its emotions beyond the barriers of visible existence.

It is only in such a state of society that the weak soul shrinks from phantoms of its own creating, or sinks into helpless imbecility under the arts and stratagems to which so wide a field is opened by the implicit belief of supernatural agency.

The worst result of this supernatural agency is the belief of witchcraft, which,

after all, is unjustly blended with the more ancient faith in spectral appearances. This cruel and abject form of superstition, originated with the other corruptions of Christianity in the dark ages, when an ambitious, though degenerated form of religion, extended its temporal influence, by adopting, not only the outward splendour but the dark and mysterious horrors of Pagan superstition.

The intention of the present dissertation on the popular belief, is to elucidate some of the peculiarities of the highland character and manners, as they existed within my own memory, and still continue to exist in some remote corners. To account for the manner in which this belief is so intimately blended with their traditions, their poetry, their customs and even their modes of thinking, it is necessary thus to trace it, to its remote origin. For this purpose, I shall endeavour to shew, how the imaginary connec-

tion betwixt the material and spiritual world grew up from an obscure and visionary dream of solitude, to a regular system of general belief.

That this belief originated in the semi-barbarous, yet heroic times, of which the memorials still float in broken fragments on the waves of tradition, cannot be doubted.

These ancient poems, so sacredly venerated by every genuine highlander, are with them of the first authority.

In these are found the remotest traces of those mystic shades that seemed to hover over the poet in the hour of inspiration, and warn the warrior of the approach of danger. Though the mode in which this universal belief was wont to operate, seems to add confirmation to the questioned authenticity of these pathetic strains of national poetry, yet it is not on them that I would ground my hypothesis, nor from them that I would draw my deductions: This I defer to a

later period, when religion was mingled with the reigning superstitions, and gave them in many instances a salutary direction.

It may be worth while, however, to dwell a little longer among the mists and clouds of those earlier and darker times, to observe what a fine poetical effect this imaginary intercourse was fitted to produce. It is odd enough to observe, in the course of speculation into which we are led by this species of research, that the same cause which gave a fantastic wildness to the waking dreams of those imaginative people, gave form and consistency to the visions of their repose !

What they mused upon, and wished and tried to see all day, appeared distinctly to them at night, for that reason. The train of images that floated in dim succession over their pensive and labouring minds when waking, came ar]

rayed in all the forms and colours of reality to visit their slumbers after this previous preparation. Hence, in time they could hardly distinguish on recollection, "The visions of the night, when "sleep cometh upon man," from the unreal forms which haunted their waking fancy. Whatever effect this might have upon life in the period of society, which might properly be termed the reign of the affections, it gave much pathetic effect to their descriptive poetry, in which this indistinct mixture of day dreams with night visions, is very perceptible.

One of the most petulant, but not least powerful critics who has attacked the authenticity of the most ancient highland poems, is not content with denying their antiquity. He refuses them any claim to poetical merit; and, among many other faults in their composition, is not a little scandalized at the multitude of

ghosts with which those productions abound.

In a faithful picture of the manners of the people, these were as necessary as a great number of mountains would be in a map of this critic's native country. Yet who ever objected to a map of Scotland, that it was disproportionally encumbered with mountains.

As it was said of ancient Rome, that, at the time of the invasion of the Goths it contained as many statues as men, it may be remarked of the ancient highland poetry, that it contained as many shadowy as substantial personages. On the description of night by the five Bards which Macpherson had not even the imputed honour of composing, Gray the poet observes, " that every one of those Bards sees ghosts more or less." Yet he does not seem surprised, or at all disgusted with their abundance. Now, though the whole tribe of Fingalian ts should be proscribed and hunted

down by caitiff critics as phantoms of the eighteenth century, numberless shades of remote antiquity and unquestioned authenticity will remain to prove the picturesque and pathetic effects of such appearances, upon minds prepared to "hold each strange tale devoutly true."

In the death of Gaul, a poem of singular merit and undoubted antiquity, the hero is described, as being by some accident left alone in the island of F'Fruine, a horrid appellation, meaning "the infernal island," given to that spot, on account of its ferocious and inhospitable inhabitants. The warrior is attacked by a party of these savages, sets his back to a rock, and by his single valour kills many, and repulses the rest. They leave him, however, though seemingly unconquered, pierced with many wounds, some of which soon after prove mortal. His faithful and affectionate spouse, meanwhile, is filled with fear and

anxiety, by his prolonged absence. After a restless night, she falls into a perturbed slumber, but in the dawning has a singular dream.

“ And poets say, that morning dreams are true.”

She sees Gaul with a pale and mournful countenance, standing on the approach that led towards their dwelling. Flying eagerly to meet him, she observes that he stands motionless, and that his limbs on one side, seem to be formed of mist; this last portentous sign of speedy death, alarms and awakes her: a form appearing as gradually dissolving into mist, was a fatal presage of no doubtful meaning.

She snatches up the infant Gaul in her arms, launches instantly into her currach, or small boat, covered with skins, and hastens to the I'Fruine, where as I should have formerly said, the misty form told her she should find her beloved. She just arrives in time to exchange with

her expiring warrior, expressions of exquisite grief and tenderness, to soothe his last moments, and to die upon his bosom. A bard, the friend of the departed, arrives, too late, to his aid ; he, however, celebrates the virtues, and laments the fate of those affectionate and heroic lovers in a beautiful song, invoking the winds of heaven, the waves of the sea, the bards of times to come, and the passing traveller, to mourn over the grave of the lovely and the excellent : He invites the showers of spring to call forth the earliest verdure on the “ Bed of Gaul,” and to clothe the tree that shades the final repose of these lovers, with the freshest foliage, that the birds of swiftest wing and sweetest song, may be attracted to the spot, consecrated by their remains.

This slight sketch gives a very imperfect idea of the effect, which the description of such a dream has on the imagi-

nation of a highlander, familiar to all the wonted results of these misty visions. Dwelling too amidst clouds and storms, torrents and precipices, these grand accompaniments, and appropriate scenery gave double effect to a song of ghostly pathos.

One of this nature occurs in a collection I have seen, which is abundantly ancient, and wonderfully pathetic.

I have not the book beside me, and cannot even remember the name of the hero. The story and its effect on my feelings, however, I perfectly recollect.

A boat is returning with some warriors from an expedition to Lochlin, and through the darkness of a tempestuous winter night, attempts to reach the coast of Argyleshire.

A young hero standing near the prow, is disturbed and threatened by the apparition of a Norwegian chief whom he had slain in battle. This spectre being arrayed in complete armour, and not ap


pearing like the shadowy forms of fleet
ing mist, that usually haunted the tem-
pestuous blasts, the young warrior was hur-
ried on by an impulse of indignation, to
aim his spear at the seeming chief.
While he plunged, as he thought, his
weapon into the unresisting shade, he
lost his balance in the effort, and sunk
into the waves unseen by his companions,
whose attention was occupied in conduct-
ing with much labour, their boat through
the surge. They proceeded to some dis-
tance before they missed their friend, whom
they lamented with hopeless sorrow, as
swallowed up by the waves. They had
however passed very near a small islet,
perhaps one of the Orcades, which the
fury of the storm, and the darkness of
the night, had prevented their seeing.
The chief for some little time, with the
assistance of his spear, floated on the sur-
face. He was presently raised up on an
enormous billow, which threw him upon

a *claddich* or flat pebbly strand. Though stunned by the violence of the surge, he has strength enough to climb a rocky shelf, and there, languid and mournful, waits for the dawn, which brings him no hope or comfort. The account given by the solitary chief, of his sufferings and situation is very different from what we meet with in the poems of the Fingalian age, in which the descriptions rarely descend to minuteness, the great leading features only of scenery, or of sentiment, being brought into view. On the contrary, Cowper himself, could we suppose him in a similar situation, could not paint the scene, or the feelings of horror, anxiety, and lassitude, succeeding each other in his mind, with more minute fidelity, and more lively truth of colouring. He describes the barrenness of this desolate islet, where he merely supported life by the aid of a few shell-fish, gathered in the clefts of the rocks, the short and

gloomy days of a hyperborean winter, and the long and mournful nights of weary vigilance, in which every short slumber was haunted by images of

“ The cold, the faithless, and the dead.”

Could he have indulged in peaceful musings the recollections of Suilmath, the maid of his love, his condition would have been more tolerable: Could he have sung undisturbed the praise of his absent fair one, his soul, which seemed formed to delight in “ concord of sweet sounds,” might have been soothed by the melody of song: But it was the peculiar misfortune of this hard-fated lover, to suffer the privations, without tasting the quiet of solitude. The whales and the sea-fowl night and day disturbed him with endless turbulence and clamour. The former drove the fish in shoals before them, and with their bellowing and



spouting kept up a perpetual agitation; the latter, hovering in countless multitudes of various species, over the shoals of fish, driven by the whales on shallow banks, and into little openings of the island, darkened the air, and deafened him with ceaseless clamour.

The sun he never beheld in this gloomy sojourn : During its short and sickly progress through the chill and cloudy atmosphere, its obtuse rays never reached his drear abode : if the moon at times burst forth with transient lustre, it merely shewed the incessant agitation of turbulent waves, and the white and restless wings of screaming sea-fowl.

Thus estranged from every pleasurable sensation, from quiet, and even from hope, this forlorn exile wandered forth on the stormy beach, on one of the darkest, saddest days he had yet encountered.

The whistling blasts, discordant cries,

and watery tumults, us usual, formed a dismal concert round.

On a sudden, all seemed stilled at once. The elementary strife, the spouting whales, and clanging birds were hushed into profound silence. The melody of a sweet and well-known voice, accompanied by the exquisite tones of an unseen harp, that seemed hovering in the air above him, filled him with speechless wonder and delight: "Come," it seemed to say, "come to the home of thy youth, to the dwelling of thy fathers; why lingers my warrior on the storm-beat isle far from his faithful Suilmatha?" The song was continued with much eloquent tenderness, soliciting the return of the chief, and expressing the sorrow which his absence had occasioned to his beloved. It is interrupted, however, by a chorus of virgins, who invite Suilmatha back to the windy hills of her native land, where the shades of her kindred

await her, and forbid her to linger longer in the gloomy isle of the strangers: The lover continues, “ the heavenly music passed away, and left me dark, and
“ lonely, and sorrowful: the voice of my beloved sounded faint in distant clouds.
“ Again, I saw nought around me, but the
“ stormy beach and echoing rocks; again,
“ the mingled clamour arose, and the
“ eagle, the ospray, and the sea-mew,
“ rushed fearless by me to their prey. But
“ my soul sunk within me, for I knew it
“ was the music of the departed; I had
“ heard the virgins of other times call
“ Suilmatha to the clouds of our hills, and
“ I knew she had mourned for my absence,
“ but would never more rejoice of my return.”

In spring, the kindred of the warrior, warned by a dream of his forlorn state, go to bring him from the place of his retreat, and inform him that Suilmatha, coming to meet his bark on its return,

and not finding him among his companions had sat daily on the shore, and pined away, and died with grief, &c. &c.

Thus the ghosts, with which the dreams, the tales, and the songs of the highlanders so much abounded, were generally these conjured up by affection, and came like "angels sent on errands full of love," to warn or soothe the survivors.

This army of ghosts, that constantly hovered round those that mourned for them, and kept alive both their affection and their enthusiasm, had a twofold effect upon the general character of the people. It was favourable to courage, as death, which did not put an end to existence, and re-united them to their departed friends, could have nothing very terrible in it: and it strengthened attachment, because the deceased were not only ever present to the memory, but supposed to be often obvious to the senses.

The beloved object, who not only dwelt in the soul of the mourner, but seemed ever hovering round, with fond impatience, to watch the moment of re-union, became, if possible, more endeared than ever.

Whatever lifts the mind above objects merely of sense, enlarges the conceptions, and exalts the general character. In exploring the habits of thinking among what we call barbarous nations, we shall always find more of savage virtue, and stronger individual attachment, where departed souls are believed to re-visit, on particular occasions, their surviving friends. In fact, we never find the appearance of spirits an article of belief, but where their immortality is also accredited. The existence of separate spirits in a state, either of enjoyment or suffering, which totally removes them from all connection with mortality, is an ar-

title of religious faith, far beyond the reach of the uncultured mind.

The soul in such circumstances, either clings to the spirit of the departed, as something by which it is loved and remembered, or with brute insensibility, forsakes all care and thought of it.

Thus, I think it appears pretty evident, that the state which I have been describing, may be justly termed the reign of the affections. Ambition and avarice have little room to operate, and self-denying habits enable individuals to sacrifice their comfort and interest, for those they love, without feeling severe privation, whilst mutual dependance becomes a source of mutual endearment.

Yet the reign of the affections was by no means productive of that peace and meekness which might be supposed to result from such a principle of action.

Let no one trust much to the virtues of impulse. If these knew any bounds

—if they were regulated and moderated in their operation by any rational controul, we should indeed find this condition of life, worthy of all the encomiums bestowed on the savage state, by one* whose abundant self-conceit and caprice made the necessary restraints of regulated society incompatible with the irritable sickness of ungoverned sensibility. The virtues of mere impulse never stop where they ought, either in communities or individuals, who give themselves up to their guidance. Their excess, on the contrary, often produces consequences the very opposite to what might be expected.

The reign of the affections, in the infant state of society, to which I advert, produces in its excess, the fiercest cruelty and the bitterest revenge. These affections never extend beyond the kin-

* Rousseau.

kindred or the tribe, who indeed are all accounted kindred. And in exact proportion to the fervour of these attachments, was the resentment raised by any attempt, in the slightest degree, to injure the objects of them.

What has been said of the immutability of Oriental customs, is, in a great degree, applicable to those of the highlanders.

Wherever they remain in undisturbed possession of their own language, and the prejudices connected with it, they think and act pretty much as they would have done a thousand years ago, unless where restrained by religion.

A creature impelled, in some instances, to do what is morally wrong, from the excess of fond attachment or laudable feeling, does still appear noble and amiable, no doubt, in comparison of the habitually depraved, or the sordid sensualist. Yet, if I am injured or de-



prived, by rash resentment, (or what the perpetrator may esteem generous revenge,) of my best friend, or most beloved child, it is no consolation to me, that it was not by a deed of determined villainy, but of mistaken honour, that I suffered this misfortune.

The virtues of mere impulse, like the virtues of a German tragedy, are very apt to lead those who are under their sole guidance, into situations that admit only of a choice of evils, and create a perplexity in the mind, fatal to the precise distinction of right from wrong.

Thus, during the period which I have thought fit to stile the reign of the affections, the blind and devoted attachment with which a man loved his relations, his tribe, and, above all, his chief, seemed to deprive him of all moral perception, where his (the chief's) interest, his honour, or even his caprice and resentment was concerned. The very intense-

ness of a man's love to his kindred seemed to kindle the flames of hatred to his enemies.

To this principle may be traced those fatal feuds, which, in after ages, became so exasperated by fierce retaliation. These were carried so far, as to stigmatize a people, naturally brave and generous, with the character of horrid cruelty: Yet, while their fury blazed so fiercely against the enemies of their clan, they were kind and compassionate, not only to the most unworthy individual of their own tribe, but to all who came within their reach, of those who were in alliance with them. Even to unarmed individuals of the tribes they most hated, if chance threw them in their way, they were generous and indulgent, and particularly so to strangers, who sought no settlement, but merely sojourned among them.

The superstition which heightened their affection to their friends, even to a pitch of extravagance, produced the same effect in exalting the fervour of their indignation. The "Sean Dana" (ancient poems) are full of instances, in which the spirit of the departed came sadly to his surviving friend, shewed the wound in his breast, and invoked him, by all that was dear and sacred in their past affection, to revenge his death.

Such, no doubt, were the lively dreams suggested by sorrow and resentment, and their fatal consequences seldom concluded with the death of the aggressor. Thus ardent love, unrestrained in its effects, produced the fruits of deadly hatred, as might be shewn in many instances, which I cannot here enumerate.

I shall next endeavour to point out the influence which the belief of spec-

tral appearances had on popular opinion, in a more advanced period, when it was blended with religious faith, and, in some measure, considered as essential to piety.

ESSAY V.

The Influence of Superstition, when combined with Religion, and rendered, in some degree, subservient to the imperfect sense of it which then prevailed.

“ Of solemn visions, and repeated dreams,
“ That hint pure thoughts, and warn the favoured soul
“ For future trial, fated to prepare.”

I THINK I have satisfactorily shewn, that the period of society which I have stiled the reign of the affections, though productive of high sentiments of tenderness and generosity, was necessarily sanguinary and unsettled. There can, indeed, be no medium in either the vices or virtues of impulse. And, with re-

gard to the established principles of clanship, though these do not depend upon immediate impulse, yet are they so constructed, that the conduct, which is accounted virtuous, with regard to friends, becomes vicious, where it applies to those who are not so.

