

## CHAPTER X.

“The muse, nae poet ever fand her,  
 Till by himsel’ he learned to wander  
 Adown some trottin’ burn’s meander,  
     An’ no think lang:  
 O, sweet to muse, and pensive ponder  
     A heart-felt sang !”

BURNS.

THERE are delightful walks in the immediate neighborhood of Conon-side ; and as the workmen—engaged, as I have said, on day’s wages—immediately ceased working as the hour of six arrived, I had, during the summer months, from three to four hours to myself every evening, in which to enjoy them. The great hollow occupied by the waters of the Cromarty Frith divides into two valleys at its upper end, just where the sea ceases to flow. There is the valley of the Peffer, and the valley of the Conon ; and a tract of broken hills lies between, formed by the great conglomerate base of the Old Red System. The conglomerate, always a picturesque deposit, terminates some four or five miles higher up the valley, in a range of rough precipices, as bold and abrupt, though they front the interior of the country, as if they formed the terminal barrier of some exposed sea-coast. A few straggling pines crest their summits ; and the noble woods of Brahan Castle, the ancient seat of the Earls of Seaforth, sweep downwards from their base