

twigs of birch; bundles of split fir, for lath and torches; and hair tackle and nets for fishermen. Nearly seven thousand persons, male and female, thronged the area, bustling and busy, and in continual motion, like the tides and eddies of two rivers at their confluence. There were country-women, with their shaggy little horses laden with cheese and butter; Highlanders from the far hills, with droves of sheep and cattle; shoemakers and weavers from the neighboring villages, with bales of webs and wallets of shoes; farmers and fishermen, engaged, as it chanced, in buying or selling; bebies of bonny lasses, attired in their gayest; ploughmen and mechanics; drovers, butchers, and herd-boys. Whiskey flowed abundantly, whether bargain-makers bought or sold, or friends met or parted; and, as the day wore later, the confusion and bustle of the crowd increased. A Highland tryst, even in the present age, rarely passes without witnessing a fray; and the Highlanders seventy years ago were of more combative dispositions than they are now. But Thomson, who had neither friend nor enemy among the thousands around him, neither quarrelled himself, nor interfered in the quarrels of others. He merely stood and looked on, as a European would among the frays of one of the great fairs of Bagdad or Astrakan.

He was passing through the crowd, towards evening, in front of one of the dingier cottages, when a sudden burst of oaths and exclamations rose from within, and the inmates came pouring out pell-mell at the door, to throttle and pummel one another, in inextricable confusion. A gray-headed old man, of great apparent strength, who seemed by far the most formidable of the combatants, was engaged in desperate battle with two young fellows from the remote Highlands, while all the others were matched