No long chain of reasoning, or probable foresight of remote consequences, can take place in this early state, where strong and deep feeling of present injury or benefit, glory or shame, intercept the view of future results.

In a more advanced period of mental culture, though more enlarged views might, in some degree, obtain, and though the light of religion began to dawn upon the obscurity of opinion, that light continued to be so imperfect, that superstition mingled with, and accommodated itself to it.

Those unreal appearances which, still in this improved state, held their ground

in those visionary regions, were not so pernicious in their effects, as might be supposed.

Such things ought not to be believed by those whom cultivated reason, and enlightened religion, have raised above the childhood of the faculties: By those who possess no share of a creative fancy, they cannot be believed, for an opposite reason: Yet the same implicit manner of talking after others, which makes very silly people triumph in all the superiority, and repeat by rote all the arguments against immateriality, as far as it deceives or affects our senses;— these very people, had they been bred among the mountains, would have been shuddering slaves to the grossest superstition. This class of persons, destined by Nature to live by borrowing, would have been full as ready to borrow ready-made spectres in a highland glen, as

they are to repeat ready-made opinions in an enlightened society.

To those born to be deceived, the best thing that can happen is a salutary, or, at any rate, harmless deception.

He who is only afraid to enter a dark room, is no just subject for contempt to him who does not fear to wander into the cheerless gloom of infidelity, or plunge into the fearful obscurity of an unknown state of existence, without one ray to lighten, or to cheer the "formless infinite."

The untutored mind, which believes more than reason or revelation will warrant, concerning the world unseen, is often misled by the excess of imagination and sensibility! Those who, on the contrary, assuming to be "wise beyond what is written," believe nothing that cannot be sensibly demonstrated, often owe their blind apathy regarding things.

beyond the reach of sense, to a defect in both.

Those, however, to whom the culture of mind is assigned, will find it much easier to lop off exuberances, than to supply defects. He, to whose awakened fancy, solitude instantly recalls the departed spirits of those whom he either loved or feared while living—

“ To whom, in every wind, some spirit calls,

“ And more than echoes talk along the walls,”

is certainly a weak and wild enthusiast; much of the little comfort that life affords, and all the peace of solitude, must be lost to such a sensitive and visionary being: Yet whatever the victim of superstitious terror may be doomed to endure of unreal suffering, still we cannot suppose him a suitable agent for the commission of a solitary crime, and should be less afraid to meet him in a

wood, than the fearless infidel, who never doubts.

“That, when the brains are out, the man is dead.”

Indeed, the consequences of *over* and *under* belief are completely obvious, where the prevalence of either is distinctly marked.

In the highlands, where superstition reigned paramount, surrounded by awful, yet (for that form of life) salutary terrors, no people seemed more regardless of life, or set it to hazard on lighter occasions. To revenge an injury offered to the meanest of their own clan, or even to protect the most unworthy of them from just punishment, a highlander would combat against odds, with ferocious obstinacy. If he assisted in taking a prey from his hereditary foe, the Lowland Scot, or from some adverse tribe, it was a point of honour, should

he be pursued, to fight till the last drop of his blood, for the plunder he had thus atchieved. And, at the command of his chief, he felt no scruple to combat with enemies, where the cause of aggression was unknown.

In all this, he was supported by the custom of his ancestors; and had, as he thought, a clear conscience, never being disturbed by the spirits of those so fairly slain, where his own life was risked in the combat. But of a murder, there is scarce an instance in the history of a clan: By a murder, I mean, what they would consider as such—suddenly and secretly taking away life, from motives either of revenge or avarice.

The very imperfect Christianity which but dimly enlightened the clans, anterior to the last century, and the salutary dread of being haunted by the spirit of the deceased, did more to prevent secret assassination, than regular laws, and a

nominal form of religion, have ever attained to, in wealthier countries, considered as more enlightened.

Whatever tragical effects might be produced by the fury of exasperated affection, kindled, like the wrath of Achilles, by the loss of its darling object, whatever frenzy of resentment might be excited by the infringement of some point of family honour concerning all the clan, or whatever outrages might be sanctioned by the implicit obedience of those clans to their prince or chief, as in the days of Robert Bruce, or of Montrose; still, the individual highlander, nurtured by poetry, in the highest degree tender and heroic, enlightened by the wisdom, and inspired by the valour of a long line of remembered ancestors, was a humane, courteous, and even chivalrous character, whose worst national faults had their origin in a kind of savage vir-

tue. He was, in the mean time, despised by strangers, because they did not understand him; and he hated strangers, because they despised him, while his proud spirit rose superior to the contempt which he did not deserve.

The different forms that religion assumed, when it began to be deeply felt in both districts, had its influence in keeping up an alienation between the highland and lowland Scots.

It is no disrespect to the vital spirit and renovating power of religion to say, that the popular mind, when newly enlightened, is apt, in many instances, to degenerate into excesses unsuitable to the spirit of that faith, which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.”

The religion of the highlanders, then, an unlettered people, was consequently tinged with the lofty and tender enthusiasm so blended with their habits of

Thinking. It was also mingled with superstitions all their own, and entirely distinct from those of Popery. That mode of worship, however, in a kind of mutilated form, prevailed, and does still prevail in many districts; and the episcopal persuasion, which best suited their political prejudices; in many more.

As the reformation of Scotland was forced by the middling and lower classes upon those above them, it was not that implicit and blind compliance with superior power; or even with superior knowledge, which first induced this beneficial change in other countries.

The Scriptures, once laid open to the people at large, were their daily study and delight. Their pastors, renouncing all prospect of worldly advantage, for the good of souls, proved the sincerity of their profession, by an austere contempt for worldly things.

In the unsettled state which succeed-

ed the reformation, during the cruel wars between king's men and queen's men, and the tumultuary conflicts which agitated a long and feeble minority, civil strife produced its wonted effect of shewing all the depravity and deformity of the human mind in the strongest light. All that remained of integrity or principle in the nation, turned abhorrent from the sight, and took shelter from corruption and degeneracy in the sanctity of a religion purely spiritual, which held out no rewards to its ministers, but those promised to the meek, to the pure in heart, and to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

In this religion, which plainly told them, that in this world they should have tribulation, those who despised its allurements, and were wearied of its deceptions, sought for that peace which the world has not to bestow. That their search was not generally unsuc-

cessful, their purity of life and doctrine, their patience in suffering, and the influence which their instructions and example have had upon their posterity, sufficiently testify.

It would be hard, however, to deny, that, embittered as the spirits of many of our first reformers were, both by the corruptions which they witnessed, and the persecution which they suffered, their charity became limited, and their views confined.

Of the narrowness of their views in after times they gave too plain a proof in endeavouring to enslave the conscience of their sovereign. And, in expecting with inexcusable confidence, a visible interposition of the divinity in their favour, till they were too late convinced "that those who take the sword *may* perish by the sword."

During this cloudy and disturbed state of things, the study of theology in its most

abstruse points, was the favourite, if not sole intellectual pursuit, among even the lowest class of believers. To spirits embittered by persecution, and narrowed by an utter ignorance of human affairs, as they are generally conducted, this passion for polemics, certainly led to a degree of bigotry, and spiritual pride. So satisfied were those good, though not liberal men, with having broke the shackles of implicit belief, that they made war against every relic of ancient prejudice as the blackest crime. Imagination with all its under-working powers, was entirely banished from the precincts of presbyterianism. So far from seeing visions, the child of fancy was not even permitted to dream dreams, in the least prophetic or significant.

These were all declared to be, "visitings of Satan." Yet they had warnings and inspirations of their own in many instances, but they could not endure the

idea of dogs in the least sharing of those crumbs, as they considered such glimpses of intelligence. These warnings, however, were only in rare instances; for with them, reason was indeed

“ A lone baptized, alone allowed to touch things sacred.”

This tendency to bigotry could scarce, from the nature of things at the time, be avoided. A sober, steady, and laborious peasantry, fixed to one spot, and accustomed to one circle of ideas, and that not a very wide one, though they held with a firm grasp, the principles of rectitude which they inherited, and those of piety which they were taught, were great strangers to the finer exertions of the mind, and wilder creations of the fancy: Far from possessing them themselves, they did not well comprehend them in others.

This is evident from the old Scots

poetry, in which all the fine fictions and heroic legends of the highlanders are mentioned with supreme contempt, though at the same time, in such a manner as shews, that their existence, (which it is so fashionable to deny,) was well known to the lowlanders in very early times.

This must have been, by means of the clergy, the only mode of communication then existing; as oil and water never kept more sedulously separate, than these two nations, as they may well be stiled.

Thus it clearly appears, that if the popular religion of the highlanders did, and still does retain a portion of enthusiasm, that of the lowlanders was not free from a shade of bigotry, such as gave very little allowance to inevitable ignorance or prejudice. The rooted enmity between these two extremes in religion has ever existed, and will ever continue to exist. He, whose faculties are en-

gaged in establishing and guarding points of doctrine, and he, whose heart is melted and engrossed by pious feelings, both, if sincerely desirous of worshipping in spirit and truth, perform their duty in different ways, according to the capacity and different opportunities assigned to them.

“ Though thousands at his bidding speed,

“ Those also serve who only stand and wait.”

MILTON.

But those differences, occasioned in a great measure by temperament and the influence of local habit (which for ought we know, superior intelligences may regard with the same curiosity, as we do the variety in gems or plants,) produce no little dislike and prejudice among the parties so differing.

The austere peasants of the country bordering upon the highlands, looked upon those mountaineers, with their dreams,

their omens, their ghosts, and their fairies, as little better than heathens. The highlanders, again, branded the impiety of the lowlanders, who tempted providence by going out alone at midnight, and believed not, as they thought, in either angel or devil. With an appellation of comprehensive reproach, they called them *Whigs*.

This was by no means among them a term solely appropriated to political difference. It might perhaps mean, in a confined sense, the adherents of King William, by far the greatest caitiff in the list of highland delinquency; but it meant much more: It was used to designate a character made up of negatives: One who had neither ear for music, nor taste for poetry;—no pride of ancestry;—no heart for attachment;—no soul for honour: One who merely studied comfort and conveniency, and was more anxious for the absence of po

sitive evil, than the presence of relative good: A Whig, in short, was what all highlanders cordially hated,—a cold, selfish, formal character.

Very many of the western highlanders, were, in compliance with the supremacy of their chiefs, Whigs, according to our acceptation of the term, and good Presbyterians upon the whole. But even those had store of ghosts and visions, whom they kept like Teraphim in their secret chambers, and were afraid to acknowledge, yet unwilling to resign.

In order to investigate the manner in which those darling superstitions were cherished through all changes and improvements, entwined with their religious belief, and by degrees reduced into a regular system, it will be necessary to take a view of the first introduction of Christianity into the highlands.

The first cause that operated powerfully and widely in corrupting Christianity was undoubtedly the vanity and worldly-mindedness of those who, attempting to teach others what they had not rightly learned themselves,—prided in converting numberless heathens, when the faith they professed was established by human laws.

When the professors of Christianity were invested with the imperial purple, and showered wealth and honours on those who joined in their worship, the church nourished in her own bosom enemies more dangerous than the most cruel persecutors, whose power was only temporal, and who could not kill the soul. These were the weak and vain, as well as the crafty and ambitious.

Persons of both these descriptions, from an eager wish to make many converts, not only received many more into

the church, than they bestowed time and pains in instructing, but, in order to induce greater numbers of the wealthy and distinguished heathens to join in their communion, assimilated the worship of the Divinity, to the magnificent ceremonial of Pagan superstition.

Now that the great and the distinguished saw worldly advantages likely to accrue from embracing the Christian mode of worship, they were willing to come into the church, provided purity of heart and life, simplicity of worship, and self-denied humility were not accounted indispensable, and that they might retain their pomp, their luxury and even their idols under other names.

Whilst

“ St Peter's keys, some Christen'd Jove ador'd,”

the spirit of the old religion seemed, in

many instances, to linger under the form of the new one.

Amidst all this deception and corruption there were still some who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and who wept in secret over this accommodating mode of making converts.

Among this number, charity, as well as gratitude leads us to include these holy men who first carried the light of the Gospel into these remote regions, where there were none of the attractions that corrupt or delude. Here, if their hope had been only of this world, they would have been of all men most miserable.

It is not easy at this time to ascertain who they were, who first disseminated Christianity through these regions. But as they were so remote, and shut out from the world, that nothing less than the most industrious and fearless zeal could penetrate into them, and so void

of all attraction from worldly motives, that none but the self-denied and disinterested could think of such an exile, there is every reason to suppose, that this great work was achieved by holy men truly such; and the event shewed that they had all the success which was to be expected, both from the purity of their motive, and the peculiar adaptation of the soil, they were to cultivate, to the "precious seed" which they were to entrust to it.

To enter minutely into the details connected with this, would be to write a book, and no small one, on a subject of far superior interest to that which I have undertaken to illustrate. But for this purpose, I have neither leisure, nor the necessary documents. Nor do I think that any industry could procure at this late period, the proper authorities to give connection and authenticity to such a detail. Neither will I

indulge the fondness of Highland partiality in any endeavour to revive the departed glories of Iona, the sacred isle of the west, from whence the rays of science and true religion so long emanated. And which was the acknowledged Cynosure of the north of Europe, when all besides was dark and formless. I shall only remark what immediately connects with the subject in hand ; That the sublime truths there inculcated were taught in the Gaelic language ; and that, notwithstanding the poverty and ignorance, perhaps justly imputed to the highlands of Scotland at that period, there are religious establishments of very remote antiquity still remaining in the Hebridean isles.

Among these are inscriptions in the Gaelic language, commemorating ecclesiastics who had officiated in these islands, and no doubt instructed the people in

their own language, which is still legible upon their tombs.

Among these is the monument of Anna Donelach, (Anne M'Donald) who at a very remote period was abbess of a nunnery in one of the isles.

The language too is enriched with many devout hymns, which appear to have been preserved unwritten from very early times. And I have seen in one of the collections of old poetry, a dialogue, very curious in its kind, between two young maidens, one of whom is determined to dedicate her life to recluse devotion, and the other argues in favour of active duties, and the pleasures of liberty.

The devotee very shrewdly remarks, that her opponent's liberty will soon end in chagrin at being neglected, or else in the severest of all slavery, that which will subject her to the arbitrary will of a lordly spouse. The other asserts her

resolution to remain free; and goes on to give a most pastoral and poetical description of the life she means to lead, surrounded by the grateful and affectionate flocks and herds, which her kindness and care had attached to her, and the alternate pleasures and comforts which she should derive from her summer excursions to the wild and lofty shealings, and her winter abode in her warm and sheltered cottage. Adding, that from thence, her prayers and hymns might ascend and be accepted, as well as from the sanctified recesses of the chapel.

The votress elect, retorts with great scorn on the contemptible taste which could prefer the sylvan scenes among the summer grazings, or the domestic quiet of the wintry cottage, to the views of paradise opened to those who have renounced the world, in the undisturbed tranquillity of the monastic cell. She pities too her wretched taste that could

think of spending so much of her life among the perpetual and unmusical lowing of cows, and bleating of sheep, while she herself at early dawn, at dusky evening, and in the solemn hour of midnight, should have her senses delighted, and her soul exalted by the charms of sacred melody. Margaret, her opponent, does not fail to remark the dull monotony of a life of still and unvarying regularity.

The indignant nun pours forth a rhapsody of reproach upon the common pursuits of life, and of compassion on its wonted calamities. All that she says on this subject, though very true, has little claim to originality.

The answer of Margaret seems to imply that in a state "loveless, joyless, unendeared," safety from spiritual and temporal danger is dearly bought, by quenching the light of youth, and cutting off the means of doing active good.

The friends do not convince each

other, but part amicably with a kindly exchange of pity and respect. The votary tenderly compassionates the dangers and sorrows which she foresees in the path of her companion ; Margaret regards with veneration that self-devotion which she cannot emulate, and solicits the prayers of the devotee in her progress through the dangers she had foretold to her.

I must here abruptly recur to a circumstance which I have omitted to mention in its proper place. I spoke formerly of “ the peculiar adaptation of “ the soil they were to cultivate to the “ precious seed,” which holy men were to entrust to it.

I used this figure, in speaking of the first planting of Christianity among this people, in order to illustrate the facility with which they received devout impressions. For this known fact, as far

as it was influenced by exterior circumstances, I am now about to account.

