

marbles of Assynt,—of the petrifications of Helmsdale and Brora,—of shells and plants embedded in solid rocks, and of forest trees converted into stone ; and my ears drank in knowledge eagerly, as those of the Queen of Sheba of old when she listened to Solomon. But all too soon did the conversation change. My cousin was mighty in Gaelic etymology, and so was the mineralogist ; and while my cousin held that the name of the Barony of Gruids was derived from the great hollow tree, the mineralogist was quite as certain that it was derived from its sienite, or, as he termed it, its *granite*, which resembled, he remarked, from the whiteness of its feldspar, a piece of curd. *Gruids*, said the one, means the place of the great tree ; *Gruids*, said the other, means the place of the curdled stone. I do not remember how they settled the controversy ; but it terminated, by an easy transition, in a discussion respecting the authenticity of Ossian,—a subject on which they were both perfectly agreed. There could exist no manner of doubt regarding the fact that the poems given to the world by Macpherson had been sung in the Highlands by Ossian, the son of Fingal, more than fourteen hundred years before. My cousin was a devoted member of the Highland Society ; and the Highland Society, in these days, was very much engaged in ascertaining the right cut of the philabeg, and in determining the chronology and true sequence of events in the Ossianic age.

Happiness perfect and entire is, it is said, not to be enjoyed in this sublunary state ; and even in the Gruids, where there was so much to be seen, heard, and found out, and where I was separated by more than thirty miles from my Latin,—for I had brought none of it from home with me,—this same Ossianic controversy rose like a Highland fog on my horizon, to chill and darken my hours of enjoyment. My cousin possessed everything that had been written on the subject, including a considerable amount of manuscript of his own composition ; and as Uncle James had inspired him with the belief that I could master anything to which in good earnest I set my mind, he had determined that it should be no fault of his if I did