

continuous covering of forest, the indubitable signs of a virgin country. It is remarked by Humboldt, that all the earlier seats of civilisation are bare and treeless. 'When, in passing from our thickly foliated forests of oak, we cross,' he says, 'the Alps or the Pyrenees, and enter Italy or Spain, or when the traveller first directs his eye to some of the African coasts of the Mediterranean, he may be easily led to adopt the erroneous inference that absence of trees is a characteristic of the warmer climates. But he forgets,' it is added, 'that Southern Europe wore a different aspect when it was first colonized by Pelasgian or Carthaginian settlers. He forgets, too, that an earlier civilisation of the human race sets bounds to the increase of forests; and that nations, in their change-loving spirit, gradually destroy the decorations which rejoice our eye in the north, and which, *more than the records of history, attest the youthfulness of our civilisation.*' Some of my audience must be old enough to remember the last of the great aboriginal woods of Scotland. It was only during the second war of the first French Revolution, when the northern ports of Europe were shut against Great Britain, that the native pine-woods of Rothiemurchus and the upper reaches of the Spey were cut down; and as late as the year 1820, I looked, in the upper recesses of Strathcarron, on the last scattered remains of one of the most celebrated of the old pine-forests of Ross-shire. Possibly some of the fragments of the pine-forest which skirted the western shores of Loch Maree may still exist; though, when I last passed through it, many years ago, the axe was busy among its glades. It is known of some of our Scotch mosses,—the deposits which testify geologically to this primitive state of things when the country was forest-covered,—that they date from the times of the Roman invasion, and were consequences of it. The mark of the Roman axe,—a narrow, chisel-like tool,—has been detected, in many instances, on the lower tier of stumps over which the peat has accumulated; and