The meek and humble doctrines which we profess to believe, were to the Greeks foolishness; because they had by subtile and erroneous speculations, wrought up their minds to a pitch of self-conceit and worldly wisdom, to which the sublimity and simplicity of these doctrines were equally unsuited. "Much of the soul they talked, but all awry." Though they could not by "searching find out God;" though they could not by mere reasoning pierce into these secret councils, which Revelation was in some measure to unfold, they had reasoned so acutely on "fate, foreknowledge, and free-will," and had soared in the wilds of speculation so far beyond the reach of vulgar intellect, that it was incomprehensible to them, how the path that they had mist, should be revealed "to babes and sucklings," to the poor, the illiterate,

and the humble, who were chosen from the lowest obscurity, to confound the pride of science, and reveal the light of truth. If this religion was by the sublimity of its doctrines, placed beyond the reach of self-important science, the simplicity of its precepts, the humility and self-denial it inculcated, and that perpetual hostility with the passions and the pride of life, which were essential to its truth and reality, were as far below the views and pursuits of those who only lived to be admired, and who cultivated wisdom, not as the path to peace, but to distinction,

To all such as I describe, whether Greeks, or others, the wisdom of the gospel must appear foolishness. I have already observed, that in the imperial city, where a false religion was invested with all the splendour and magnificence that power and wealth could bestow, and where the vanquished world had

yielded up all the treasures of art and genius, to deck the objects of popular idolatry. The heart was too much hardened by the possession of wealth, and the exercise of power; and the imagination too much dazzled and engrossed by the glitter of pageantry, and the pomp of ceremony, to yield a ready assent to doctrines purely spiritual; or to strip religion of its ornaments and rites, which, to the vain and sensual, had been her chief attraction.

We have already seen, how the lustre which surrounded the church in the days of her darkest adversity became dim, when she was subjected to the harder trial of prosperity. In the primitive ages, whoever joined that persecuted community, did it at the risk, not of death only, but that contempt and opprobrium, which to many spirits are far more terrible.

To conquer this, a deep conviction of the truth, and lively hope of immortality:

were necessary ; and poverty was one of the least evils to be encountered in the path of righteousness. After “ those, of whom the world was not worthy,” had sealed their testimony, and cemented with their blood an unshaken foundation for the wide fabric of Christianity, a church established and connected with worldly power and prosperity, opened her gates to receive those who were willing to forsake the objects of their idolatrous worship, for that religion which was proffered by their sovereign, and to which the laws now afforded a sanction.

Here was an opportunity not to be lost ; for the new teachers of religion, whom safety and ambition had allured into a wealthy and predominating church. And now it was seen how a heart, unchanged by real penitence, clings to its idols.

Thousands of nominal Christians

flocked to a church, which, to attract their senses and amuse their imagination, was decked out with the frippery of that which they had in appearance forsaken. Far from being in reality changed, they found among saints and martyrs, substitutes for the subordinate deities, whom they had only seemed to renounce ; and in the “ dreadful pomp of sacrifice,” something to fill up the space occupied in the mind by the hecatombs and victims of antiquity.

While these partial and deceitful conversions were filling Rome with new splendour, and sincere believers with new sorrow, those who carried the glad tidings of salvation to barbarous nations, whose hearts were hardened by brutal ignorance and ferocious customs, were still in many instances victims to their humane zeal. Not so, by any testimony or tradition remaining, those, who first brought the doctrines of life and immor-

talities to the knowledge of the Celtic tribes. These appear, even at that period to have been barbarous, only in name.

The cultivation derived from poetry and tradition, which I have so often insisted upon as calculated to enlarge the mind and soften the manners, they possessed in no common degree.

The doctrines which inculcated mutual kindness and forbearance were far less hostile to their habits, than to those of any uncivilized nation we have ever heard of: and the immortality of the soul, as brought to light in the gospel, was a glad confirmation of that belief in a separate state, which had always a kind of dim existence among them, and which was confirmed and strengthened by the apparitions of the departed, so often conjured up by fear or fancy.

From the defect of literature in these mountaineers, and the great difficulty in travelling among them, there is little

room to suppose, that there was for a very great while any regular establishment of clergy. Once converted, they were not likely to relapse. There is room to suppose, that the first arguments, or rather persuasions, by which they were induced to embrace Christianity, were more addressed to the heart than the understanding ; and with good reason.

It is inconceivable for us who know so many things by rote, and have from our infancy been accustomed to hear reasoning, or something that looks like it, to imagine how difficult it is to make a person in this primitive state comprehend abstract reasoning of any kind. It is not merely that they do not understand the thing in itself. The signs of ideas are wanting. You can but speak to them in their own language, and that affords no terms to express abstract ideas.

To their understanding then, the

appeal could not be made; or, to speak more distinctly, to their judgment: But however waste these faculties lay, the heart was cultivated, and was the dwelling of warm affections and good propensities; and not the less so, from a felt conviction of the continued existence of all that was dear to it. To the heart, then, the road was obvious and direct.

Those who could not, in the least, follow the chain of abstruse disquisition, (and, to such minds, all disquisition is abstruse,) could nevertheless be made sensible of the depravity of their nature, and of the necessity of newness of heart and life, to fit them for appearing in the presence of Infinite purity. They could feel, too, the deepest and most devout sense of what they owed to Him who loved them, and gave himself for them.

As I have remarked, on a former occasion, the habits and opinions of these

people are far less liable to change, than these of any other we are acquainted with.

Their ideas, indeed, are in a manner embalmed in their language, which has been long stationary, and is not liable to change. And we find, by a comparison of their sacred poetry, of early date, which still exists, with their present religious opinions, that though their imperfect instruction, their want of literature, and the defect in their language, which I have already noticed, have kept them ignorant of many speculative points, yet there are no people, on whose minds the great leading truths of Christianity are more deeply impressed, or none who have greater aptitude to devotional feeling.

Indeed, wherever there are any pains taken to light up that enthusiasm, which is so native to their temperament, with a coal from the altar, no more suitable

material can be found to feed the fire of devotion, than the simplicity and fervour of their minds.

This simplicity of Christianity was never generally, far less entirely corrupted in the highlands. The Catholic religion, no doubt, prevailed there, as well as in other parts of the kingdom, and has, perhaps, lingered longer in some corners; but it is very questionable, whether all the corruptions of Popery were ever known or heard of among them.

Scotland, in general, long resisted the first encroachments of Roman tyranny, particularly the celibacy of the priests.

In the highlands, there is reason to believe, that the simplicity of doctrine was still longer preserved, as there was no gainful harvest to be reaped there from corruption; and as the teachers of religion, after it was first established a-

mong them, must have been the natives of their own country.

This last conclusion almost amounts to certainty; as none other could be sufficiently masters of their language to instruct them in it.

The superstitions of the country were not much disturbed by the introduction of a new mode of belief. To these simple teachers, who had, from childhood, been familiar with them, they did not appear adverse to the belief of a future state.

Instead, then, of hastily rooting out these opinions, from the influence of which, they were not themselves entirely free, they endeavoured, by grafting upon them several forms of devotion, to disarm them of every evil tendency, and make them, in some instances, produce

“ Pious awe, and fear to have offended.”

These primitive teachers did not add very much to the stock of superstition which they found existing. They either did not know, or did not inculcate many of the distinguishing doctrines of the Romish church. Though saints were revered, and chapels dedicated to them, it does not appear that they worshipped them of old: and the only trace remaining of invocations to the Virgin, is the custom of naming her, in the way of exclamation, when a horse stumbles:—This, from mere habit, is done unconsciously.

Those that remained Catholics in the highlands, after the reformation, were more fully instructed in these respects, because it became necessary to point out to them the main points of dispute betwixt the receding and advancing church. Yet still the supremacy of the Pope, and many other points of doctrine peculiar

to that church, are little understood or thought of among them.

We have now traced the progress, and, in some measure, described the form of the highland superstitions, as the minds and conduct of the inhabitants were influenced by them, in their original state. What effect they produced, when mingled with imperfect, and often erroneous notions of religion, is next to be considered.

In doing this, I am sure to encounter the frown of the well-meaning, but prejudiced zealot; and the “dread laugh” of the hard-hearted infidel.

There are, however, lovers of nature and of truth, who find gratification in tracing the progress and effects of opinion, upon minds which have neither been improved nor sophisticated; who love to see the process by which the raw materials of belief take their destined form, and watch its effects upon action.

I shall think, with some satisfaction, on the accidents of life, which have opened to my view this "invisible world" of the imagination, if it enables me to gratify a curiosity so useful and so rational, or even to afford a transient degree of amusement to a class of readers, with feelings so congenial to my own.

It may appear somewhat paradoxical to affirm, that even in the period of which I speak, the belief in spectral appearances had, upon the whole, a good moral tendency: and this, notwithstanding the bewildering effects which, in some instances, it might produce.

This is not a merely speculative opinion; but the result of diligent observation and much reflection. I only contend for the salutary effects of any belief which necessarily implies a future state; where the light that they depended on was but dimly shewn; and where the cultivation of intellect was so

imperfect, that people reasoned merely from facts, or founded their belief on hearsay evidence. This abundant source of terror, fiction, and awful delight which the popular superstition opened to the awakened soul, was not extinguished by the imperfect knowledge of religion existing among the illiterate mountaineers.

Religion, however, set limits to the power of these air-drawn terrors, gave them a new direction, and furnished a remedy for some of the worst evils resulting from them. The scorn with which it is usual now to speak of these impressions, thus directed, does not indicate deep reflection, or much intimacy with the earliest operations of the human mind, far less with that assistance which speculation, in the infancy of science, derived from the imagination and the senses.

This mixture of piety and credulity,

which one knows not whether to call a devout superstition, or a superstitious devotion, in time was so blended with the habits of thinking, and assumed a form so regular and systematical, that it mingled with every concern, and every action of life, in such a manner, that it is scarcely possible to eradicate it by any human means.

It were long and strange to tell all the different forms which superstition assumed; but, in order to go on progressively through the most prominent of them, we shall begin with infancy.

The first danger to be guarded against, then, was the power of fairies, in taking away the infant, or its mother; who were never considered as entirely safe, till the one was baptized, and the other had performed her devotions at some chapel or consecrated place. All the powers of darkness, and even those equivocal sprites, who did good or evil,

as they happened to be inclined, were supposed to yield instantly before the performance of a religious rite, or even a solemn invocation of the Deity.

But, then, the danger was, that one might be carried off in sleep. Sound orthodoxy would object to this,—that the same power guards us waking and asleep. This argument would not in the least stagger a highland devotee. He would tell you, that till these sacred rites, which admit the child, and re-admit the mother into the church, were performed, both were in a state of impurity; which subjected them (the body, not the soul) to the power of evil spirits: and that it was the duty of the friends of such, to watch them during their sleep, that, on the approach of evil spirits, (who never came unseen,) they might adjure them, in the holiest name, to depart: which they never failed to do, when thus repelled. If these vigilant

duties were neglected, the soul of the abstracted person might be saved, but his friends, in the privation they sustained, suffered the due punishment of their negligence of what was at once a duty of affection and of religion.

If, however, they were not able or willing to watch, or wished for a still greater security, the bed, containing the mother and the infant, was drawn out on the floor, the attendant took a Bible, and went thrice round it, waving all the time the open leaves, and adjuring all the enemies of mankind, by the power and virtue contained in that book, to fly instantly to the Red Sea, &c.

After this ceremony had been gone through, all slept quiet and safely: Yet it was not accounted a proof of diligent attachment to have recourse to this mode of securing a night's rest to the watcher.

When the infant was secured by the performance of this hallowed rite from

all risk of being carried away, or exchanged for a fairy, there was still an impending danger, which required the utmost vigilance of mistaken piety to avert. This was not only the well-known dread of an evil eye, which, by a strange coincidence, is to be traced, not only in every country, in the first stages of civilization, but in every age of which any memorials are preserved.

There was, besides this, an indistinct notion, that it was impious and too self-dependant to boast of the health or beauty of any creature, rational or irrational, which seemed to belong to us; but which was not, in fact, a gift, but a loan to be resumed at pleasure, which we ought not to appropriate, far less glory in.

The punishment assigned to boasting of what was not, in fact, our own, or praising it without some qualifying expression, to denote our own inability to preserve it, was a very severe one: No

less than that of leaving the defenceless babe at the mercy of evil eyes and evil spirits, to be instantly deprived of the vigour, or the bloom and symmetry so admired. An infant, in short, was not to be praised at all, without a previous invocation of the Deity. They thought that, in the eyes of Infinite purity, there was only this difference between our best virtues and our worst vices, while we continued self-dependant, that the first werè mingled with error, and the last the consequence of depravity.

Having these true *data* before their eyes, and not being sufficiently acquainted with that rule of life, which gives a safe direction, and sets just limits to this opinion, they drew false or exaggerated conclusions from the premises already mentioned, and mingled them with all the awe, and much of the absurdity of their old belief. Beauty and health, with the good-humour commonly resulting from the latter circum-

stance, are the only topics of the commendation bestowed on infants.

For this reason, it was concluded, that the praise of friends was tinged with vanity, and that of indifferent persons with envy.

There was, in their opinion, a kind of sacredness, investing infant innocence, which our unhallowed passions were not to approach without punishment. We were bound, too, the more, to pray for those who could not perform that duty for themselves.

If you praised a fine child, or even a fine heifer or cow, without the usual prelude, the nurse, or dairy-maid, darting at you a look of indignation, was sure instantly to supply the deficiency with " God save the bairn or the beast." Woe be to you, if any thing happen to either for a week after. Unless you lost all regard for opinion, you found it necessary to comply with this custom.

If it so happened, that you felt a conscientious repugnance to invoking a blessing in mere compliance with ignorant prejudice, you had nothing for it but silently

“ To wonder, with a foolish face of praise.”

This, which, among the more enlightened, is considered very justly, as giving an undue power to evil spirits, is, in their perverted view of things, a sincere intention of

“ Acknowledging the Lord in all his ways.”

The operation of human vanity, or human envy, in bursting the shining bubble of worldly prosperity, was not supposed to be confined to infancy. A highlander's glory and felicity consisted in the extent of his fold, and the number of his family.

He could never have too many chil

children, or too many cows; however great the difficulty might be of rearing the first to maturity, or providing winter fodder for the last. But to parade either one's cows, or one's children, in any unnecessary display, or for a stranger to make any remark on the abundance of them, is by no means safe.

Of this superstition, numberless instances might be given. Of these, the most signalized, which I recollect, derives interest from the royal and beautiful personage concerned in it; it is said to have happened, when Queen Mary made that memorable excursion to the North, which proved so fatal to the Gordons.

She staid for some days at Inverness, in the castle (so well known as the scene of King Duncan's murder) and received there the homage of all the neighbouring gentry and nobility.

There lived at that time in Ross-shire,

a wealthy and powerful family of the name of Monro, whose title I do not remember.

The laird had been attending his sovereign with all due loyalty on her expedition. The lady had twelve sons, and twelve daughters, many of whom were married, or otherwise detached from the family.

She was at much pains, however, in collecting them, wherever they were dispersed, to adorn her train, in the presence of royalty.

The sons were all drest in "Lincoln green," the wonted costume of knights and hunters, and led the procession in gallant array, mounted upon sable steeds. Next, their mother, decked no doubt in her best array, followed, attended by her daughters, attired in white, and mounted on horses of the same colour. This goodly train was ushered into the royal presence, after being duly announced

The Matron, dropping on one knee, made obeisance, and told her sovereign, she had here brought twelve squires and twelve damsels, ready to devote themselves to her service. The Queen started from her seat, overwhelmed with astonishment and admiration, and cried, "Madam, ye sud tak this chaire, ye best deserve it." After this exclamation, the ceremonial was properly adjusted, and the family returned home, enchanted with the grace and loveliness of their accomplished sovereign. It was, however, remarked, that from that day, they were never again seen together, and that this imprudent mother was the sad survivor of the far greater number of the children thus rashly exhibited.

I knew myself, about thirty years ago, a gentleman, the head of an ancient house, who had once been happy in a singularly promising family.

I do not know that I ever saw so

many children together, equally prepossessing in their appearance; some of them indeed were extremely beautiful, and all well disposed, and of good capacity. Several of these died in the spring of life, and others were lost to the family, by being less happily connected than they deserved. Yet as the stain of vice or degradation did not attach to any of them, they could not be properly styled an unfortunate family.

Such it appears they were considered, but the thing was very satisfactorily accounted for.

It was, however, by such means, as never would have entered any head, but that of a highlander. This old gentleman had a friend who, by the death of his children and his wife, had been reduced to a melancholy solitude.

This affliction, his friends did all in their power to soften, by bringing him

among them, and amusing him to the best of their power.

