

the cattle a few years earlier, in the midland districts of Sutherland. Groping in this foul outer chamber through a stifling atmosphere of smoke, we came to an inner door raised to the level of the soil outside, through which a red umbery gleam escaped into the darkness; and, climbing into the inner apartment, we found ourselves in the presence of the inmates of the mansion. The fire, as in the cottage of my Sutherlandshire relative, was placed in the middle of the floor; the master of the mansion, a red-haired, strongly-built Highlander, of the middle size and age, with his son, a boy of twelve, sat on the one side; his wife, who, though not much turned of thirty, had the haggard, drooping cheeks, hollow eyes, and pale, sallow complexion of old age, sat on the other. We broke our business to the Highlander through my companion,—for, save a few words caught up at school by the boy, there was no English in the household,—and found them disposed to entertain it favorably. A large pot of potatoes hung suspended over the fire, under a dense ceiling of smoke; and he hospitably invited us to wait supper, which, as our dinner had consisted of but a piece of dry oaten-cake, we willingly did. As the conversation went on, I became conscious that it turned upon myself, and that I was an object of profound commiseration to the inmates of the cottage. “What,” I inquired of my companion, “are these kind people pitying me so very much for?” “For your want of Gaelic, to be sure. How can a man get on in the world that wants Gaelic?” “But do not they themselves,” I asked, “want English?” “O yes,” he said, “but what does that signify? What is the use of English in Gairloch?” The potatoes, with a little ground salt, and much unbroken hunger as sauce, ate remarkably well. Our host regretted that he had no fish to offer us; but a tract of rough weather had kept him from sea, and he had just exhausted his previous supply; and as for bread, he had used up the last of his grain crop a little after Christmas, and had been living, with his family, on potatoes, with fish when he could get them, ever since.

Thirty years have now passed since I shared in the High-