

CHAPTER IV.

Are we not brothers?
So man and man should be;
But clay and clay differs in dignity,
Whose dust is both alike.

SHAKSPEARE.

It was no unimportant change to the people of Cromarty, which transferred them from the jurisdiction of hereditary judges to the charge of a justice such as Mr. Forsyth. For more than thirty years after his appointment he was the only acting magistrate in the place; and such was the confidence of the townspeople in his judgment and integrity, that during all that time there was not in a single instance an appeal from his decisions. In office and character he seems to have closely resembled one of the old landammans of the Swiss cantons. The age was a rude one. Man is a fighting animal from very instinct, and his second nature, custom, mightily improves the propensity; and nine tenths of the cases brought before Mr. Forsyth were cases of quarrels. With the more desperate class of brawlers he could deal at times with proper severity. In most instances, however, a quarrel cost him a few glasses of his best Hollands, and cost no one else anything. The disputants were generally shown that neither of them had been quite in the right; that one had been too hasty, and the other too ready to take offence; that the first blow had been decidedly a wrong, and the second unquestionably a misdemeanor; and then, after drinking one another's