When time had blunted the edge of his sorrow, he came to visit the friend already mentioned, with many other persons, at the time of an annual festival.

After promiscuous dancing had gone on for some time, the father desired his four sons to lead his four daughters to dance, what in that country is called an eightsome reel.

This was his whole family, who all excelled in that exercise, and were much admired by the spectators. The childless father, however, broke out into lamentation, and contrasted the happiness of his friend with his own forlorn state. In short, the vanity of the father, and the envy of the visitor, had such an effect in provoking judgment, that this family never met together again, and were soon after scattered and diminished.

If one were to account for these mis-

perstition to enforce the duty of resignation. The dead very often appeared to the living, both in

“ Waking visions, and repeated dreams, ”

and, with an angry countenance, reproved them for disturbing the sacred rest of the grave, with the excess of their lamentations.

No people suffered more acutely on the death of their relatives; yet, with a Spartan firmness, they exerted themselves to receive their guests cheerfully, while suffering the deepest anguish; and there is no doubt, but the effort which this supposed duty forced them to make, broke in, for the time, on the stillness of mute sorrow.

I knew an elderly woman, who, though of a most ardent and enthusiastic habit of mind, was a person of much sincerity, piety, and fortitude, and con-

dicted her affairs in a manner that shewed spirit and capacity. Her father had come from a distant place, to discharge the office of tutor in a highland family. He became attached to a person who was retained as governess in the same house; and they married and settled in a country, where neither of them had any connections.

I mention this circumstance, to account for the singular and fervent attachment afterwards subsisting between their children. They had two; a boy, and afterwards a girl. The person who told me the story, I am about to relate.

Her mother dying at the time of her birth, her father, a very sensitive and melancholy man, did not long survive her.

The family in which this couple had first met each other, took care of the children.

The boy, who was very promising,

shewed the tenderest attention to his sister; who was three years younger. She looked up to him with unbounded attachment; and they loved each other the better for having no one else to love.

As the youth grew up, his abilities and disposition were so promising, that the gentlemen of the parish took a deep interest in him, and raised a contribution to send him to Aberdeen College.

He was very soon after his arrival, seized with an infectious fever, which proved fatal to him, before his sister heard of his illness.

It is not to be told how much the loss of a beloved object was aggravated by his dying, where he could not be buried with his fathers; and where the mourner could not visit his grave, and bedew it with the offerings of affection. The violence of his sister's grief may be imagined, but the continuance of it, in

unabated force, is more wonderful, as impetuosity generally exhausts itself. But she had no remaining tie ; and her's was the " grief that knew not consolation's name." Night after night she sat up, weeping incessantly, and calling in frantic agony on the beloved name, which was all she had left of what was once so dear to her.

At length, in a waking dream, or very distinct vision, her brother appeared to her in his shroud, and seemed wet and shivering. " Why, selfish creature, said he, why am I disturbed with the impious extravagance of thy sorrow ? " I have a long journey to make through " dark and dreary ways, before I arrive at the peaceful abode, where " souls attain their rest. Till thou art " humble and penitent for this rebellion against the decrees of Providence, " every tear thou sheddest falls on this " dark shroud without drying ; and

“ every night thy tears still more chill
“ and encumber me. Repent, and give
“ thanks for my deliverance from many
“ sorrows.”

This woman, I am certain, entirely believed what she said; nor is it at all wonderful that she should have such a dream. Dreams denote a foregone conclusion; and she would hear numberless stories of frowning apparitions returning to check immoderate sorrow, which might naturally enough, suggest to her young and sensitive mind this vision of terror.

On another occasion, a woman in very humble life, hearing that a person whom she was accustomed to regard as a superior, was inconsolable for the loss of a favourite child, and neglected her duties and friends to abandon herself to unavailing sorrow; she, (the poor woman,) prest boldly in, to give her a lesson of resignation, in gratitude, as she

said, for some kindness she had owed her.

The lesson was very forcible, though simple ; and what may appear very extraordinary when it is considered, that this comforter could not read : many Scriptural arguments were quoted. This, however, is not unusual. *in fact*

These people listen with such avidity to instruction from the pulpit, and lay it up in their minds with such diligence, that one frequently finds more Scriptural knowledge which they have thus caught, retained among them, than with many others to whom the sacred volume is always open.

In the process of her discourse, she illustrated her argument, as those people never fail to do, with tales of apparitions of which two may serve as a specimen.

The first, of a man to whose name and pedigree her hearer was no stran-

ger ; and who had lived about 50 years before in Glen Banchar. Now Glen Banchar, of all places of human habitation, is the most dreary and detached ; and in winter the most stormy and inaccessible.

There was, however, much summer grazing about it ; and its remoteness, and the rocky barriers with which nature had surrounded it, saved from all encroachment the few daring tenants who risked their lives by wintering there. They grew wealthy in cattle ; and as none but themselves understood the art of managing them during the stormy season in that recess, their rent was never heightened ; and they lived in their own way in great plenty and comfort.

One peasant, in particular, whose wealth, wisdom, and beneficence, gave him great sway in this elevated hamlet, was fortunate in all respects but one.

He had three very fine children, who all in succession died after having been weaned, though before they gave every promise of health and firmness. Both parents were much afflicted; but the father's grief was clamorous and unmanly. They resolved that the next should be suckled for two years; hoping by this to avoid the repetition of such a misfortune. They did so, and the child by living longer, only took a firmer hold of their affections, and furnished more materials for sorrowful recollection. At the close of the second year he followed his brothers, and there were no bounds to the affliction of the parents.

There are, however, in the economy of highland life, certain duties and courtesies which are indispensible; and for the omission of which nothing can apologize.

One of those is to call in all their

friends and feast them, at the time of the greatest family distress.

The death of the child happened late in spring, when sheep were abroad in the more inhabited *straths*; but, from the blasts in that high and stormy region, were still confined to the Cot.

In a dismal snowy evening, the man unable to stifle his anguish, went out lamenting aloud, for a lamb to treat his friends with at the late wake. At the door of the cot, however, he found a stranger standing before the entrance.

He was astonished in such a night to meet a person so far from any frequented place. The stranger was plainly attired; but had a countenance expressive of singular mildness and benevolence, and addressing him in a sweet impressive voice, asked him what he did there amidst the tempest. He was filled with awe, which he could not account for, and said, that he came for a lamb.

“ What kind of lamb do you mean to
“ take ?” said the stranger. “ The very
“ best I can find,” he replied, “ as it
“ is to entertain my friends ; and I hope
“ you will share of it.” “ Do your
“ sheep make any resistance, when you
“ take away the lamb, or any distur-
“ bance afterwards.” “ Never,” was
the answer. “ How differently am I
“ treated,” said the traveller, “ When I
“ come to visit my sheep-fold, I take,
“ as I am well entitled to do, the best
“ lamb to myself ; and my ears are filled
“ with the clamour of discontent, by
“ these ungrateful sheep, whom I have
“ fed, watched, and protected.”

He looked up in amaze, but the vision
was fled. He went, however, for the
lamb, and brought it home with alac-
rity. He did more : it was the custom
of these times,—a custom, indeed, which
was not extinct till after 1745, for people

to dance at late wakes. It was a mournful kind of movement, but still it was dancing.

The nearest relation of the deceased, often begun the ceremony weeping, but did, however, begin it, to give the example of fortitude and resignation.

This man, on other occasions, had been quite unequal to the performance of this duty; but at this time, he immediately on coming in, ordered music to begin, and danced the solitary measure appropriate to such occasions.

The reader must have very little sagacity or knowledge of the purport and consequences of visions, who requires to be told, that many sons were born, lived, and prospered afterwards, in this reformed family.

Another tale of wonder came to enforce the duty of submission in such cases, by shewing how mistaken fond parents were, in supposing that death ut-

terly separated them from the objects of their affection.

This was a very old story, the narrator said, much older than the Gle Banchar one. She had heard it from her grandfather, who was assured of the truth of it, by one of the wisest men that ever had been known in the parish of Kingussie.

In this region, people have generally such numerous families, that, by the time they attain old age, both their little property, and their bodily strength is exhausted in working and providing for them. This, however, is but a petty evil, or none at all as they take it.

Children consider it as a duty not incumbent only, but inevitable to provide for their parents. This they do not regard as an exertion or meritorious duty, but merely as the circulation of their blood, or the returns of day and night,

things of course, that never can or will be omitted

A highlander would never thank any one for a compliment on his filial piety. He would stare at such a person, as very ignorant and absurd, and say, "What then should I do? is he not my own father?" This habit of thinking and acting, takes away the sting of dependence, so that to those people, of all others, it is of most consequence to have children, for the comfort of their old age, in the largest sense of the term.

This exordium is necessary for the full understanding of the story told by the wisest man in Kingussie for the benefit of one, whom the relator considered at the time as the foolishest woman in the neighbouring parish. Take it in her own words.—

" There was in Glenfeshie, a poor
" woman, whose husband and children
" had died and left her without sup-

“ port; and so, when she was deprived
 “ of all, she saw nothing better than
 “ to submit to the will of her Master,
 “ and go (with your leave) to ask help
 “ from her neighbours. They were
 “ kind to her, because she was ever
 “ faithful and blameless. But, then, a
 “ year of scarcity came on, and she did
 “ not wish to burden her kind neigh-
 “ bours, but went down to Strathspey,
 “ which you know to be a better corn
 “ country. She, being considerate,
 “ wished to find her night lodgings
 “ where the trouble would be least felt.
 “ She went to the house of a rich child-
 “ less *tenant*, who (with your leave) was
 “ a sort of churl. This tenant was al-
 “ so (with your leave) very good to him-
 “ self.

“ You have known many people who,
 “ though they do not like to give, like
 “ well to hear. He was just one of
 “ those people

“ So he asked the poor widow much
“ of whom she was, and whence she
“ came. She told all the truth ; and the
“ rich carle’s conscience was awakened ;
“ and he said to himself,—“ Here am
“ I, that have abundance, and never
“ knew the heart-ache of losing a child ;
“ yet I have murmured against the
“ Highest, for not giving me, were it
“ but a single one. This woman has
“ nothing left. She is bereaved of
“ children who have looked in her face,
“ and warmed her heart. She is come
“ in the cold, ill-shod, and over rough
“ ground ; yet she praises the Almighty,
“ ty, and looks satisfied.”

“ So this man ordered the woman
“ her supper, and a bed in the corner
“ farthest from the fire.

“ Well, to the bed she went, which
“ was of short broken straw upon the
“ ground. These were good days, when
“ southern fashions, of dividing houses,

“ and such useless niceties, were un-
“ known. There was nothing taken off
“ the house, but the pantry.

“ However, this man, being very rich
“ for a tenant, and loving ease, lay on
“ a feather-bed. Very ill, however, he
“ rested; and, by the glimmer of the
“ fire, could see the poor woman’s hard
“ bed, in the distant corner where she
“ slept.

“ Midnight came, and the embers
“ were dying, when behold a procession
“ approached from the door, of six bright
“ lights, followed by a small greenish
“ one, like a candle burning in the
“ socket.

“ Three times these lights moved
“ round the bed of the sleeper; and
“ thrice the disordered straw, and the
“ clothes about it, were smoothed and
“ regulated by invisible hands. The
“ lights returned the way they came;

“ and the man filled with wonder and
“ perplexity, could sleep no more.

“ In the morning, he told the wo-
“ man in private what he had seen, and
“ how much he was surprised to see her
“ sleep so sound upon her hard and
“ humble couch, while he was so rest-
“ less upon his bed of warmth and soft-
“ ness. “ Wonder not at this,” said
“ the mendicant, “ I did not see what
“ you saw ; but I well know what it
“ means.

“ My children died before they had
“ done evil. Each of them, I have faith
“ to believe, is a light in the presence
“ of the Holiest. I had six, which
“ were the lights you saw, and one born
“ untimely, which was the dim light
“ which followed. They come, unseen
“ by me, to smooth the bed of my re-
“ pose : They cheer my dreams with
“ nightly visits ; and the time is very
“ short till I rejoin them. Though I

“ receive food from your hand, do you
“ think the Blessed Father has for-
“ saken me?—that he will ever for-
“ sake his humble and grateful chil-
“ dren?—or that he cannot find out
“ ways to make up in secret, for the
“ outward difference in his manner of
“ treating his creatures, while they are
“ here, as in a school.”

Such is the mode in which the mourn-
ers of the mountains are wont to be con-
soled!

I have given this discourse as literal-
ly as possible, that it might convey some
idea of the mode of expression among
those people, whom it would be most
unjust to stile rustic; for, certainly no-
thing could be more refined (allowing
for their want of literature and com-
merce with other countries) than their
language in their ordinary intercourse
with each other.

But as matters of this nature crowds

upon my recollection, I shall avoid the temptation to redundance, by here concluding this Essay, and purpose to devote the next to the more wild and capricious superstitions, of which, it can scarcely be argued, that they have any direct tendency: But the glimpse thus attained, of the high imaginative state of mind, produced by these prevalent opinions, has its use. It not only develops national character, but gives a clearer view of the operations of the human mind, when exalted into fervour by the uncontrouled influence of imagination and sensibility.

ESSAY VI.

Courteous manners, and polished conversation of the Highlanders accounted for.—Instances of visionary terrors.—Encounters with Spirits.

Desponding fear, of feeble fancies full,
Weak and unmanly, loosens every power.

BEFORE I enter upon the details which are meant for further illustration, I shall resume the subject which was touched upon in the conclusion of the last Essay.

The refinement and gentleness that so particularly distinguish the conversation of the mountaineers, may, in some degree, be accounted for, by the preva-

lence of the softer, though more fervid affections, native to that stage of society:—to the influence of poetry, so ancient and so universal; and, in course of time, improving, if not in energy, at least in delicacy. This stream of poetical sentiment,

“ As it runs, refines,

“ Till, by degrees, the floating mirror shines.”

To this powerful cause, much might be attributed, where there was so little to counteract it, and to the great respect paid to age and primogeniture in the patriarchal times, much more. Something too is derived from the custom of people living so very much together; most of the inhabitants of a little groupe of cottages, meeting alternately in each others dwellings in the winter, to listen to music or recitation. And in the long days of happy leisure, which their annual recess to the summer *shealings* af

forded, conversation, and all the sports of untutored genius, filled up the vacant hours, and not only smoothed the asperities incident to unpolished minds, but forced them, as a matter of convention, to yield trivial points of difference, or to conceal slight shades of displeasure, that the general harmony might not be interrupted.

All this accounts for a certain degree of unlooked for amenity to be found among that rank of society, which in other countries consists of clownish rustics; of such as we vainly strive to seem pleased with, while their very virtues disgust us by the coarseness which accompanies them, and their vices become more detestable by the grossness which aggravates them.

But how a community totally void of the outward and visible marks of refinement, and so far from possessing the elegancies that they had attained to very

little of what we should consider as the indispensable comforts of life. How such beings should ever have thought of cultivating and adorning conversation, and making it a polite art, of which the lowest in rank and intellect were not entirely ignorant, is the wonder !

How it must have mortified Chesterfield, could he possibly have known how many of the rules of good-breeding, which he impresses with such sedulous care, were familiar to the “ spinsters “ and the knitters in the sun,” at the doors of their dark and diminitive cottages. Had this been told him, he would, as in more important cases, have sought refuge in infidelity.

None of the wonders which he read in the Talmud, would appear to him so extraordinary, as that the chief arcana of the art of pleasing, which he had studied so long in courts ; the profound attention to the discourse of others ; the

suasive voice ; the temperate and courteous dissent ; the visible and indicated, rather than declared respect for superiors ; the subdued feelings ; the governed looks ; the graceful and easy attitudes ; the flowing periods, and utterance, neither rapid nor monotonous ; the constant self-command, and habitual composure ; the vigilant caution against committing one's self by speaking rashly on any subject, or speaking at all on a subject one is not master of. All this, which it was the business of his youth to learn, and the labour of his age to teach, he would find here quietly established, transmitted from father to son, and tacitly understood, as no effort or attainment, but the common and wonted routine of society.

This we shall the less wonder at, when we consider of how much consequence eloquent and persuasive speech. or in a word, the talent for conversa-

tion, was held in the days of Homer. Yet, in this respect, our peasants of the mountains, seem much to have exceeded those insular peers, who came to make love, and make merry at the court of Ithaca. The insolence of Antinous, or the gross boisterousness of Eurymachus would not be endured at a highland wedding.

Any person who should transgress, not the rules, but the feelings of natural good-breeding, as many of the Grecian princes appear to have done on various occasions, would, among an assemblage of highland peasants, be tried by his peers, and expelled from the company. This was not all natural good-breeding; that no doubt was the foundation of their polished courtesy, for one can call it no less; but there were numberless rules seldom alluded to, but generally understood, which no one could transgress, without incurring that contempt,

which, in the most cultivated society, punishes a gross violation of propriety.

