

of straw. Sabbath-walking in parties, and especially in the neighborhood of our large towns, is always a frivolous, and often a very bad thing ; but lonely Sabbath-walks in a rural district,—walks such as the poet Grahame describes,—are not necessarily bad ; and the Sabbatarians who urge that in all cases, men, when not in church on the Sabbath, ought to be in their dwellings, must know very little indeed of the “ huts where poor men lie.” In the mason’s barrack, or the farm-servant’s bothy, it is often impossible to enjoy the quiet of the Sabbath : the circumstances necessary to its enjoyment must be sought in the open air, amid the recesses of some thick wood, or along the banks of some unfrequented river, or on the brown wastes of some solitary moor.

We had completed all our work ere Hallowday, and, after a journey of nearly three days, I found myself once more at home, with the leisure of the long happy winter before me. I still look back on the experiences of this year with a feeling of interest. I had seen in my boyhood, in the interior of Sutherland, the Highlanders living in that condition of comparative comfort which they enjoyed from shortly after the suppression of the rebellion of 1745, and the abolition of the hereditary jurisdictions, till the beginning of the present century, and in some localities for ten or twelve years later. And here again I saw them in a condition—the effect mainly of the introduction of the extensive sheep-farm system into the interior of the country—which has since become general over almost the entire Highlands, and of which the result may be seen in the annual famines. The population, formerly spread pretty equally over the country, now exists as a miserable selvage, stretched along its shores, dependent in most cases on precarious fisheries, that prove remunerative for a year or two, and disastrous for mayhap half-a-dozen. And, able barely to subsist when most successful, a failure of the potato crop, or in the expected return of the herring shoals, at once reduces them to starvation. The grand difference between the circumstances of the people of the Highlands in the better time and the worse, may be summed up in the one important vocable,