

set out together to the wake of an elderly female who had died that morning. Her cottage, an humble erection of stone and lime, was situated beside a thick fir-wood, on the edge of the solitary Mullbuoy, one of the dreariest and most extensive commons in Scotland. We had to pass in our journey over several miles of desolate moor, sprinkled with cairns and tumuli — the memorials of some forgotten conflict of the past; we had to pass, too, through a thick, dark wood, with here and there an intervening marsh, whitened over with moss and lichens, and which, from this circumstance, are known to the people of the country as the white bogs. Nor was the more distant landscape of a less gloomy character. On the one hand there opened an interminable expanse of moor, that went stretching onwards mile beyond mile — bleak, dreary, uninhabited and uninhabitable — till it merged into the far horizon. On the other there rose a range of blue, solitary hills, towering, as they receded, into loftier peaks and bolder acclivities, till they terminated on the snow-streaked Ben Weavis. The season, too, was in keeping with the scene. It was drawing towards the close of autumn; and, as we passed through the wood, the falling leaves were eddying round us with every wind, or lay in rustling heaps at our feet.

“I do not wonder,” said my companion, “that the superstitions of so wild a district as this should bear in their character some marks of a corresponding wildness. Night itself, in a populous and cultivated country, is attended with less of the stern and the solemn than mid-day amid solitudes like these. Is the custom of watching beside the dead of remote antiquity in this part of the country?”

“Far beyond the reach of history or tradition,” I said. “But it has gradually been changing its character, as the people have been changing theirs, and is now a very dif-