An entire stranger to the nature and history of birds, who had never, for instance, heard (or even heard of) a lark, on seeing her soar among the clouds, as if she scorned the earth and its inhabitants, would wonder at being told for the first time, that she nestled among the clods of the valley. As strange will it appear to those, who having been accustomed to combine gentle and regulated manners with these external elegancies which wealth only can supply, and to meet them only in the higher ranks of life, to be told of this phenomenon in good breeding. None will be so hard of belief, in this instance, as those, who, devoid of every virtuous and truly noble principle, which gives real dignity to manners, and a stamp and honourable sanction to good taste, at-

tempt to gild depravity, and give lustre to corruption.

To those proficients in all the “ smooth barbarity of courts,” whose elegance dwells only in externals, and who, by a scrupulous attention to every voluptuous and artificial mode of refinement, which ingenuity can invent, or wealth can procure, deceive themselves, and endeavour to deceive others into an opinion, “ that they are the people, and that elegance shall die with them.”

To all such, this paradox must seem inexplicable : but there are others, and I trust there are many in the same rank of life, whose surprise on such an occasion will not amount to incredulity. There are those highly-polished and amply informed, yet unsophisticated beings, whose minds, peculiarly susceptible to the charms of nature and of poetry, feel and acknowledge a link connecting them with every human soul capable of the finer emotions ;

those better feelings that exalt our nature, and indicate our capacity of being something more, and something better than this infancy of existence admits of: Minds that feel a sacred sympathy with every soul that attempts to rise beyond the limits of material form, to trace the spirit that animates, and the beneficence that supports creation.

To those, who feel themselves not borrowing from art, but gifted by nature with "her lavish charter taste," which indeed "appropriates all it sees." all this will not appear so incredible; because they feel in themselves that capacity for being informed and delighted, which a very slight culture can unfold, and they feel also, that benevolence is nearly connected with taste, and that both these principles are the legitimate parents of natural good breeding.

In the mean time, to conciliate the first mentioned class of persons of refine-

ment, it may be as well to own, what is in fact, literally true, that much of the polish, superadded to the courtesy of the mountains, was owing to the frequency of courts among them. In the superior culture of the heart and of the imagination, no doubt they had their origin. But in the halls of the Chieftains, they "received the form and presence," which so much distinguished them. This too is obvious from the symptoms of decay that begin to appear since the diminution of feudal influence. To keep awake the unseen vigilance which guards the barriers of good breeding, there must be something to excite both awe and admiration.

The petty pomp of a chieftain's castle was quite enough to produce this effect on him who had never seen any thing finer, and who supposed his own chief to be the first of human beings. This chief, though possessed of little more know-

ledge than the meanest of his vassals, might nevertheless be a very tolerable model for the manners of his clan. Nothing can be more erroneous than the prevalent idea, that a highland chief was an ignorant and unprincipled tyrant, who rewarded the abject submission of his followers with relentless cruelty and rigorous oppression. He was, on the contrary, the father of his people : gracious, condescending, and beloved, far from being ruled by arbitrary caprice. He was taught from the cradle to consider the meanest individual of his clan, as his kinsman and his friend, whom he was born to protect, and bound to regard. He was taught too, to venerate old age, to respect genius, and to place an almost implicit dependance on the counsels of the elders of his clan.

Among these, his uncles were frequently included ; a tie held in reverence all over the Highlands: and with great

reason, as will appear in another place. There is no instance of a chieftain's taking any step of importance without the consent of the elders of his tribe.

Nay, so great was the prevalence of public spirit over private inclination, among those habituated to consider themselves as born for the good of others, that a chieftain seldom contradicted the opinion of his counsellors, in the most personal of all concerns, his choice of a companion for life.

Conscious power, and the habit of receiving universal respect, gave dignity to his manners, still more elevated by that loftiness of conception, incident to him, who thinks not of himself, but enlarges his comprehension by balancing continually in his mind the concerns of many. Beloved as he knew himself to be, it is not likely that he should want

“ The ease

“ Which marks security to please.”

With all the graciousness and affability natural to a person who has perfect confidence in all about him, and has no reason to fear losing respect while he conciliates affection, it is always casier to *be* than to *seem*; and the adherents of these little courts actually felt all that cordiality of attachment, and reverence of respect, which it has ever been the trade of greater courts to simulate.

In some few instances, chiefs were severe and ungracious from the perverse varieties of human character, as fathers are sometimes unkind and arbitrary. This, however, was very rare. All the bad passions of a chief, not yet well acquainted with the divine precept that teaches in a certain sense the love of enemies, were let loose on the foes of the clan. To them he returned in perfect good humour, after having amply sacrificed to his own irritable passions, under the pretext of revenging their quarrels.

There could be no more decisive proof of the power which the sense of good breeding, and the dread of apparitions had over these "enthusiasts of the woods," which then sheltered them, than the unfrequency of crimes and quarrels. This must appear extraordinary, when one considers how partially the Divine laws were taught among them; and that of human laws, they defied the power, and disdained the name.

Ferocious quarrels might occur between different clans, and their hostilities might be aggravated with circumstances of cruelty; but except in the heat of liquor, the quarrels between individuals of the same clan were very rare; indeed more so than they could have been, were not the intercourse of life guarded and softened by strict rules of good-breeding.

Frequenting courts so much as they did, they learned to cultivate, not the

religion only, but the superstition of good-breeding; and incumbered it with punctilios, something of the nature of those which we impute to the old court. I have given an example in the long story told by the old woman, of the expression used to introduce any such thing as you might not chuse to come “ between the wind and your nobility;” but it is not the objects of disgust alone, that are never mentioned, without being prefaced with “ by your leave.” “ I just “ waited (by your leave) to change my “ clothes : I had (by your leave) a pair “ of dirty shoes on : the pool (by your “ leave) is become stagnant : He was “ (by your leave) merely a wandering “ beggar.” And so you go on, loaded with those respectful expletives to the end of the chapter.

I think I have said enough to prove, that I have had the honour of belonging to a most courteous community, whose

old-fashioned good-breeding was fully as lectable as modern nonchalance.

I have not, however, been too minute in accounting for a mode of expression, that every person in possession of the language which forms the only key to the manners of these singular beings, must have been struck with, as something peculiar to themselves.

It does not injure my position, to have the Chinese quoted against me: the ceremonious courtesy prescribed by the laws, and enforced by the bamboo, is a matter so entirely mechanical, so contra-sentimental, that it may be produced in proof of a want of even humane feeling, in a people who must needs be threshed into common civility.

Nothing perhaps is more tedious in the recital, than the ritual of ceremonious courtesy. Yet there is something far more difficult to attain or to describe, which may be traced in the daily inter-

course of those people with their equals. They are those gentler graces that adorn, and that innate sense of propriety which restrains conversation within its proper limits among people of good feelings directed by good sense.

Here that distinguishing character of their manners appears to far more advantage than in their more respectful and ceremonious conversation with their superiors. Not that they feel under the smallest restraint; for the ritual of highland good-breeding demands such a frank and affable demeanor towards inferiors, as disarms rank of all its repulsive terrors; but they are the complimentary phrases and expletives of ceremony that clog discourse in such instances.

To return from this long, though not useless digression; the superstitions of the highlands, when they blended with religion, were reduced to a regular system, and in their limited apprehension,

rendered subservient to it. It was in the first place, laid down as a principle, that when evil spirits were permitted to assume any visible form to disturb or dismay any individual, such permission was in consequence of some sin committed, or some duty neglected, by the person so visited : Sometimes, want of submission, but, oftenest of all, want of faith, as they stile it : That is, want of confidence in the divine protection and aid, which the highlanders account a dreadful sin. Undue confidence, what they emphatically call tempting providence, is another sin, punishable with this species of dereliction. They believe, for instance, that a spirit is never seen by more than one person at a time. That these shadowy visitors are permitted to roam in darkness, to awake terror, or announce fate to those who do not sufficiently respect the order that obtains in this particular, either to stay in at night, or take some

other person along with them for a protection. If they are commanded by any one, whom they are bound to obey, to go out at night, they are less liable to these visitations. At all times, if they mark the approach of the apparition, and adjure it in the name of the Trinity to retire, it can do them no hurt. But then, these spectres sometimes approach so suddenly, that they are seized with breathless terror, which prevents articulation. Or the spirit appearing in some familiar form, is mistaken for a living person, till it is too late to recede.

In the stillness of noon, or in a solitary place, at the instant one is speaking of them, the dead are sometimes seen in the day-time, passing transiently, or standing before one. But this is merely a momentary glimpse that continues only while the eye can be kept fixed on the vision, which disappears the moment the eye-lid falls.

To tell of all the instances given of both these forms of visitation would be endless ; two only I shall mention of a superior order, the persons concerned not being plebians, but persons of worth and undoubted veracity.

A gentleman died in Strathspey, three score years since, and left a widow with a large family. He, though the head of an ancient house, left not much behind him ; and his widow found it necessary to pay the most sedulous attention to all the small profits of a farm, &c. for the benefit of her family : She possessed among other things a mill, part of the grist of which she allowed to the miller, and took the rest to herself, as a kind of rent. She often walked down from her house to see whether her due was regularly put in the place allotted for it. One evening she staid longer than usual, and returned to her house as it grew dusk ; her way lay through a little wood, and

she had to cross a brook, over a temporary bridge made of fallen trees. As she was approaching with some doubt and hesitation towards it, she saw on the other side, her husband very well drest, in tartan, with a handsome silver mounted dirk, and pistols, such as he used to wear on occasions of display.

He came to her, took her hand, and led her over the bridge with the utmost attention, then walking up the wood, he said to her ; “ Oh Marjory, Marjory, by what fatality have you been tempted to come thus rashly alone, when the sun is gone to sleep.” It is in this manner that they express, what we should call sunset.

The spectre disappeared, and Marjory arrived at home in great terror, fainted immediately, and on her recovery from her swoon, thought of nothing but preparing for her departure.

She lived however for a week, and was visited by many of her friends. Had

they been sceptical enough to doubt her assertion, she carried about with her, a testimony to enforce belief. Her wrist, where the ghost had laid hold of her hand, was blue, and had the appearance of being mortified. This is quite consistent with the system; for it appears that Marjory was punished for her impiety in daring the powers of darkness, without using the precaution appointed in such cases.

It was not supposed that the appearance of such spirits was in itself fatal; many outlived them, but even these found their spirits much depressed in consequence. The thing dreaded was the effect which such an appearance might have on minds peculiarly sensitive and awake to all the impressions of horror connected with a supernatural visitation.

They were imprest too, with "pious awe, and fear to have offended;" and the appearance of such phantoms instantly suggested the idea, that they had, by

some neglect of duty, or want of due confidence, thrown themselves out of the divine protection,

Auspicious forms which came to comfort the mourner, or to suggest useful hints, generally were either seen for an instant in day-light, or visited the dreams of their surviving friends in a manner so lively and consistent, as to leave them in doubt, whether they had been cheered by a vision sent to impress their waking senses.

Though I chose to set out on such a cheerless journey of retrospection, I fancy very few would wish to accompany me

“ Along the waste dominions of the dead.”

I shall merely select a specimen of each kind of the tales of wonder, which I have been accustomed to listen to with civil attention. And these have been told me, by people who were related in the first degree, to the persons thus visited.

I have already mentioned the prevalent opinion, that the sacred repose of the dead is disturbed by querulous regret, expressed in audible lamentation. It was permitted to speak of them, with sorrow and endearment, but not with repining, or in any terms indicating a wish that they had still remained in a state of sin and suffering.

Two gentlemen, both of the same name, and connected together by school-days' intimacy, improved into steady friendship, lived very near each other on opposite sides of the Spey. They were both persons of superior understanding, and great honour and probity. Laws, as I have formerly observed, had very little sway in the highlands in old times.

These two worthies lived at a later period : After the year 1745, their chief was proscribed and hunted down by soldiers, a company of which remained nine

years in the country exerting their utmost influence to discover him in vain.

These gentlemen were next to him in the tribe, in point of rank and influence, and they, with their adherents, by their judicious management and inviolable secrecy in all his affairs, contrived for that long period to keep him concealed in caves in the woods, and recesses dug under their houses. To these, the unfortunate outlaw removed by turns, as the search became more or less diligent, in different quarters. Those faithful friends without any ostensible pretext for doing so, but merely from the respect paid to their family, their wisdom, and their worth, ruled the whole district for many years, and acted on all occasions with a coolness and judgment that forced esteem from those whose purposes they defeated, and whose power they disarmed.

When a particular circumstance rendered it necessary for the chief to take

shelter in France, they contrived the means of his escape with singular address, and were all along engaged in so many important affairs, that they could scarce be classed among the idle and solitary dreamers, who, from seeing very little of this world, are apt to fancy to themselves glimpses of the other. I mention all this to shew how very deeply the imagination in this region of shadows must have been tingured by the awful forms of other times, whether only known in the songs of the bards, or dimly seen through misty moon-light. .

There could be no greater proof of this, than a little anecdote, which I have heard the representatives of both these important and sapient personages, relate (with full belief) of their respective fathers.

The attachment between the two families, was very great indeed, and increased by the most painful sympathies.

R. (the initial of his title) lost a wife early in life, for whom he ever after lamented during a long and melancholy widowhood. His grief, however, was rather deep than clamorous. Some years after, the same misfortune happened to B. who bore it very ill, and often broke out into bitter complaints on being destined to outlive what was so dear to him. For many years, the friends always contrived to have a daily interview at each other's houses, or on the bridge of Spey, which lay at equal distance between their dwellings, and from whence they used to repair to walk in a beautiful meadow on the shaded banks of that river.

One summer afternoon, meeting as usual, they went together to their favourite spot. B. lost in reverie, did not attend to the conversation of his friend, but, throwing himself upon the ground, with his face downwards, exclaimed in

his native tongue. " Alas, that I had
" but one sight of my dark-haired Anna !"
Just as he was uttering these words, his
friend, who stood leaning on his staff,
meditating a reproof, saw the " dark-
" haired Anna," in her full dimensions
standing in bright sunshine, attired in
her usual garb, at the side of her spouse,
and looking down on him, with a coun-
tenance expressive of mixed compassion
and displeasure. R. opened his lips after
a little pause to say, " Behold her, and
" see how you have disturbed her rest,"
but the vision was gone ; and, as he ex-
pressed it, " the flowers were not bent
" where she stood." One may easily
imagine the homily upon resignation
which this day-dream suggested. I have
selected it out of a thousand, from my
intimacy with the nearest relations of
the individuals concerned, and as an in-
stance how little very sound sense, and
uncommon strength of character availed

to conquer this imaginative habit of mind.

These mountain ghosts, on all occasions where I have had this kind of second-hand acquaintance with them, are in a high degree moral, rational, and prudent, and give the best advice imaginable to the survivors. There is a class of spirits, however, not subject to rules such as I have mentioned, whose appearance is somewhat mystical or capricious, and difficult to trace to any laid-down principle.

The manner of it, in some instances appears to indicate, that, while the body rested in the grave, and the soul in some calm, intermediate dormitory appointed for its repose till the great day of final decision, there was a kind of wandering shade, which was an unreal representative of both, and hovered around its usual haunts, or over the place of sepulture. Very much the accounts of those wandering shadows resemble those of the

thin forms, that flitted by Ulysses in the shades below.

I shall mention an instance illustrative of this last description of apparitions, which is, I believe, completely authenticated, and can I think, be easily accounted for.

There is a family of great distinction in the North Highlands, who have all along lived more at home, and more in the patriarchal mode of kindly intercourse with their humble friends, and in the old baronial stile of princely hospitality than any other, now existing in the same rank. They were, in consequence, much beloved and highly respected, not to say, revered by their vassals. The country abounded with gentlemen, that is to say, with cadets of the family, very much indulged, who had either small properties or easy leases

It was a custom derived from remote antiquity, that, when the chief went

from home, his castle was watched every night by some of his adherents, who took that duty by turns.

This practice, no doubt, originated in necessity, when the danger of a sudden attack by night was in some measure obviated by such a precaution.

But in later and more peaceable times, it became a mere form, a compliment paid to the dignity of the absent chieftain, of whose consequence all the clan participated. One gentleman only came, bringing an attendant or two with him, as a necessary precaution. The scene of the vigil was always the great room of the castle, which, being large, empty of substantial beings, and replenished with family pictures, was sufficiently dreary, through a long February night, such as I am to speak of.—“ On such a night,” came a gentleman of no small note to perform the wonted vigil. This was to be literally such, for to sleep would

be indecorous in the highest degree. He entered before midnight this stately apartment, attended by his servant, a mere youth, who had never seen a large room, or a large picture in his life, and of consequence must have thought the shades of the brave and the beautiful, who seemed fixed in motionless gaze, to behold him, from all sides, very awful.

