

and the necessary manure was carried to the fields in spring, and the produce brought home in autumn, on the backs of the women, in square wicker-work panniers, with slip-bottoms. How these poor Highland women did toil! I have paused amid my labors under the hot sun, to watch them as they passed, bending under their load of peat or manure, and at the same time twirling the spindle as they crept along, and drawing out the never-ending thread from the distaff stuck in their girdles. Their appearance in most cases betrayed their life of hardship. I scarce saw a Gairloch woman of the humbler class turned of thirty, who was not thin, sallow, and prematurely old. The men, their husbands and brothers, were by no means worn out with hard work. I have seen them, time after time, sunning themselves on a mossy bank, when the females were thus engaged; and used, with my brother-workmen,—who were themselves Celts, but of the industrious, hardworking type,—to feel sufficiently indignant at the lazy fellows. But the arrangement which gave them rest, and their wives and sisters hard labor, seemed to be as much the offspring of a remote age as the woollen sails and the moss-fir cordage. Several other ancient practices and implements had at this time just disappeared from the district. A good meal-mill of the modern construction had superseded, not a generation before, several small mills with horizontal water-wheels, of that rude antique type which first supplanted the still more ancient handmill. These horizontal mills still exist, however,—at least they did so only two years ago,—in the gneiss region of Assynt. The antiquary sometimes forgets that, tested by his special rules for determining periods, several ages may be found contemporary in contiguous districts of the same country. I am old enough to have seen the handmill at work in the north of Scotland; and the traveller into the Highlands of western Sutherland might have witnessed the horizontal mill in action only two years ago. But to the remains of either, if dug out of the mosses or sand-hills of the southern counties, we would assign an antiquity of centuries. In the same way, the unglazed earthen pipkin, fashioned by the hand