

mossy stream, black in its deeper pools, as if it were a rivulet of tar, contained a good many trout, which had acquired a hue nearly as deep as its own, and formed the very negroes of their race. They were usually of small size,—for the stream itself was small ; and, though little countries sometimes produce great men, little streams rarely produce great fish. But on one occasion, towards the close of autumn, when a party of the younger workmen set themselves, in a frolic, to sweep it with torch and spear, they succeeded in capturing, in a dark alder-o'ershaded pool, a monstrous individual, nearly three feet in length, and proportionately bulky, with a snout bent over the lower jaw at its symphysis, like the beak of a hawk, and as deeply tinged (though with more of brown in its complexion) as the blackest coal-fish I ever saw. It must have been a bull-trout, a visitor from the neighboring river ; but we all concluded at the time, from the extreme dinginess of its coat, that it had lived for years in its dark pool, a hermit apart from its fellows. I am not now, however, altogether certain that the inference was a sound one. Some fishes, like some men, have a wonderful ability of assuming the colors that best suit their interests for the time. I have been unable to determine whether the trout was one of these conformists ; but it used to strike me at this period as at least curious, that the fishes in even the lower reaches of the dark little rivulet should differ so entirely in hue from those of the greatly clearer Conon, into which its peaty waters fall, and whose scaly denizens are of silvery brightness. No fish seems to possess a more complete power over its dingy coat than a very abundant one in the estuary of the Conon,—the common flounder. Standing on the bank, I have startled these creatures from off the patch of bottom on which they lay,—visible to only a very sharp eye,—by pitching a small pebble right over them. Was the patch a pale one,—for a minute or so they carried its pale color along with them into some darker tract, where they remained distinctly visible from the contrast, until, gradually acquiring the deeper hue, they again became inconspicuous. But if startled back to the same pale patch from which they had set out, I