His master, not feeling inclined to conversation, indulged in solitary musing near the fire. The young man sat down in the recess of a window at a respectful distance.

When two persons watched together in this manner, there was a kind of implied compact that one should keep the other awake ; there was a very good reason for this, for if one slept, the other was virtually left in the power of the spirits of darkness. The master, after watching till near morning, was overpowered with sleep. The servant, full

of wonder and speculation, was kept awake by the novelty of the scene around him. He perceived, however, that his master slumbered, and feeling a sudden chill, attempted to rise and awaken him. He was suddenly arrested by astonishment, when the great folding doors were instantly thrown open, and two footmen in the family livery came in bearing lights. They were followed by some of the family who had been dead for years, and whose wan and ghastly visages "looked not like inhabitants of the earth." Their dress and behaviour, however, exactly resembled that of their fellow-mortals in the same condition of life. Pope tells us of female Sylphs or Gnomes, who, "though they play no more, o'er-look the cards."

These phantoms went further, the card tables were placed, and they actually sat down to play. They conversed too a great deal, but though this intra-

der on their amusements, saw their lips moving, and their gestures varying, he never heard the sound of their voices.

His terror was much augmented by recognizing in one of the footmen a kinsman of his own, who in his life-time had served in the castle in that capacity ; the dusky grey of the dawn now began to appear ; the shadowy troop rather hastily returned the way they came : In passing, however, one turned towards the watcher, and breathed upon him.—It was a cold breath, that seemed to freeze the blood in his veins. The cock crew, and his master wakened. The poor visionary begged to be carried home, being unable to move. His request was immediately complied with, he called his friends about him, and narrated all that had happened to him, adding, that the hand of death was upon him, and nothing could save him. . He died in three days after, of a fever and delirium.

The lady, from whom I had the recital is still alive, and remembers the circumstances of the man's death, her father's attending his funeral, and coming home, full of the story.

Now, that this poor man, in such a situation, should dream awake, is not at all surprising. Dreams of this regular kind so often denote a fore-gone conclusion, that it may be matter of wonder how the materials of such a one, could be supplied to a youth, who was so entire a stranger to the form of life he saw thus represented.

But the curiosity and intelligence of these people is inconceivable. There was not a house in the strath, but what was in some way connected with the attendants of the great family, and all were anxious to know particulars of the domestic life of their beloved chief, such as those attendants were qualified to describe. This youth no doubt, had heard

often of the evening card-parties at the castle, which he would in fancy associate with the family-pictures and with some help from memory, and more from fear, furnish out the fatal vision.

The tragical termination of this vigil had however the effect of abolishing the custom. And the *Castle spectres* have, ever since, in the absence of the family, enjoyed their sombre card-party unmolested by intruders.

The fatal result of these visions, in some of the instances which I have mentioned, may also, in the opinion of most of my readers, prove my theory; I mean, of a beneficial effect arising from that awful sense of the future and unseen, which in the infancy of knowledge, is imprest on the mind, by the deep felt consciousness of the separate existence of the departed spirit, and the lively apprehension of their unseen presence.

I shall return in another place to the

justification of my system, and now proceed to discuss and exemplify yet another mode of apparition.

In some instances, either children, or nervous and melancholy persons, see or imagine that they see a spirit. They perhaps return home without suffering the least injury, but imprest with an idea that the spirit wishes for another interview with them at the same hour the following night, or, at some future time. Those who receive this impression have the most restless anxiety to keep their appointment, and will burst from their friends, and break doors, rather than forfeit their word.

The friends however seem to entertain the same terror that Hamlet expresses, when he doubts whether the figure of his father, which he saw, might be a phantom formed "out of his weakness" and his melancholy, to tempt him, &c. "to self-destruction." They therefore, not only use arguments, but coercion to.

prevent these much desired interviews. One instance, the subject of which, who is still living, is well known to me, I will record.

A man of the lower class of people died about thirty years since in the strength of life, leaving behind him a widow and children.

He was rather an intelligent and judicious man in his own way, and a most affectionate parent.

He had a daughter of whom he was extremely fond; she being a beautiful child, of a mild temper, much feeling, and good capacity.

The girl, who was about ten years old when she lost her father, was, on that account, much earlier sent out to work, and look after cattle than she would otherwise have been. She constantly, for a good while, thought of her father, and wept alone in the places where she was wont to see him. On the midsum-

mer day following, when time began to blunt her sorrow, her mother not being able to go with her neighbours to the shealings, and it not being compatible for her to feed her two cows below, when all the rest were in the mountains, she sent this, her eldest girl, to keep them in a moor, through a remote part of which the military road passes, giving her at the same time, charges to avoid every place occupied as a farm, and not to bring home the cows, till it was late, as she meant to follow her neighbours to the shealing next day; and in the meantime wished to avoid the blame of having them on the grass. On midsummer night there is scarce any darkness at all in that country; the child, waiting for twilight, thus remained till near midnight, and probably became drowsy and bewildered.

This would appear from her driving the cows in the very opposite direction

to home, and as directly towards the military road, then crowded with drunken travellers returning from a great fair.

When very far out of the way, and near the road, a man always seemed to stand before her, and prevent her from going on, whom on a nearer view, she recognized to be her father. When she turned homewards, he conducted her part of the way, and then desired her to meet him the eighth night on the same spot:

It now became the great business of the hamlet to watch the child on the appointed night. Supernatural impressions are by those people always treated with great delicacy, and never needlessly recalled to the mind affected by them. The good folks of the hamlet pretended to lounge about their doors, that they might watch her motions unsuspected. When it became dusky she attempted to steal away unperceived, and succeeded so well, that she was near the top of a

hill in the direction of her former path before she was overtaken: She mildly submitted to return.

Two young women, in a better condition of life, who lived near the hamlet came and offered to amuse the child, till she should become drowsy, that the hard-wrought peasants might not be under the necessity of sitting up with her. They were at pains to engage her attention, told her stories, and affected even to teach her some trivial game at cards. After midnight, when their vigilance became relaxed by her apparent tranquillity their little charge stole out at the door, and they were forced to alarm all the neighbours, before they could overtake her.

She was carefully watched that night, and next day carried to some relations in a distant part of the country, where new objects probably effaced the impression made upon her imagination.

Some time after a fancy of the same kind seized upon a man whom I knew very well, and knew to be one of the most sensible and intelligent of his own class in the neighbourhood. He lived with his master in the deepest seclusion, on the banks of Loch Laggan, as a kind of principal trusted servant; and became so great a favourite, that in the solitude of his retreat, he often conversed with him as an equal. He often boasted of him indeed as superior to any one in his station, he had ever met with, not only in fidelity and integrity, but in feeling and understanding.

Here, however, he was often left for months in solitude, in his master's absence. Unable to find solace in books from a total want of education, and having derived a kind of painful refinement from that gentleman's various and intelligent conversation, he became in some degree thoughtful and abstracted.

He met with some alarm, when contrary to all highland custom, he went out alone at night. This sin of presumption was, as he imagined, punished by an encounter with a spirit, who wrestled violently with him, bruised him, and charged him to meet him some nights after, at an allotted place and hour. When the appointed time arrived, his brothers, by every affectionate entreaty endeavoured to detain him. He broke from their hands, went to some unknown place to meet the substantial spirit, and returned as formerly, exhausted and marked with bruises. Upon this, these assignations became matter of speculation in the neighbourhood, and all his friends assembled on the appointed evenings, to prevent if possible, this dreaded assignation from taking place.

Many were the counter-magical operations and precautions used for this purpose. A small bible was sewed into one

of his pockets, which would at any rate have the good effect of preventing the evil spirit from obtaining power to overcome him entirely. This, which was done with tremulous awe, was the dernier resort. Before this final resource, nine knots of a very old pine tree, growing in a certain situation and exposure, which gave it a kind of sacredness, and adapted it for this purpose, were fastened in different parts of his clothes, but without the desired effect. Two of Angus's brothers very strong men, assisted by another, on one of these appointed nights, struggled to detain him, but in vain; with a kind of preternatural strength he broke through them all, went out to his antagonist, and returned more exhausted and bruised than usual: This, doubtless, was a kind of madness, but there was method in it; for on all other subjects, he was quite rational, and

though very unwilling to mention the apparition, argued consequentially on the subject, when forced to speak of it at all. If he were to break his assignation with this agent, who was permitted for the punishment of his sins to afflict him, this powerful and malicious spirit, might avenge himself of him, by injuries still more serious to himself and his friends.

This poor Angus appears to have been in the state of mind, ascribed by Le Sage to Olivarez, ever haunted by an apparition which poisoned his peace, without in other respects disturbing his reason.

His master, who was in the largest sense of the word, his friend, returned to the country about the time that this poor man's unfortunate state of mind was the prevailing subject of conversation in that neighbourhood. He immediately visited his faithful and affectionate adherent, of whose worth

he thought very highly, and to whom he owed much for courage and fidelity, called forth by very singular and trying exigencies. He found him pensive, but calm, sensible, and collected. He entered into a confidential conversation with him ; and heard with astonishment, a narrative, in itself most improbable, told with such circumstances as might stagger incredulity itself. The falsest premises laid down, and the truest conclusions drawn from these premises. Never, he said, had he found so much occasion to admire the powerful native eloquence, and acuteness in argument of this extraordinary person.

He let him into the whole secret of those struggles, and the conversations that preceded them. He considered his materially and literally wrestling with this goblin as a trial of his faith. He was so supported, he said, by this de-

pendence, that this agent of evil had not power entirely to overcome him ; and he trusted never would. Various modes of trial were appointed to various characters ; no doubt this had been seen fit to be the most suited to his. And thus he went on, demonstrating with a plausibility that almost varnished absurdity, till his master knew not what to think.

This same master, though no believer in spirits, was in some respects a knight very well suited to such a squire. He had much imagination, was a native of the district, and possessed, in a very high degree, enthusiasm and warmth of heart, which considerable intercourse with the world had not chilled. All this fitted him for the subject of a romantic adventure. Beginning to waver, perhaps more than he chose to own, from his original opinion, that this was merely a deception of Angus's fancy,

“Bred from his weakness, and his melancholy,”

he even proposed to accompany the unfortunate visionary to the scene of his nightly combats.

This proposal was at first resisted with extreme horror; partly from a fear of provoking his unearthly antagonist, but chiefly from terror, lest he should revenge the intrusion of an unbidden visitor to witness these midnight meetings. He feared too, that his master was committing a sin, in thus needlessly exposing himself to trials, which he himself, when called to them, found so severe. His friend, however, with great difficulty, convinced him, that as his intents were holy and charitable, and his confidence in the divine protection undoubting, there was not the least danger of his being abandoned to unhallowed powers.

After much eloquence exerted on

both sides, much preparation, and doubtless much prayer, the two friends set out about 11 o'clock in a very clear moonlight night, about the latter days of June 1776. No person acquainted with the scene and circumstances could reflect without an emotion of horror, on the state of mind in which this expedition was undertaken. The whole parish being at that season in the Glens, 12 miles distant, except, perhaps, an individual left in each hamlet to tend the poultry; the solitude and stillness were awful.

They set out from the centre of the parish to the appointed place, which was, at the time, a profound secret betwixt them. The impression seems yet fresh on my mind, as it was, when I heard it from the voluntary visitor of this formidable apparition.

They proceeded northward three miles, to where the valley becomes narrow.

They then arrived at a place called Shirramore, where, passing a little dreary lake, they turned westward to a very narrow and rocky pass, which serves courageous foot passengers, as an entrance towards Loch Laggan. This is a place of such utter and dreary desolation, that I should not risk the credit of my veracity in describing it, were it not like the bricks in Jack Cade's chimney, "alive at this day to testify." It is blocked up with great stones that have fallen from the naked and cheerless rocks that overhang this gloomy and almost impervious pass. If ever there was vegetation there, the mountain torrents have long since washed it away. It is a place where one would be glad to meet a frog, or see the commonest insect. Birds and insects are there quite out of the question. There is not a leaf to attract them. The rocks, too, close out even the remote view of life

and vegetation. Twice when I passed this sanctuary of utter desolation, I thought of nothing but the blasted district around the Upas tree, as we hear it described. He must, indeed, have a "heart with strings of steel," who does not feel it sink in some measure; in this total abstraction from all that belongs to life. The centre of this pass, was the place appointed for meeting the spirit, and the hour twelve. The friends walked slowly on, discoursing of the nature and extent of permitted evil; and Angus did not fail to warn his master of the alarm which he was to look for on approach of this terrible visitant, which, he said, often preceded by noises such as he could not describe, and as no earthly creature could produce. His friend assured him that his faith or courage would not fail; and that no power of darkness could successively assail any one whose trust was unshaken.

When they advanced to the destined spot in profound silence, the shadow of the rocks seemed overwhelming; the sound of their steps was reveberated from every side. All at once a noise was heard from the rocky recesses on the west, of a most unusual kind, neither like thunder, drums, or carriages, but a compound of all three, which rapidly approached, and still the nearer it came was less intelligible. "Alas! Alas! there it comes," said Angus; "Does it always come thus?" "Very often, but not invariably." "Stay Angus, your spirits are worn out with these encounters; your life has been often risked for me, I determine to meet and challenge this fiend, and prefer going alone." Angus required no persuasion; he was, in fact, in a cold sweat, and trembling so, that he could scarce stand. His heroic master proceeded forward into the recess beyond the open-

ing, but, as he owned, with very unequal steps. In his hand he held a bible, and on his lips, the accents of solemn adjuration, almost died away, when numberless quick steps drew near, and he beheld a pretty large flock of sheep, driven hastily by two great coarse looking fellows, as little Arcadian as might be.

This phenomenon, for such it was, in that detached corner, was soon explained. One would as little have expected a sheep as a spirit at that hour and place. This very unusual occurrence, however, had been occasioned by the extreme heat of the preceding day. These apparitions were Lochaber sheep drovers. They had been driving a large flock of those animals, through the steep and difficult passages which separate Lochaber from Badenoch. They found the meridian hour so excessively hot among the encircling rocks, where the sun

beams are concentrated as in a burning glass, that they thought it safest to conceal them in a deep hollow, between two rocks, where they might escape the notice of the proprietors of the ground: They honestly confest their dishonest intention of driving them down into the open country at midnight, while the people absent in the Glens could not detect the encroachment.

All this may appear very ridiculous. But one must have heard the strange sound in the hollow pathway, re-echoed from every side, to have any idea of the horror produced by it. Angus was confounded beyond measure ; and still insisted that the appearance of his nightly foe was ushered in by a similar sound.

Upon enquiry into the feelings of our friend on this issue of the adventure, he confessed with his usual candour, that he had worked himself up to such a pitch of pious resolution, that though his

nerves were not proof against all the terrors awaiting him, he was rather disappointed when he found he had no imp of darkness to encounter.

One may easily imagine the lecture on fancy and folly that awaited poor Angus. His alarms were as difficult to account for as ever. The approaching sound seemed to be quite familiar to him, and he appeared immediately to recognize it; yet, certain it was, that no other flock had been driven that season in the same direction; and that the driving those that night through the pass aforesaid, was an occurrence singular and unpremeditated.

One cannot help wondering at the co-incidence of the sheep, and these adventurers meeting so opportunely, the only time they could ever possibly meet at such an hour and place. This, however, did not abate the concern of this good master for the peace of his scr-

vant's mind. He carried him away to another part of the country where he had a friend, who gave him (Angus) a farm on easy terms.

This, however, was ill situated for amusing visionary like him, being a grazing in a remote solitude:—I am concerned to add, that he died melancholy in three years afterwards.

There would be no end of treading all the circling mazes of those strange tales held devoutly true by highland superstition; yet, one feels an indefinable satisfaction in listening to narrations, whether true or not, which are supposed to be so by the reciter. Perhaps Shakespeare did not believe in the truth of any of his supernatural beings, with the exception of the weird women of Macbeth, which had then a kind of historical sanction; yet that he did, in common with his co-temporaries, believe in

the possibility of such appearances, scarce admits of a doubt.

To this is owing the unstudied solemnity, the irresistible awe produced by his visionary creations.

