

CHAPTER XI.

“The bounding pulse, the languid limb,
The changing spirit’s rise and fall,—
We know that these were felt by him,
For these are felt by all.”

MONTGOMERY.

THE apprenticeship of my friend William Ross had expired during the working season of this year, when I was engaged at Conon-side; and he was now living in his mother’s cottage in the parish of Nigg, on the Ross-shire side of the Cromarty Frith. And so, with the sea between us, we could no longer meet every evening as before, or take long night-walks among the woods. I crossed the Frith, however, and spent one happy day in his society, in a little, low-roofed domicile, with a furze-roughened ravine on the one side, and a dark fir-wood on the other; and which, though picturesque and interesting as a cottage, must, I fear, have been a very uncomfortable home. His father, whom I had not before seen, was sitting beside the fire as I entered. In all except expression he was wonderfully like my friend; and yet he was one of the most vapid men I ever knew,—a man literally without an idea, and almost without a recollection or a fact. And my friend’s mother, though she showed a certain kindliness of disposition which her husband wanted, was loquacious and weak. Had my quondam acquaintance, the vigorous-minded maniac of Ord, seen William and his parents, she would have triumphantly referred to