

introduced to an expedient of the kind scarce less ludicrous or inadequate than that which Landor must, in one of his humorous moods, have merely imagined.

I returned to the inn at the hour from which, as I have said, it would be possible for us, and not more than possible, to complete our day's journey; and finding, as I had anticipated, no trace of Click-Clack, we set off without him. Our way led us through long moory straths, with here and there a blue lake and birch wood, and here and there a group of dingy cottages and of irregular fields; but the general scenery was that of the prevailing schistose gneiss of the Scotch Highlands, in which rounded confluent hills stand up over long withdrawing valleys, and imposing rather from its bare and lonely expansiveness, than from aught bold or striking in its features. The district had been opened up only a few seasons previous by the Parliamentary road over which we travelled, and was at the time little known to the tourist; and the thirty years which have since passed, have in some respects considerably changed it, as they have done the Highlands generally. Most of the cottages, when I last journeyed the way, were represented by but broken ruins, and the fields by mossy patches that remained green amid the waste. I marked at one spot an extraordinary group of oak trees, in the last stage of decay, which would have attracted notice from their great bulk and size in even the forests of England. The largest of the group lay rotting upon the ground,—a black, doddered shell, fully six feet in diameter, but hollow as a tar-barrel; while the others, some four or five in number, stood up around it, totally divested of all their larger boughs, but green with leaves, that, from the minuteness of the twigs on which they grew, wrapped them around like close-fitting mantles. Their period of "tree-ship"—to borrow a phrase from Cowper—must have extended far into the obscure past of Highland history,—to a time, I doubt not, when not a few of the adjacent peat-mosses still lived as forests, and when some of the neighboring clans—Fraser, Bisset, and Chisholm—had, at least under the ex-