Let any one that can feel and think, compare the sensation thus produced, with that resulting from a perusal of the laboured and accumulated terrors heaped up with unsparing profusion by a Radcliffe, a Lewis, or any other infidel magician of our own enlightened times. The stage is no doubt intended a deception, even when the powers of a Siddons give force to the illusion: of a puppet-show too, the worst one can say is, that it is a deception; yet, as far as the gross deception of a puppet-show falls short of the finest illusions of the theatre, so far do the laboured and exaggerated fictions, which have no prototype in the minds of their authors, fall short in producing the intended impression of

the simple strokes of magical delusion, which originate in the

“ Shuddering, meek, submitted thought ”

of a soul imbued with implicit faith in the legends of superstition.

A man, in such a case, cannot make others fear, without first being afraid himself. We do not feel inclined to pay much deference to the ruling spirit, who sits calmly in the whirlwind, raised to disturb and agitate us. We expect, in short, sympathy in our terror, and are ill pleased when we do not find it.

Before I quit this subject, I will mention the mode in which unhallowed curiosity has been sometimes punished. One instance will be sufficient for this purpose.

A man passing a church-yard on Halloweven, indulged his mind in idly curious speculation on the wonders that would appear to the gifted eye to which

the shadowy forms, that night at liberty, should become visible. Almost unconsciously, he formed a momentary wish for this dangerous privilege. Instantly a low and mingled murmur of hollow voices arose. He turned; and beheld numberless dusky and dim-seen forms rising above each other in the air, and muttering indistinct sounds. Many approached him, and in some, he recognized familiar countenances. His head grew dizzy, and his eyes dim. He supported himself an instant with difficulty on the church-yard wall; and when he recovered his recollection, found himself in solitude and darkness, with the stings of an upbraiding conscience, added to the remembered terrors of this glimpse of the departed.

Now, this recital, at second hand, produces very little effect, for want of faith in the narrator. Yet, when told with

every symptom of firm belief and recent horror, it was calculated to produce an effect on the mind, of the same nature with the recital of Æneas, when he describes the veil of mortality for an instant removed from his eyes, and the adverse deities at once becoming visible, occupied in the destruction of the long defended towers of Troy.

The instances by which I have chiefly endeavoured to illustrate my subject, have not been chosen from the lowest classes (of mind at least.) These, in every country, are credulous, and susceptible of groundless terrors.

The point I mean to establish, is the hold which long-descended habits of thinking, heightened by wild poetry, and wild scenery, took of even the more powerful intellect, giving to the whole national character a cast of "dreary sublimity," as an elegant critic

has happily expressed it, altogether unique and peculiar.

I knew a man of great worth, who some time since closed a life of unspotted integrity, with a pious and exemplary death. He was a native of the vale of Glenorchy, and had a good natural understanding, and a better education than generally fell to the share of the highland gentlemen of his day.

As a devout and rigid Presbyterian, he thought it his duty to war against superstition in all its forms. Yet he still kept a corner in his mind for one darling idol, fondly cherished by all true highlanders, with constant, though concealed love.

This was the second sight, including the ominous sights and sounds, by which the approach of death is announced; not perhaps to the person who is to be summoned to another world, but possibly to

some friend, or even to an indifferent person.

One instance of this, mentioned, and firmly believed by my old friend, shall serve as a specimen of this kind of foresight; the varied instances of which, and the legends belonging to them might fill a folio.

The Presbyterian clergy made fierce and open war on all this host of airy terrors. Many of them, however, attempted to root up the old belief in such a rough and contemptuous manner, as served rather to exasperate than convince.

One, however, of milder manners, and a better regulated mind than many of his brethren, combated these prejudices in a more gentle, and therefore more effectual manner. He was one of a family, eminent for sanctity in its most attractive form, unspotted by the world, gentle, and easy to be entreated.

They were the ornament and comfort of their native valley, to which they were pastors in succession for three descents; and which they enriched with the fruit of righteousness which is peace. I must not name them, but am pleased to think that their piety, their learning, their benevolence, and simplicity of life and manners, still live in the venerable and amiable representative of their family and their virtues:

The good old pastor to whom I allude, had in his own gentle way, banished a whole troop of apparitions and auguries from his parish, and in the decline of a well-spent life, was enjoying "that sweet peace, which bosoms goodness ever," in the midst of his family and flock.

It was his custom to go forth and meditate at even; and this solitary walk he always directed to his church-yard, which was situated in a shaded spot, on the banks of a river. There, in a dusky

October evening, he took his wonted path, and lingered, leaning on the church-yard wall, till it became twilight, when he saw two small lights rise from a spot within, where there was no stone, nor memorial of any kind. He observed the course these lights took, and saw them cross the river, and stop at an opposite hamlet. Presently they returned, accompanied by a larger light, which moved on between them, till they arrived at the place from which the first two set out, when all the three seemed to sink into the earth together.

The good man went into the church-yard and threw a few stones on the spot where the light disappeared. Next morning he walked out early, called for the sexton, and shewed him the place, asking if he remembered who was buried there. The man said, that many years ago, he remembered burying in that

spot, two young children, belonging to a blacksmith on the opposite side of the river, who was now a very old man. The pastor returned, and was scarce set down to breakfast, when a message came to hurry him to come over to pray with the smith, who had been suddenly taken ill, and who died next day.

This story he told to my old friend, from whom I heard it; and I am much more willing to suppose that he was deceived by an ignis fatuus, than to think either could be guilty of falsehood.

Of the second sight, much remains to say; but this must be either from vague rumour, or from the information of persons living, who would not chuse to be quoted on such an occasion.

The connection which such waking dreams is supposed to have with succeeding events, is so difficult to trace and ascertain, and the legends of the visionary must appear so like shadows of

shades to those who have no local knowledge of the people and their customs, that I shall tread no farther over this hollow ground, where one perpetually hears reverberated echoes, without being able to trace the original voice.

ESSAY VII.

Imagined power of pious rites in banishing an Apparition.—Food for credulity eagerly sought by the ignorant of all nations.—Depraved taste for the marvellous nourished by extravagance and absurdity.

See the rude muse, the rural faith sustain,
These are the themes of simple sure effect,
That add new conquests to her boundless reign,
And fill, with double force, her heart-commanding strain.

I HAVE been minute in the details given in the former Essay, and have chosen rather the most familiar than the most wonderful; the objects chiefly aimed at being to bring into view the peculiarities

of character and manners which distinguish those people, and which, in some measure, are derived from, and blended with the popular belief.

To the naturalist, the varying fibres of a leaf, or shading of a flower—a few wing-feathers, more or less, in the plumage of a bird, or spots on the wing of an insect, are important, as they promote the purpose of distinction and classification. To the lover of Nature, who wishes to trace her in all her gradations of intellectual progress, and to detect her in her pristine form, before manners have disguised, or science exalted the mind, it is of importance to know, not only what untutored man believed, but how that belief influenced his mind, and formed his character.

The religious awe which impresses the minds of the people I have been describing, and rises paramount even to their favourite superstitions, may be in some

measure understood from the following anecdote.

It is previously to be observed, that the writer of these pages was well acquainted with the scenery, and all the circumstances connected with this little narrative, which relates to an occurrence of not very distant date.

In the narrow part of the valley through which the Spey makes its way from the parish of Laggan downwards to that of Kingussie, there is some scenery of a very singular character. To the south, the Spey is seen making some fine bends round the foot of wooded hills. It is bordered by a narrow stripe of meadow, of the richest verdure, and fringed with an edging of beautiful shrubbery. On the north side rises, with precipitous boldness, Craigow, or the Black Rock, the symbol and boundary of the clan who inhabit the valley. It is very black indeed, yet glitters in the sun, from the

many little streams which descend from its steep, indeed perpendicular surface.

In the face of this lofty rock are many apertures, occasioned by the rolling down of portions of the stone, from which echoing noises are often heard.

This scene of terror overlooks the soft features of a landscape below, that is sufficient, with this association, to remind us of what has been said of "Beauty sleeping in the lap of horror."

An eminence, as you approach towards the entrance to the strait, appears covered with regularly-formed hillocks, of a conical form, and of different sizes, clothed with a kind of dwarf birch, extremely light-looking and fanciful, sighing and trembling to every gale, and breathing odours after a calm evening shower, or rich dewy morning.

In the depth of the valley, there is a lochan, (the diminutive of loch), of superlative beauty. It is a round, clear,

and shallow bason, richly fringed with water lilies, and presenting the clearest mirror to the steep wooded banks on the south, and the rugged face of the lofty and solemn rock which frowns darkly to the north.

On the summit, scarce approachable by human foot, is the only nest of the goshawk now known to remain in Scotland; and in the memory of the author, the nearest farm to this awful precipice was held by the tenure of taking down, every year, one of the young of this rare bird, for the lord of the soil.

The screaming of the birds of prey on the summit, the roaring of petty waterfalls down its sides, and the frequent falls of shivered stone from the surface, made a melancholy confusion of sounds, very awful and incomprehensible to the travellers below, who could only proceed on a very narrow path on the edge of

the lake, and under the side of this gloomy rock.

This singular spot has too many minute beauties to be pictured in description. All its terrors, and all its beauties, however, conspire to give it the air of a nook, separated by surrounding barriers for some purpose of enchantment.

It did not require a belief in fairies to look round for them in this romantic scene. If one had merely heard of them, an involuntary operation of fancy would summon them to a place so suited for their habitation.

Many, like Audrey, may thank the Gods that they have not made them poetical. Yet, of even these sober thinkers, I should admire the *sang froid* of one, who could pass in sunshine or moonlight between Lochan Uvie and Craigow, without looking round for some traces of this tiny population.

How then could the children of fancy

and feeling—awakened fancy and indulged feeling, tread safely over this perilous ground? Indeed, they very rarely passed without meeting with something that made “their knotted and combed locks to part:” and this something was always in the shape of a meagre and haggard woman with red hair, known and shunned for more than a century by the name of the *Caillich Rua*; a title which comprehends all I have said above.

This *Caillich Rua* had a sad history. Like other old women, she had once been young—had possessed charms to attract a lover, and tenderness to requite his attachment.

She had a brother too, who, in consequence of some feud or animosity between their families, attacked the lover. He, unwilling to kill one so dear to his beloved, did not exert all his powers of resistance, and fell in the conflict.

The widowed maiden buried her lover in one of those fairy hillocks, in some spot which neither friend nor enemy could discover.

She never spoke afterwards, nor could be prevailed on to re-enter the dwelling of her father. She continued for a long period of years to wander in silence through the scene so fatal to her peace. Sometimes she was seen hovering over the little wooded mounts below ; sometimes on the steep surface of the Craigow ; but oftenest appearing, and vanishing through the wood,

When she died, or whether she died at all, was never ascertained. Still the shade wandered in mournful silence ; and still appeared to all of the tribe to which she herself belonged, towards which she seemed to retain some resentment for the unavenged death of her lover. She never annoyed any one ; and by any, except the race stained with the

blood so dear to her, she was never seen.

Still her presence very much disturbed the inhabitants of the valley, which was peopled by the kindred of the Caillich Rua.

It so chanced, that one beautiful, dry summer, several years since, there was a vacancy in the church of the neighbouring parish. The clergyman of the parish, in which this wondrous *lochán* lies, went sometimes to preach for the people below, then deprived of that gratification, for such they considered it. He observed, that when he did not, they came perhaps eight or ten miles to hear him preach in his own church.

Pleased with their zeal, and pitying their fatigue, the pastor took the advantage of the fine weather to preach one day in the open air, in the hollow below Craigow, merely with the benevolent intention of accommodating both parishes

at once, as this was the boundary of his own, to which his people could follow him without any material inconvenience, and where the people of the lower district could come without fatigue.

Never was benevolent project more completely successful. The audience from both parishes was very numerous, and devoutly attentive. The day was serenely bright; the air sweetly pure; and the glow of gay and many-coloured tartan, with the expression of serious, yet animated countenances, disposed in groupes among the fairy mounts, and under the light-waving birches, formed a scene more singular and picturesque than can be easily imagined.

The reverberation of Craigow gave great effect to the voice of the preacher: but when the psalm was sung by so many musical and according voices, echoing from all the rifted rocks and gloomy chasms above, drowning the sounds of

the waterfalls, and the notes of the mountain blackbirds, one was tempted to cry out audibly—

“ To Him, whose temple is all space, .

“ Whose altar, earth, sea, skies,

“ One chorus let all beings raise,

“ All Nature's incense rise !”

No one need be much surprised to hear, that the people all went home in an excellent frame of mind, declaring they had never heard so admirable a sermon.

This was a great deal ; but yet it was not all ; for the good people affirmed, with one consent, that it was impossible the Caillich Rua could ever again profane with her unhallowed presence, a place which had been sanctified, by having divine worship performed in it with such impressive solemnity.

They thought among themselves, that possibly the sermon might have been preached in the scene which the Caillich

seemed to have appropriated, with a view to her banishment from it.

The sexton, or beadle, who certainly was, and is the strangest mixture of wit, simplicity, and knavery, that ever was compounded, favoured the idea. He thought every thing that exalted his master gave additional consequence to himself.

Now, it unfortunately happened, that of all earthly beings none more scorned and detested, all the petty artifices of vanity, than this same master; every shade and gradation of pretension was abhorrent to his pure and delicate mind. He had, as in duty bound, warred against superstition; but knew human nature in general, and highland nature in particular too well, to think, that he could "knock down iniquity like an ox." He did not furiously combat, but gently re-proved instances which met his view.

He rode alone at midnight, through

the most gloomy and sequestered nooks, to which duty or engagements led him, to give example to others; and when people mentioned before him, their transient visions, which indeed from their respect for his opinions, did not often occur, he neither taxed them with deceit or impiety, but merely told them that they dreamed awake, and ought to occupy their minds otherwise.

Nothing could have more shocked him than to have it supposed, that he assumed to himself the functions of immediate inspiration, or, that by using means to banish a fancied apparition, he should have given a sanction to the belief of its previous appearance. Of all this his sexton had a kind of indistinct conception, and did not therefore venture to acquaint him of the new exaltation to which his character had attained.

He told it however to some of the fa-

mily : It is difficult to express the ludicrous conflict which succeeded.

The honours offered to the expeller of evil spirits were scornfully rejected, and the people's awkward astonishment at the perverseness of a person, whose sanctity was only exceeded by his obstinacy in denying its effects, was most amusing. " It was needless to deny it." Had not hundreds seen the Caillich Rua before, and who ever saw her since the day of the sermon ? Well, sure enough the minister was not only a very good, but a very humble man, and wished to shun popular admiration ! This was still more provoking : To take credit for such artful humility, very ill suited the dignified candour of the pastor ; he lost all patience ; and if he had been formerly displeased with hearing of the appearance of the Caillich Rua, the mention of her disappearance was still more grating to him.

It became at last, an interdicted sub-

ject: Yet the popular opinion continues unshaken; and as the imagination must needs be amused with something wonderful, the miracle supplies the place of the apparition. Lady Mary Montague remarks, that foreigners of the lower class encourage no quacks; their love of the marvellous, being both excited and gratified to the full extent by saints and miracles. The love of the mere marvellous is not the only gratification found. There is a love of connecting ourselves ideally with the future and invisible. A stretching forward to catch a glimpse beyond the abyss of obscurity, which death opens to the mind, must be the result of the first unfolding of the imagination, the slightest culture of the reasoning powers.

The fancy though but partially enlightened, catches eagerly at any the slightest link of the golden chain that connects this world with a better.

Deprived of superstition, without being furnished with the light of a pure and rational faith, an ignorant populace transfer the cares for the soul to those that more immediately concern its frail associate, and bestow that implicit belief on quacks and pretenders, who affect to possess infallible medicines for the disorders of the body; which the votaries of a superstitious piety devote to those who offer inefficacious remedies for the diseases of the soul.

The mind must be occupied with something to hope, and something to believe, beyond what the senses offer to our bounded view.

The elastic and soaring faculties given us to fly at heaven and gather immortality, if they attain not their proper direction, will wander in search of ghosts and fairies over the dreary heaths, and among the wooded *tomhans* of our mountains; or will hover, with fond

credulity, round the shrine of a saint, or the tomb of a martyr, with the vulgar of other countries.

With that class of the learned of all countries, who are too wise to be spiritually taught, these wings are expanded in the regions of metaphysical subtilty, to reach at systems and hypotheses.

Perhaps the most unfortunate direction that faith degraded can take, is quackery. In that region, all the diseases of the imagination wander with restless vigilance, and produce more perturbation than the whole invisible population of a highland parish, in much narrower bounds.

The more natural and wholesome credulity of the highlands, expands the mind, even while it distorts it; and feeds the imagination, though not with food convenient for it. Here, credulity taking its native and original bent, finds full scope for exercise, without preying

on the mind, by being centred in the petty egotisms that relate to the perishing body.

