

through the midst. He had brought his gun with him, in the hope of finding a seal or otter asleep on the outer banks; but there were none this evening; and, laying down his piece against one of the poles of the wear, he was employed in capturing a fine salmon, that went darting like a bird from side to side of the inner enclosure, when he heard some one hailing him by name from outside the nets. He looked up, and saw three men — one of whom he recognized as the young farmer who was paying his addresses to Lillias — approaching from the opposite side of the bay. They were apparently much in liquor, and came staggering towards him in a zigzag track along the sands. A suspicion crossed his mind that he might find them other than friendly; and, coming out of the enclosure, where, from the narrowness of the space and the depth of the water, he would have lain much at their mercy, he employed himself in picking off the patches of sea-weed that adhered to the nets, when they came up to him, and assailed him with a torrent of threats and reproaches. He pursued his occupation with the utmost coolness, turning round, from time to time, to repay their abuse by some cutting repartee. His assailants discovered they were to gain little in this sort of contest; and Thomson found, in turn, that they were much less disguised in liquor than he at first supposed, or than they seemed desirous to make it appear. In reply to one of his more cutting sarcasms, the tallest of the three, a ruffian-looking fellow, leaped forward and struck him on the face; and in a moment he had returned the blow with such hearty good-will that the fellow was dashed against one of the poles. The other two rushed in to close with him. He seized his gun, and, springing out from beside the nets to the open bank, dealt the farmer, with the butt-end, a tremendous blow on