

after bidding me remark the completeness of the solitude, and that the eye could not command from the site of the ruin a single spot where man had ever dwelt, told me that it had been the scene of the strict seclusion, amounting almost to imprisonment, about eighty years before, of a lady of high birth, over whom, in early youth, there had settled a sad cloud of infamy. She had borne a child to one of the menials of her father's house, which, with the assistance of her paramour, she had murdered; and being too high for the law to reach in these northern parts, at a time when the hereditary jurisdiction still existed entire, and her father was the sole magistrate, possessed of the power of life and death in the district, she was sent by her family to wear out life in this lonely retreat, in which she remained secluded from the world for more than half a century. And then, long after the abolition of the local jurisdictions, and when her father and brother, with the entire generation that knew of her crime, had passed away, she was permitted to take up her abode in one of the sea-port towns of the north, where she was still remembered at this time as a crazy old lady, invariably silent and sullen, that used to be seen in the twilight flitting about the more retired lanes and closes, like an unhappy ghost. The story, as told me in that solitary valley, just as the sun was sinking over the hill beyond, powerfully impressed my fancy. Crabbe would have delighted to tell it; and I now relate it, as it lies fast wedged in my memory, mainly for the peculiar light which it casts on the times of the hereditary jurisdictions. It forms an example of one of the judicial banishments of an age that used, in ordinary cases, to save itself all sorts of trouble of the kind, by hanging its victims. I may add, that I saw a good deal of the neighborhood at this time in the company of my cousin, and gleaned, from my visits to shieling and cottage, most of my conceptions of the state of the Northern Highlands, ere the clearance system had depopulated the interior of the country, and precipitated its poverty-stricken population upon the coasts.

There was, however, one of my excursions with Cousin William, that turned out rather unfortunately. The river Shin