A genuine highlander has no faith in medical science, and hates a doctor, next to a Whig; or, rather, to the character to which he gives that appellation. With the "unpublished virtues of the earth" he is most intimate. He detests chemical medicines, but his skill in the common remedies for the few disorders with which they are acquainted, is wonderful. He does what no fashionable patient would submit to, drenches himself with the infusion of different herbs, which perhaps contain the virtues which medical skill concentrates in drops and pills.

It will always appear, that the kind of credulity which invites quackery and legerdemain, exists most where the popular mind is least busied in exploring objects beyond the reach of sense.

These open so wide a field to the exercise of imagination, and extend the dominion of hope and fear so far into illimitable space, that they furnish abundant supply for this craving of the soul.

The fairy mounts, or little regularly formed cones, which abound so much in the highlands, have been, from time immemorial, accounted the abode of fairies. In some places, as at the foot of the mountain Corryarick, on the south side, a large space of ground is entirely covered with them. These are most regularly formed of equal size, and covered with the bilberry and fox-glove.

This, it is to be remarked, is a place famous for the perishing of travellers in the snow.

All along that road, numbers of these conical hillocks are seen rising in dry, gravelly ground, and thickly covered with heath; whereas, at Lochan Uvic, they rise at a broader base, with a conical

cal summit, to the height of eight or ten feet, and are covered with diminutive birch. The perfect regularity of their form, their resemblance to each other, and the light foliage constantly playing round them, gives a singular and fantastic appearance to the scenery.

Here the fairies are supposed to dwell, and the children's nursery tales are full of wonders performed by the secret dwellers of these *tomhans*, or fairy hillocks.

I knew myself an old gentleman, who, though nervous, and a little inclined to the visionary, was "much too wise to walk into a well," and travelled, bought, and sold like other people.

He was also much too wise to travel by night. In the day, however, he frequently passed the road I have been describing.

Far from human dwellings, near the foot of Corryarick, he used to hear, in:

passing near these *tomhans*, the fairies turning their bread on the girdle, and find the smell of the oatcakes they were toasting waken appetite very forcibly. This I believe that he believed; yet I believe, at the same time, that if he had as many things to think back on, and anticipate, as people who live in the world, he would not have heard so well what was going on in these hillocks.

He was, indeed, the only person I ever knew, admitted to so near a cognizance of the domestic economy of these fantastic sprites; and, to say truth, his own friends were wont to smile at his details with complacent, but suspicious silence.

But the youths who were accustomed to lead, during the spring months, a wild and solitary life, tending cattle among the hills of that dreary district, were often, as they said, cheered by the music of small sweet pipes, issuing from these awe-inspiring hillocks. These im-

pressions are early given, and deeply fixed by little songs which the children learn almost in infancy, of which the mystic intercourse betwixt fairies and the children of mortality are the subject. These hold the same place with them, that Tom Thumb and Jack the Giant-killer do with our children; with this difference, that our nursery-*tales* of wonder have also something of the ludicrous mingled with them.

Our children learn very soon to regard with ridicule and contempt, the objects of terror-mingled wonder, by which their imaginations were first excited.

Not so the little highlander! There was something like music which Collins gives to Despair, in the tales he first heard, conveyed in strains, of whose expression one might truly say,

“ By fits 'twas sad, by starts 'twas wild.”

One of these, which I have heard children at a very early age sing, and which is just to them, the Babes in the Wood, I can never forget. The affecting simplicity of the tune, the strange wild imagery, and the marks of remote antiquity in the little narrative, gave it the greatest interest to me, who delight in tracing back poetry to its infancy.

A little girl had been innocently beloved by a fairy, who dwelt in a tomhan near her mother's habitation. She had three brothers, who were the favourites of her mother. She herself was treated harshly, and tasked beyond her strength: Her employment was to go every morning and cut a certain quantity of turf from dry heathy ground, for immediate fuel; and this with some uncouth and primitive implement.

As she past the hillock, which contained her lover, he regularly put out his hand with a very sharp knife, of such

power, that it quickly and readily cut through all impediments. She returned cheerfully and early with her load of turf; and, as she past by the hillock, she struck on it twice, and the fairy stretched out his hand through the surface, and received the knife.

The mother, however, told the brothers, that her daughter must certainly have had some aid to perform the allotted task. They watched her, saw her receive the enchanted knife, and forced it from her. They returned, struck the hillock, as she was wont to do, and when the fairy put out his hand, they cut it off with his own knife. He drew in the bleeding arm, in despair, and supposing this cruelty was the result of treachery on the part of his beloved, never saw her more.

I am very sorry, that the spirit of this most primitive song could not be transfused into English, but it is as volatile

as the fragrance of the wild lily, and would, like it, evaporate when moved from its place.

I shall try, however, how two or three stanzas will look in literal English.

The maiden speaks, and, as is usual in all very old songs, the first verse is repeated as a chorus to the rest.

“ I behold yonder the tomhan covered with rowan^{*} and holly.

“ Dear to me is the treasure which it contains.

“ Sweet and deep was my slumber

“ On the brink of the lake of many salmon.

“ I awoke, and half of my bed remained not.

“ I see yonder the tomhan of rowan and holly, &c.

“ I see my brothers afar yonder,

“ Mounted on sleek swift grey steeds :

“ They ride, but my heart goes not with them.

“ I see yonder the tomhan, &c.

“ I see the house of my mother afar off ;

“ Not as it were a house, but a place deserted.

“ While sweet slumber falls on others,

“ Green flames shall encompass her feet.

* Rowan, the mountain Ash.

" I see yonder the tomhan of rowan and holly ;
" Dear to me is the treasure it contains."

The first thing to be observed of this little melancholy ditty, is the picture of manners which it presents. The brothers are, no doubt, hunters, and leave the hard task of cutting heathery turf to their little sister. A knife is a thing rare and highly valued. The hard-hearted brothers are persons of no ordinary condition. They are mounted on horses fleet, sleek, and of the favourite colour, when such animals conferred distinction on those possessed of them.

She uses a most expressive figure to denote the misfortune which had overtaken her. While enjoying a sweet refreshing sleep on the banks of the lake of salmon, a phrase meant to express ease and plenty, the water washes under her, and deprives her of half her bed ; a metaphor signifying the loss of her future repose.

What she says of her brothers is highly expressive. The third verse describes her feelings on seeing them pass at a distance. They are mounted on sleek swift steeds: Yet though they move on with all this air of power and consequence, her heart, wounded by their cruelty, does not accompany them.

The final verse contains something like an imprecation on her mother, which is difficult to reconcile to the impassioned veneration with which parents are mentioned in all the reliques of ancient poetry.

Here, too, occurs an expressive figure, consonant to the stile prevalent to this day, in their emphatic language.—“ I see the house of my mother, not as if it were a house, but merely a bare place.” There is no longer any thing in the domestic hearth to create an interest. I see the habitation of my mother with as

much indifference as if it were a deserted spot.

The green flames which are to surround or consume her mother's feet, while others slept sweetly, must have been a figure to denote a disturbed mind; or, perhaps, it might be descriptive of some punishment inflicted by the offended fairies. Green flames, or flames edged with green, being often used to express the dubious lustre of an ignis fatuus, or other wandering meteor. This fragment is accounted the most ancient extant, and bears the marks of very primitive modes of thinking, and expressing one's sensations.

I must no longer wander in the devious path of fairy lore, where new temptations to transgress my limits, assail me at every turning. There is some merit in leaving untold nursery legends, that rise to remembrance, connected with so many tender associations.

I am sensible of hazarding a great deal, by descending so far into these minutiae of antique lore, as I have done. It is indeed difficult to escape from the seduction of the subject. To a calm, reflecting, and unsophisticated mind, it has peculiar attractions, as opening a wide field of speculation on the most interesting of all merely speculative subjects, the progress of the human mind, in a very peculiar state:—a state adverse to artificial and external refinement; yet adapted to nourish all the finer emotions of the untaught and unregulated heart, and give scope to all the wild creation of excursive fancy.

This latter peculiarity of primitive life, is fitted to take great hold on the imagination, which, sheltered in retirement, and prompted by feeling, loves to range undisturbed through the wilds of enthusiasm.

We feel gratified, too, in the calm and

conscious superiority with which our better informed minds can look down on our equals, perhaps superiors in intellect, struggling through the gloom of ignorance, and combating the phantoms that inhabited it.

One of the great pleasures which we unconsciously derive from the perusal of Don Quixote, is a blended sentiment arising from the respect which his wisdom and virtue inspires, and a secret sense of self-gratulation at feeling our own superiority to so much excellence, disfigured as it is by romantic credulity.

Miguel Cervantes shews, in this instance, as in all others, an intimate knowledge of human nature, first, in making the knight of La Mancha a person of generous sentiment, habitual self-denial, and a heroic elevation of mind, as only such a person could have courage to undertake, and perseverance to hold on in the path of adventure allotted

to him : and next in engaging our sympathy, and soothing our self-importance by making him at once so respectable and so absurd. Were he wholly fantastic and absurd, we should despise him ; were he entirely the mirror of knight-hood, renowned for valour and courtesy, we should coldly esteem him, and seek our amusement from some less dignified character.

The hero of Cervantes too derives the interest of probability from the times in which he is supposed to exist. The spirit of romantic chivalry, excited by the Moorish wars, and nourished by the tales of wonder and necromancy, had hardly subsided. The ashes of civil conflagration were scarcely cold, and the religion of the country gave a kind of sanction to the extravagances of fiction, when the overheated brain of the knight did not entirely create, but greatly exaggerate the wonders familiar to his imagination.

A wandering knight in the present enlightened times, invested with the attributes of that flower of courtesy, would disgust more by the incongruity of his adventures, than he could amuse by their singularity. Of this, the story of Sir Launcelet Greaves is a striking instance. Well told as it is, not all the descriptive powers and rich invention of Smollet can give lasting interest to such a violation of all costume and probability. What Sir Launcelet Greaves is to Don Quixote, the tales of enchantment of the present century, with all their elaborate apparatus are to the short and simple stories of enchantment recited with all the thrilling horror of credulity in the former ages by honest believers. These, though they did nothing extenuate, set down nought in laboured exaggeration. With all due reverence to our venerable forefathers, we must confess, that they were very apt to be afraid of shadows, and had a pecu-

liar art of communicating the impressions received from these shadows, to their unbelieving descendants. Yet amidst the broad effulgence of light, which has since flowed in upon us, we must shrink a little from the presumption of those of our contemporaries who expect to awaken all those emotions which Shakespeare and others, including even * blind Harry, had at command, by conjuring the shadows of these shades. In vain do they spin their narratives into immoderate length, and stretch their figures into immeasurable magnitude. The former only languish on the ear with wearisome monotony; and the latter, like the shadow of Cowper's limbs on a shining winter day, appear only the more ludicrous from their magnitude.

The spider's filmy net, seen through

* See the fine diablerie of the spirit of Fawdon appearing to Wallace.

the watery moonshine, might be a fitting vestment for the elves of antiquity ; but that they should, after their long banishment, come out in full sunshine, arrayed in the still more transparent, though more glittering attire of dewy gossamer, is a violation of the aerial unities most offensive to supernatural criticism, and revolting even to the good taste of the nursery.

It is amusing to consider how this very worst species of perverted taste, first sprung up amongst us. A very learned, and very vain, old nobleman, who had devoted his life to literary pursuits, and feasted upon all the varieties of knowledge, pleased himself with the idea of being above ambition. No man certainly had seen more of the unsatisfactory nature of its highest rewards, than he had the melancholy experience of in his own family : But still the lurking principle inhabited his breast, and

wrought perversely with a kind of distorted energy.

The want, the deadly and wretched want of some object beyond what earth affords, to stimulate or to satisfy the aspiring mind, to warm and invigorate the fainting heart, must needs be supplied; and the stronger the mind, the more necessary the stimulus. Whoever reads over the works of Lord Oxford, and more particularly the life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, will easily perceive, that *historical doubts* were but an inferior class of those, by which his mind was occupied. That, in short, he wanted the comfort, the enlargement of views, and repose of mind derived from religious belief. He had, like Solomon, tried all things, and found them vanity.

He had explored cathedrals and tombstones; had wrote mysterious tragedies, and had proved that he knew much better what was done in the era of the ri-

val roses than those who lived at the time. He had corresponded with the most cultivated and witty old ladies, and conversed with the most beautiful, sprightly, and accomplished young ones. Still there was a sad desideratum, a dreary void: Imagination, vanity, and that distorted ambition, already described, stepped forth to fill it. To form a new creation of his own, and call the world to wonder at it, appeared to him a desirable amusement for his declining years; and so he built a castle in the air, and called it Otranto. One cannot but smile to think of the laborious assiduity expended on the construction of this clumsy edifice, and of the awkward species of ingenuity exerted in the creation of its most incongruous inhabitants. This, however, excited attention; not merely as being in itself wonderful, but marvelous, as proceeding from such an author. The ideal structure, in short, had a vi-

ible relation to the material one proceeding from the same mind. And the same perversion of taste which solicited admiration for a gothic structure on the banks of the Thames in the eighteenth century, called back from the bottom of the Red Sea those spirits, which, ever since the days of Glendower, had quietly reposed there.

This castle builder had various claims to attention. Noble, witty, learned, and singular, the more odd and incongruous the production was, the more it drew the gaze of idle curiosity: yet, though it was read, and wondered at, it did not excite sufficient admiration to gratify the ambition of the author. One of his posthumous letters sufficiently shews how inordinate that was.

The "cold reasoning age," which had not been sufficiently dazzled, or astonished by his performance, would, he hoped, be succeeded by one more fanciful and

enthusiastic. Posterity would hail the triumphs of his genius, and babes yet unborn tremble at horrors of his manufacturing. Though he ascribed rather too much to the powers of his single arm in the regions of necromancy, he became unwittingly the leader of a pompous, if not powerful band of magicians, whose wands conjured up forms more elegant and aerial than their prototype had summoned ! Bells rung, owls shrieked, and chains rattled in all directions ; our circulating libraries swarmed with home-bred apparitions ; and, moreover, to borrow description from one of the best of these spurious productions.

“ On a sudden, hideous yelling,
“ Dismal groans and cries were heard,
“ And, each heart with fear appalling,
“ A pale troop of ghosts appear'd.”

This band of German apparitions were so novel and outlandish, and suited so to the English love of caricature, that they

stalked and skimmed through the land with no small approbation. It became the occupation of the few to *make believe* to be frightful, and of the many to *make believe* to be afraid.

These lovers of the awful and terrible, affected the highest contempt for the honest believers who trembled at ghosts they thought real; yet they were no otherwise superior to them, than the puppies who bark at the reflection of the moon in a pond, are to the dogs who, with more originality and better directed energy, bark at the moon herself.

Mankind, are wonderfully disposed to move in a circle, or rather, in a kind of retrograde manner, after they attain to a certain point: Cloyed and satiated with all that can be known or enjoyed here, if the proper and natural process does not take place, if we do not endeavour to reach at something beyond what is allotted to us in this limited period of

existence, we return with a kind of vitiated relish to the primary objects of the terror-mixed delights of infancy, the infancy of nations untaught, and of individuals in every state. I call it a vitiated relish, because it is no longer an article of implicit belief, and consequently, loses the powerful interest which agitates the savage and the child. Yet so dear to fancy, so consonant to the secret longings of the soul for a glimpse of worlds unknown, is this delusion, that those to whom the gates of light and immortality have never been opened, or who have willingly preferred darkness to light, can yet feel a mysterious pleasure in the improbable and impossible, merely because it carries the imagination for a moment beyond the circle of sensible objects.

Even this depraved appetite that listens to wonders not only supernatural, but unconnected with any cause or mo-

tive, with avidity, totally distinct from credulity, is still a lurking symptom of that aspiration which pants for a wider field of excursion, and higher objects of desire :

“ 'Tis the Divinity which stirs within us.”

When a beaver, torn away from his house, his kindred, and his woods, and dams, is forced into an unnatural state of domestication, he busies himself with awkward and fruitless assiduity in piling up sticks at the door of the house to which he is attached. With perverse and ludicrous eagerness he continues to obstruct the entrance, by toiling without an object or an end ; yet it is this salutary instinct, that, when permitted to take its natural course, works wonders of utility, that, checked and perverted, produces all this absurdity.

It is awful to consider, that there is no resting place, no intermediate stationary

point for the immortal soul ; once lighted up with hope and intelligence, it must be in a state of progression or declension, must soar or sink. . And, when its upward flight is checked, it must, like Milton's fallen angels, " descend with pain." It is obvious, that I confine this observation to souls who have not yet finished their probation.

How many of the follies of the wise, and weaknesses of the strong, can only be accounted for on this principle !

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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