

plain of Old Red Sandstone leans, at a few miles distance, against dark Highland hills of schistose gneiss, that, at the line where they join on to the green Lowlands, are low and tame, but sweep upwards into an alpine region, where the old Scandinavian Flora of the country,—that Flora which alone flourished in the times of its boulder clay,—still maintains its place against the Germanic invaders which cover the lower grounds, as the Celt of old used to maintain exactly the same ground against the Saxon. And at the top of a swelling moor just beneath where the hills rise rugged and black, stands the pale tall tower of Fairburn, that, seen in the gloamin', as I have often seen it, seems a ghastly spectre of the past, looking from out its solitude at the changes of the present. The freebooter, its founder, had at first built it, for the greater security, without a door, and used to climb into it through the window of an upper story by a ladder. But now unbroken peace brooded over its shattered ivy-bound walls, and ploughed fields were creeping up year by year along the moory slope on which it stood, until at length all became green, and the dark heath disappeared. There is a poetic age in the life of most individuals, as certainly as in the history of most nations; and a very happy age it is. I had now fully entered on it; and enjoyed, in my lonely walks along the Conon, a happiness ample enough to compensate for many a long hour of toil, and many a privation. I have quoted, as the motto of this chapter, an exquisite verse from Burns. There is scarce another stanza in the wide round of British literature that so faithfully describes the mood which, regularly as the evening came, and after I had buried myself in the thick woods, or reached some bosky recess of the river bank, used to come stealing over me, and in which I have felt my heart and intellect as thoroughly in keeping with the scene and hour as the still woodland pool beside me, whose surface reflected in the calm every tree and rock that rose around it, and every hue of the heavens above. And yet the mood, though a sweet, was also, as the poet expresses it, a pensive one: it was steeped in the happy melan-